



Church of the Holy Family
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THE PEARL AND TREASURE: THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE

Dear Fellow Parishioners of Holy Family,

This is the last weekend that Fr Alphonsus and I will be with you all. We will be leaving the Parish on Friday 31st July.

I think it is really providential that we have the Readings of today's Mass. They summarise in a wonderful way what we have been trying to do in this parish for all of you.

In the first reading, from 1Kgs 3:5,7-12, we see how God gave Solomon a choice of gifts. Solomon asked God for "an understanding mind," so that he could always do what was just and best for his subjects. God rewarded him with the gift of wisdom making him, proverbially, the wisest man ever.

This is what we wish that our parishioners of Holy Family would continually ask of God. We have been working in the parish to build up in you all that "understanding mind" so that you would always do what is just and best for your individual lives and that of your respective families and community and society.

It is that "understanding mind" that makes us be parishioners who get involved in the life of the parish not for ourselves and our vain glory, but for the good of others, and the growth and development of the parish at large.

The second reading from Rom 8:28-30 illustrates the graciousness and mercy of God at work in calling men to himself, justifying them, and glorifying them as well. The point of the reading is the eternal mystery of the ineffable love of God for every man and woman, even before they existed.

It is this love that we have been trying to urge all of you, dear parishioners, to live in. We have been trying to build up this parish to be an expression of that way of God's graciousness and mercy. We have been struggling, but persevering, in getting our parishioners to go beyond the past hurts and grievances that cause divisions and tensions and leave us to be uninvolved in parish life and mission. We pray that the love of the Lord God, as shared by St Paul, will allow us to let bygones be bygones, and to forge relationships anew so that we could all get involved in continuing our parish mission of building up a family and community of faith, love and service.

The Gospel passage is from Mt 13:44-52 which presents us some important parables, the lesson of which is as true for us today, as it was for those Palestinians to whom Christ spoke.

All Christians are called on to imitate the two wise men, and surrender all their earthly possessions, if necessary, in order to gain the pearl of great price and the treasure in the field – the kingdom of God and eternal life.

Does this "giving all" mean that we are all expected to abandon the world and take on the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience? There are many who do just this. But it is not the only way, nor the normal way, to purchase the eternal treasure. Heaven is within the reach of all, who follow the ordinary vocations of life and partake of this world's joys and pleasures *within the framework of God's commandments*, but never lose sight of the goal toward which they are moving.

Keeping within the framework of God's commandments is the difficulty. We need not have a vow of obedience, but we must obey all legitimate authority. We may possess the goods of this world, but only such goods as we lawfully and justly acquire. Nor may we withhold all of these from a fellow man who is in need. We do not have to take a vow of chastity, but yet we must be chaste, we must use the gifts and the pleasure of sex only within the limits set down by God's wise laws.

All of this is not easy for human nature. But we are not relying on weak human nature, we have within our reach in the Church all the spiritual and supernatural aids we need. Our world today, it is true, is so engrossed in chasing after the earthly comforts and pleasures of the body, and so devoid of any spiritual or other-worldly outlook, that even those who know and believe that there is an eternity after death, find it hard to allow their faith and convictions to govern and direct their daily actions. Yet, the evil example of others will never justify our wrongdoing. The commandments of God are still binding, even though they are openly and flagrantly violated by individuals and whole nations today.

Remember this: we shall not be asked at the judgment, "What did your neighbour do?", but "what did you do?" If we lose the pearl of great price in the eternity of happiness God has offered to us - it will not be the fault of others. The fault will be ours and ours only. We refused to pay the price. We did not think it worth the "paltry all" which we possessed in this life.

Dear parishioners of Holy Family, we have been trying our best all these past years to make sure you all not only have the pearl and treasure with you, but that you enjoy it and share it with others.

As Fr Alphonsus and I leave you in the good hands of Fr Adrian, Fr Stanislaus and Deacon Clement, we wish you God's choicest blessings and graces. May he fill you with his love, graciousness and mercy. May the strength and power of God's Holy Spirit be so alive in all of you that not a single person of this parish community be uninvolved in building up the parish which exists precisely to build up the Kingdom of God.

As we leave the parish, we want to thank all of you for your good spirit, generosity and kindness to us. We want to reiterate that we really appreciate all the wonderful ways you have cooperated and collaborated with us in our efforts to build up the parish community and family, and chose to overlook the errors of our human weakness.

We want to ask your forgiveness if we have inadvertently and unconsciously hurt you in any way. Believe us – it was never our intention to hurt any one of you. We were not appointed here to do that. But in the course of our priestly ministry if we have not seen eye to eye with each other and so entered into misunderstandings and grievances, we are not only sorry but also hopeful that eventually the way of the Lord as expressed in the readings of today's Mass will prevail among all of you.

Please pray for us as we move on in the next part of our journey in Kingdom building and we continue to pray for you. God Bless you all!

Fr Eugene Vaz and Fr Alphonsus Dominic