

Homily for July 25, 1999
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Father Charles Bowes

I Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

We'll make the toughest decisions – if only we can be sure.

Big decisions are not easy to make. We fuss and ponder, we talk and we question, scrutinize, agonize over life's important choices: where to work; whom to love; what God to believe in; how to act. And after we've said "Yes" to this or that, after we've made the big choices – they turn out to be...well, different...not quite as we had hoped; not the same as we had envisioned – sometimes better, sometimes worse.

The job...the love...the religion – sometimes the decisions we made with all our vigor, the commitments so total that every ounce of heart and mind went into them – sometimes we re-think, undo and then do again elsewhere or try to or would like to. And, on the other hand, sometimes our choices become so graciously fulfilling that we can only think about them in the silence of a grateful heart.

So when today in Matthew 13, Jesus says God's Kingdom is like a farmhand or a merchant who sells all he has to buy the field of hidden treasure or the pearl of exquisite beauty – when Jesus says, "Big

decisions cost you everything, we say, "Yeah, tell us about it. We know what big decisions, what life choices cost. The problem for us is how do you know when you've got the treasure? How do you know that this pearl, this job, this friend, this religion, this action is the right one, the best, the deepest, dearest longing of our heart? When do you know that this choice is unquestionably the best choice, the one which is worth the cost of everything?" ...and we do want to give everything. We do want to surrender totally, to invest ourselves completely. But we're scared, we're cautious. We hold back at times the commitment we long to give. We want to be sure. And Jesus says, "It's safe to risk. Here's my death and resurrection on it." And we say, "Yeah, yeah, Lord, but there's a lot of pain, a lot of stumbling to get to resurrection."

So we bring to communion today this longing to spend ourselves totally and our fear of doing so. And we give praise for the hope God gives us in Jesus and we pray for the strength to choose and to choose wisely and, even when broken, to risk choosing over and over again.

There is a story about a car dealer who owned a Chrysler dealership in the tiny town of Bug Tussel, Oklahoma. One day he discovered a lamp in the back

seat of a car left as a trade-in. He rubbed the lamp and a genie appeared.

“I’ll give you one wish,” said the genie, “but you must decide now, this instant.”

The car dealer thought a moment and said, “I want my car dealership to be no longer in this little town but in a big city.”

“Done,” said the genie. And with that the car dealer found himself standing in his showroom located now, not in Bug Tussel, but in the middle of downtown Tokyo.

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