



In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges us to think about what we value most. He uses two parables to get his message across. In the first, a farm labourer discovers a treasure hidden in a field. He realises that it is a valuable find, that it will make him a wealthy man. He buries it again, and sells everything he owns in order to buy the field.

In the second, another man discovers a great treasure. But unlike the farm labourer, this man does not discover the treasure by accident. He has been searching for it. He is a merchant who deals in fine pearls. He knows exactly what he is looking for, and when he finds the most valuable pearl he has ever set eyes on, he is in no doubt what to do – he sells everything he owns so he can have that pearl. Pearls in the time of Jesus were the most valuable of all goods. Now that the merchant has that pearl of great value, he doesn't need to search any more.

Both the farm labourer and the merchant appreciate the value of what they have discovered. They are prepared to risk everything, to spend every penny they possess, in order to have it. Both know it's worth the risk, that it would be foolish to let the opportunity pass them by.

In these parables Jesus is asking if we perceive the kingdom of heaven in the same way. Do we see it as a treasure that is worth more than everything else we value in life? Are we prepared to give up everything, to risk everything, in order to have it? Jesus did. He gave up everything he valued – his family, his home – to do his Father's will and to preach the Good News. For Jesus, there was no treasure greater than doing his Father's will. He was even prepared to give up his life to hold onto it. As Christians, God and his kingdom must be our greatest treasure. It must mean more to us than anyone or anything else. ■

SAY

“Lord, give me the grace to recognise the treasure in my life and the strength not to sacrifice it for things that are worthless. Amen.”

PRAY

We live in a materialistic world, which defines happiness in terms of the size of one's bank account and the extent of one's possessions. Pray for yourself and others that you will have the wisdom to know what is truly important.

REFLECT

People have always taken risks in order to find treasure. Think of the 200,000 who took part in the great California Gold Rush of 1849. Or those who spend all they have on 'get rich quick' schemes or other ventures in the hope of striking it lucky. Think of an investor who gambles early on the success of a new company and who makes millions when the company is floated on the stock exchange.

Both the farm labourer and the merchant in today's Gospel know the value of what they've discovered. They are prepared to risk everything to have it because they know it's worth the risk.

Today's Gospel isn't about keeping a sharp eye out for hidden treasure or taking up a career as a venture capitalist. It is about values, priorities, knowing what's important, what our real treasure is. And for Christians the answer is clear: our treasure is the Kingdom of God. Our treasure is Jesus. If we follow him, imitate him, live his way, then we will find what we are looking for, the most valuable treasure of all. The gift of salvation is a treasure far more valuable than all the pearls in the sea. ■

DO

Think of the most valuable thing you own, possibly your house. Now think of the value of Jesus in today's Gospel. Even your house, even everything you own lumped together, counts for nothing compared to God and God's kingdom.



LEARN

For Christians the only treasure that matters is the Kingdom of God.

Wisdom is a gift of God.

PARISH OF DROMORE

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Parish website: www.stcolmans.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stcolmans

St Vincent de Paul Helpline: 07738838187

Rev Dr Frank Rice, Deacon - Mobile: 07746-842977

Parochial House Dromore - Tel: 02892-692218

Parish email address: office@stcolmans.org

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer: Patricia Carville 07789 917741

Seventeenth Sunday in ordinary Time

26th July 2020

Sunday Mass Times

St Colman's Dromore

Sunday, 11.00 am

Sunday Mass will continue to be broadcast live on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stcolmans)

All Saints, Ballela

Sunday, 9.45 am

Weekday masses

Mon, Tues and Fri: 9.30 am (St Colman's)

Thurs: 7.00 pm (All Saints)

Saturday: 10.00 am (St Colman's)

Ballela Anniversaries

Sun 26 – None

Sun 2 – Sam & Maisie Burns

Dromore Anniversaries

Sun 26 – None

Sun 2- None

Recently Baptised

Patrick Jerome Burns

Baptisms

Baptisms will also recommence with some restrictions. Only one baby (or set of twins) will be baptised in a ceremony, with a restricted number of family members present and observing social distance rules. Baptism will be held on a Sunday and to book contact the parish office.

Confirmation

You are asked to pray for the P7 children of St Colman's PS, Dromore. They have concluded their time at the school but before they commence their new school year, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on Saturday 22nd August at 4.00 pm in St Colman's Church, Dromore. There are 19 children to be confirmed and, in accordance with social distancing requirements, only the children and their sponsor and immediate family will be permitted to attend. So while not able to be present, the rest of the parish is invited to pray for them on this important day.

Moving towards the reopening of churches

Masses have now commenced. In response to the revision of the restrictions announced previously, the parish has conducted a risk assessment to consider the opening of our churches for worship. The following guidelines have been agreed:

- For the time being, parishioners are asked to share responsibility for maintaining a social distance of **2 metres**
- As the churches are indoor spaces, there will be a limit on the numbers permitted to attend any mass.
- The Sunday Obligation continues to be suspended and you are invited to attend on another day of the week: **two additional masses** have been added.
- Parishioners are asked to follow **guidance on notices** and from ushers regarding seating, directions of travel and use of facilities. An explanatory video is posted on our Facebook page.
- Parishioners are asked to use the **hand sanitisers** on entry to the churches.
- Parishioners are strongly encouraged to wear **face masks** in the churches.
- Bulletins and missalettes cannot be reused so please bring your copies home or place in bin at front door.
- The collection basket will **not** be passed around the church.

The above arrangements will apply to all celebrations (masses, baptisms, funerals, etc).

Donating to the parish

The current health crisis is having a serious impact on donations to many charities. The Diocese has set up an online donation facility on the diocesan website (www.dromorediocese.com) where you can donate to this parish or to clergy support, once or on a monthly basis.

Parishioners who choose to use their weekly envelopes as normal can **deposit them in the box at the entrance of the church**, before or after mass.

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Post-lockdown, can the Church return to 'business as usual'? by Dr Aoife McGrath

Dr McGrath is Director of Pastoral Theology at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth (the post occupied by the late Fr Martin McAlinden)

As we move tentatively forward, church doors are reopening for in-person, socially distanced liturgies. While for many this is a long-anticipated moment, we should ask ourselves are we truly ready? Our focus may well be to get back to 'business as usual,' but to what 'business' are we returning?

The 'newsworthy' impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the life of the church has been centred on the sacraments. This year Easter was celebrated remotely, and the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation were postponed until late summer/autumn. Baptisms and Weddings were likewise delayed. The most radical and tangible transformation has been to Funeral ceremonies and the daily or weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

In the era of lockdown, priests continued to serve their communities by celebrating Masses remotely, for the intentions of the faithful, either from empty churches or their own homes. The Mass came into our homes via radios, televisions, smartphones and computers. We watched, waited and prayed, in anticipation of being re-admitted to communal worship.

For some, these past months have been a fruitful time for creative and revitalised personal prayer practices. However for the majority, the absence of communal prayer and receiving the sacrament of Communion has been sorely felt.

As a lay theologian, I found the feast of Corpus Christi, on 14 June, particularly challenging. I sat alone in my house facing a screen, watching, as a priest celebrated Mass alone from his home. As he read from Deuteronomy, I wondered whether this pandemic was our 'vast and dreadful wilderness,' meant to humble us, not just for God to know our inner most hearts, but for us to know ourselves.

The feast usually speaks to me of our relationship with Christ and with all his baptised followers; of a food that nourishes us, his disciples, co-heirs of – and co-responsible for – Christ's mission throughout the world. This meaning is made tangible in our companionship, through our physical presence together, in our mutual sharing in the Eucharistic meal, and our collective sending forth.

This year, however, I felt only absence: the isolation of one individual facing another who could neither see me nor know that I was present with him. This absence was not just about me and my heart, nor only about me being united wholly with Christ. I remembered the words of Pope Benedict XVI, 'I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians.' (*Deus Caritas est* §14).

In this vision, love of God and love of neighbour cannot be separated. Being present together for the Eucharistic meal helps to nourish our relationships with each other, so that we can truly be united with God. But our living communion faces new challenges because of the coronavirus.

This evolving world we live in has opened up what some have called a 'twin consciousness,' at once a feeling of connectedness, mutuality, solidarity, and cooperation in the face of common adversity, and simultaneously an awakening of divisions and gross inequalities, competition for essential supplies, and survival of the fittest in failing economies.

Where is the church as a sign, instrument, and advocate of communion in such a world? When Pope John Paul II spoke of a 'spirituality of communion' he meant the ability to think of others in faith as 'those who are part of me'; the ability to share the joys and sufferings of others, to offer them 'deep and genuine friendship,' and 'make room' for them in our lives. The great challenge of this millennium, he said, was 'to make the Church the home and the school of communion' (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* §43). His words have taken on new meaning in 2020.

For the majority of Catholics, we have the first opportunity to participate in Mass and receive Eucharist since lockdown began. I wonder, following our experience of 'church' and Mass over these past four months, what meaning will the sacraments hold for us now? Will laypeople fall into the habit of watching/observing, while the priest is active/doing?

Will we fear spreading the virus so much, and be so used to our isolation, that our companionship is weakened? Will the Eucharist be nourishment for our individual spirituality, rather than nourishment of the Body of the Church for its wider mission? Will we choose to live a *spirituality of communion*, not just when we are gathered for Eucharist, but every day? How do we take responsibility for our share in this business? Can we give communion a home, and share our learning with others?