

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, [OR]...a pearl of great price.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a special club called the **“Santa Clara Swim Club.”** Every morning, students would meet at 5:30 a.m. at the outdoor pool, having hurried through the chilly, morning air. There, they would swim for a solid, two hours. After a quick, warm, shower and a bite to eat, they’d hurry off to class. After school, they’d return to the pool to swim for two more hours. At 5 pm, they’d hurry home, hit the books, eat a late supper, and fall into bed exhausted. The next morning, the alarm would ring at 4:45a.m. & they’d start the whole thing all over again.

When asked why she followed such a disciplined schedule, one girl answered:

“My only goal is to make the Olympic team. If going to parties hurts that, then why go? There is no such thing as too much work. The more miles I swim, the better. Sacrifice...is the thing.”

Had Jesus walked the earth in our time, today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Matthew, might be very different. Rather than talk about the dream-pearl or the field-treasure, Jesus might have talked about those who sacrificed **all** to make the Olympic team.

Why do I say this? **“What is the connection between a pearl-merchant, a treasure-seeker, and a Santa Clara swimmer?” ...you ask. Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

The one thing they all have in common is their **...total ...commitment ...to a dream.**

All three are willing to sacrifice everything for a goal they have set for themselves.

And, very conveniently, this leads me to the point Jesus makes in today’s Gospel: Citizenship in God’s kingdom involves our total commitment, which is, being all we were meant to be—that is, to **‘BE’** ourselves ...with integrity and honesty. To be a spouse, to be a parent, to be a son or daughter, a brother or sister, a grandparent ...to be the best we can be at...

“who we are; why we are; what we are.”

We cannot pursue eternity and citizenship in the Kingdom of God as though it were a part-time job. We **cannot** work at it as though it were a hobby. We must give ourselves to it 100%, that is, we must make it **the** top priority of our life. Remember, life is not a game. We are not puppets on a string. We, being made to the image & likeness of God, have an **immortal** soul. All eternity hangs in the balance. It all depends on how we treat one another...how we relate to God ...to his Church & the wonderful sacraments ...that his Son lived and died to give us. We are bound to succeed **if we just have integrity & honesty...with ‘who we are,’...‘why we are,’...‘what we are.’**

Being a true Christian is **like** being a pearl-merchant ...it’s **like** being a treasure-seeker ...it’s **like** being an Olympic contender. **BUT**, and there’s that proverbial **‘but’** in life, there’s a big difference between a true Christian and the other three.

When the **merchant** dies, his pearl will no longer have any value for him. When the **farmer** dies, his treasure will be useless to him. When the **Olympic swimmer** dies, the medals will only tarnish.

BUT, when the true **Christian** dies, the Kingdom of God will shine brighter & brighter & brighter and will never tarnish or fade away ...for all eternity! At the moment of death, there’s only one thing that counts. It’s **not** whether we acquired a **prize-pearl**, a **rare-treasure**, or a **gold medal**. All that will matter is **‘who’** & **‘what’** we **have learned & have become** in the process of living, with **integrity and honesty**. ...**‘who’** and **‘why’** and **‘what’** we were meant to be!

I close with this prayer:

“Lord, give us the commitment of the Santa Clara swimmer, who worked tirelessly to make the Olympic team. Give us the commitment of the merchant, who searched his whole life for the perfect pearl. Give us the commitment of the treasure-seeker, who sold all to buy the field. If they were willing to sacrifice so much for a prize that will perish, how much more ought we be willing to sacrifice even more ...for a prize ...that will last ...forever!”

May the eternal God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen