

When I was transferred to Holy Family in 2007 it was such a relief. That was not, I hasten to add, because of the people at my last assignment. They were just as great as here. It wasn't because I didn't like the Olympic Peninsula. It's a beautiful region. The 30,000 miles I put on my truck each year due to all the driving wasn't wonderful, but that wasn't it either.

The relief I felt when I came to this parish was due to that fact that it was only one parish. You see, at my last assignment I was Pastor of three parishes -- in Port Angeles, Forks, and Port Townsend, and a mission church in Clallam Bay. I had two assistant priests to help me, but I was in charge and responsible for all of it. That meant I was always racing around just trying to keep things going, making sure the sacraments were celebrated, the finances weren't tanking, etc. But it was really difficult to initiate any change or growth. That requires a focus and energy that I didn't have. I spent all my energy just ensuring the four communities continued to function.

But when I came here it was different. The number of families at Holy Family is actually larger than in all my previous parishes put together. And I do more funerals and I'm on more Archdiocesan committees now. But the key to the peace and underlying tranquility of this assignment is that it's only one parish. I can focus on just one thing, one parish community. It's a big thing, but it's only one thing. That makes all the difference. The new initiatives we've started here are due, in part, to that ability to focus my efforts.

I mention that experience of this liberating relief and peace in relation to two parables Jesus tells in today's Gospel, comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to the Treasure in the field and the Pearl of Great Price. Today I want to preach about what Jesus wants to teach us through the person in each parable, who "goes and sells all that he has and buys" the treasure he's found.

Jesus always wants His Disciples to concentrate on just one thing in life – following Him. Think about Peter and Andrew, James and John,

at the lakeside dropping their nets and following Jesus. Matthew gets up from the customs post and leaves it all behind. Jesus tells the Rich Young Man to go and sell everything and follow Him. According to the mind of Christ, following Him is never a partial or part-time thing.

But, for many of us, being a Catholic Christian is a part time thing. We do our family thing, our job, our hobbies, our volunteering, and our church life. They're all good, but we're divided by them. We have many different goals and dreams. And they pull us in different directions. Our faith in Jesus is a good – but not the Good.

Here I think about my last assignment where I couldn't really move the parishes forward spiritually because I was so divided in my efforts and energy. I didn't have just one focus. I think that is how many of us are in our personal spiritual lives. We don't go forward because there isn't just that one focus in our lives. We have multiple priorities – and they sometimes clash. This is part of the reason prayer, daily or even weekly mass, service commitments, are so difficult for us to

schedule and persevere in. We have a hard time judging what's most important when we must decide what we're going to do with our time.

A good working definition of a true Disciple of Christ is someone who has dropped his or her nets to follow Jesus, someone who can honestly say, "I have gone and sold everything to buy the treasure, the pearl." This doesn't have to mean I've literally sold all my possessions and joined a monastery. But it does mean that all my eggs are in the Jesus-basket. All that I hope for is in Him. I'm all in.

Here we come back to the first reading and King Solomon's great wish – for the wisdom to rule as God desires. Note, that when Solomon put's all his focus and hope on doing God's will, God throws in everything else as well. That's what selling everything and buying the treasure does. We spend all we have, and in return receive all God has.

When I have ordered all my activities and priorities according to how they fit in with following Jesus this is the virtue called in the Catholic spiritual tradition "simplicity of life." To be simple is to have no

aim or goal in my thoughts and actions but to please and love God. It means my parenting decisions, job decisions, moral decisions, financial decisions, are all based on my striving towards Jesus and His Kingdom. That sounds hard. But dropping one's nets brings with it a great inner peace and tranquility.

This brings up the difference between being busy and being complicated. Our lives may be busy with stuff, but if we're focused on doing what's pleasing to Christ our lives won't be complicated. That fractured sense of being torn in different directions – is what burns us out. Saints are usually very busy people, but they are also very simple.

Living the simplicity that comes with Discipleship more than makes up for whatever sacrifices Christ will ask of us by following Him. It's like me coming to Holy Family as Pastor. Yes, in some ways it's harder here. There's more to do. But deep down it's easier on the soul because I can concentrate on the one thing – growth in Christ.

Have you dropped your nets yet? Or are you still divided among many good, but disconnected, pursuits and goals in life? Is your life simple – or too complicated? Jesus doesn't want to be just one among many good projects in our lives. He is the one thing necessary: the standard by which we measure everything else. He is the treasure. Our happiness consists in following Him simply, with our whole hearts.