



CELEBRATING AT HOME

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Close encounters with the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:44-52)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
the Body of Christ in this world.

Lord Jesus,
you guide us in the way of truth.

Lord Jesus,
you reveal to us God's love.

Lord Jesus,
you heal us and make us whole.

Scripture Reading *(Matthew 13:44-52)*

Jesus said to the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

Have you understood all this?' They said, 'yes'. And he said to them, 'Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.'

Reflection - *Close encounters with the Kingdom of God*

In the Gospel, Jesus compares the Kingdom to treasure hidden in a field, to a merchant on the lookout for fine pearls and to a fisherman's dragnet which brings in a very mixed catch.

The point of the parables is the behaviour of the people in them.

In the first parable someone stumbles across the treasure by chance. Sometimes that can happen to us, too. We are happily living our lives when, by chance, something happens or we meet someone and our lives change for ever. On reflection we discern the presence of God in that encounter.

In the second parable the Kingdom is found after a long search. It is a reassurance that those who seek always find, and those who knock on the door will always have it opened.

The third parable introduces a note of reality: the Kingdom is a mixture of all kinds of things and some sorting out is needed.

In the first two parables the joy and delight of those who find (experience) the Kingdom is obvious. It is so strong that nothing is spared in order to possess the Kingdom.

The purpose of parables is not to provide answers to questions but to get us to think.

As we know, the Kingdom of God is not a 'thing' or a 'place'. It is an experience or an encounter with the life of God.

In the life and ministry of Jesus many people experienced the Kingdom through their encounter with him which brought dignity, love, forgiveness, release from illness, disability, guilt, shame and even death. Jesus made present the reign of God's grace for people in all kinds of need.

While we are sometimes overwhelmed by the experience of the presence of God within our hearts, more often we experience the reign of God's grace through others. These people, like Jesus, somehow make present, make real the presence and action of God especially (but not only) in our moments of need.

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Having experienced that, we too, want to possess, to find and hold onto, the Source which touched us so deeply and brought us hope, comfort and freedom.

The kingdom, as we are reminded in the third parable, is a mixed bag of good and rotten fish, saints and sinners. It is not the task of members of the kingdom to judge; the final sorting out belongs to God alone. In the meantime, patience and tolerance must guide the practice of those in the kingdom.

The people of the kingdom seek the things that are of real value in life. They are prepared to make great sacrifices in order to make them their own. They live their lives with virtue and wisdom and their lives are a blessing for others as they draw from their rich store of values and virtues, of wisdom and grace. They never stop seeking the things of real value, the riches of the kingdom and they never stop making God present for those around them.

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God,
attend to our needs with a listening heart.

Bless and make whole our world.
Unite us in respect and concern for one another.

In these changing and challenging times,
may your Spirit continue to come to life in us and in our world.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Blessed are you, O Lord our treasure.
You are the hope that sustains us
and the life that empowers us
in these changing and challenging times.

May your Spirit continue to come to life in us
and in our world, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
carry us gently through the week ahead.
Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.



The Carmelites
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