

Wednesday of the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time C, Treasure and Pearl

Homily of Bishop Barres

July 27, 2022

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 13 presents us with the images of the treasure buried in the field and the pearl of great price.

The purchase of the field and the acquisition of the pearl require a complete and total investment.

There can be no hedged bets. The investment is total and complete.

That is the nature of the Kingdom of God.

We do not turn back. Our hands are firmly on the plough, our legs moving and our eyes fixed on the radiant Face of Jesus Christ.

Very much connected to these biblical images is the baptismal call to contemplative and silent depth in prayer.

A deep commitment to silence and interiority helps us to focus on the Treasure and Pearl of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

In his Third Catechesis on St. Joseph delivered on December 15, 2021 on the theme of “St. Joseph, man of silence,” Pope Francis writes:

“Joseph’s silence...is a silence full of *listening*, an *industrious* silence, a silence that brings out his great interiority. ‘The Father spoke a word, and it was his Son’, comments Saint John of the Cross, — ‘and it always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence it must be heard by the soul’. [\[2\]](#)

Jesus was raised in this ‘school’, in the house of Nazareth, with the daily example of Mary and Joseph. And it is not surprising that he himself sought spaces of silence in his days (cf. *Mt* 14:23) and invited his disciples to have such an experience by example: ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while’ (*Mk* 6:31).

How good it would be if each one of us, following the example of Saint Joseph, were able to recover this *contemplative dimension of life, opened wide in silence*. But we

all know from experience that it is not easy: silence frightens us a little, because it asks us to delve into ourselves and to confront the part of us that is most true. And many people are afraid of silence, they have to speak, and speak, and speak, or listen to radio or television... but they cannot accept silence because they are afraid. The philosopher Pascal observed that ‘all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber’. [3]

Dear brothers and sisters, let us learn from Saint Joseph how to cultivate spaces for silence in which another Word can emerge, that is, Jesus, the Word: that of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and that Jesus brings. It is not easy to recognize this Voice, which is very often confused along with the thousand voices of worries, temptations, desires, and hopes that dwell within us; but without this training that comes precisely from the practice of silence, our tongue can also ail.”

Our Holy Father is profoundly insightful about how essential deep, contemplative silent prayer is to being faithful to our Lord and the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

This Sunday, July 31st we will close the Year of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

St. Ignatius himself experienced a profound conversion after the Battle of Pamplona. His vanity, his commitment to pursuing the pride of life, his ambition to rise in the Spanish military and at the Spanish Court – all these light and ephemeral loves were replaced by the all encompassing and total love of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

This missionary love was nourished in contemplative silence.

All the energy St. Ignatius spent on pursuing his own glory on earth was completely changed to pursuing the Glory of God and His Kingdom – the treasure buried in the field and the pearl of great price.

In *The Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola*, Fr. Hugo Rahner, SJ traces to the contemplative heart of St. Ignatius the tremendous influence of the Society of Jesus through the centuries. He writes: “In the final analysis, the influence of Ignatius and his Order upon the Church, upon politics, civilization, and world-wide missions, derives from the spiritual life that animated them. For the great achievements which history records always have their beginnings in the tranquil center of the human heart.”¹

¹ Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1953), x.

