

33<sup>rd</sup> Sun. Ord Time (B)  
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes  
November 14, 15, 2015

Often we might think of ourselves reaching heaven much like an old beaten up automobile which squeaks into the parking lot of the used car dealer. “It made it in one piece”, we sigh. “We just might get something on a trade-in after all.” But heaven is not a used car lot, nor is Jesus a used car dealer.

Rather heaven is new ... there is nothing here or anywhere else like it. Heaven is both a joy and a delight. At the end we become an entirely new and transformed person. We enter heaven innocent, with all our sins forgiven, wrapped in the new flesh of the resurrection. In heaven we are linked with the entire assembly of God: chosen from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of earth and sky.

On this second to the last weekend of our current Church Year, and on this weekend when we light candles in memory of our sisters and brothers who died during the past year – we are given the magnificent image of what lies in store for all God's faithful people. What Jesus is, and what we shall be, is indeed the pearl of great price, the treasure worth selling everything else that I have so that I might have just this one treasure.

All summer long we have followed the evangelist Mark as he presented us with the Good News of Jesus Christ. During the past ten weeks we have heard important Gospel pieces telling us what is necessary to be part of the wonderful vision and plan of God. We have heard what takes to be a disciple of Jesus, what you and I need to do to be part of Kingdom that Jesus brings:

“Do not honor me with just your lips, while letting your hearts remain far from me.”

As with the deaf man, our ears must be open to the manner and way of God. We must think as God does, not as humans do.

And then we must also act in the manner of God “Whoever wishes to come after me”, says Jesus, “must take up his cross and follow me.” If you try to save your life, you will eventually lose it.

It is not up to me to determine who will sit at my right and at my left in the Kingdom. “I anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” and “If you receive each other as a child, you will in fact be receiving not only me, but the Father as well.”

Do not cause any of the little ones around you to sin; if you do, it would be better if you had not been born.”

Accept the Kingdom like a child ..... with arms open and with a trusting heart.

After you have kept all the commandments, then go sell what you have and give

what you gain to the poor.

“Don't rule it over others; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the servant of all.” Do not seek to be served, but to serve.

Seek the Lord. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the truth.

Do not take advantage of those weaker than yourself; give to them from the bottom of your treasure.

Those of you who participated in a funeral this past year, whether of those whose names were just called, or of those in another parish, you no doubt also heard words such as:

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

“In my father's house there are many rooms, and I have gone ahead to prepare a place for you.”

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven.”

“I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

Like some of the disciples, we may think and say, “Well who can do all this?” Who, in fact, is willing to try any of this?”

But then think of the thousands and thousands of refugees who continue to leave their home countries for lands they hardly know. How can anyone begin a walk of hundreds and hundreds of miles over mountains and through deserts .... with children in hand and even in their arms? How can anyone board an inflatable rubber dingy to cross the Mediterranean Sea for the island of Lesbos and Greece? They do this because they seek what is better, more stable, and certainly safer. They embark on these long and difficult journeys because they hold a vision of something better. Like them, we pick up our crosses, and we serve as Jesus served. We are willing to do this because we want to be with Jesus and His Father in the Kingdom of heaven. How can we do this ..... we do it with Jesus .... in, with and through Him.

(after some silence and dimming of lights)

As I live my life here on earth, O Jesus, help me keep my eyes on you.

Like me, once you were also separated from your Father, as you lived on this earth.

The one sacrifice of your life was offered for my sins ... and the sins of all.

Thank you for this.

Help me keep my will aligned with yours; make my life here a sacred journey .... a journey that will end in you ... a journey with you and through you.

Thank you for holding us all in your arms ..... both living and dead .... until we meet face to face in your Kingdom.