

## The Summum Bonum

By Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

In Christian philosophy there is a something called *summum bonum* or the supreme good. The *summum bonum* is believed to be not just the best thing one could ever have but also that good which contains in itself or brings along with it all other good and desirable things, that which completely satisfies the otherwise insatiable desires of the human heart. The *summum bonum* sounds like an abstract idea but it can be illustrated with a childhood experience in a typical African village.

It is not uncommon that a child be asked to round up a mother hen with a brood of, say, seven chickens. The child, invariably, would start with the small chickens. But as the chickens run and duck the child would fall over so many times before catching even one chicken. Worse still the mother hen, to defend her little ones, would come after the child with her beak and claws. After so many falls with little result to show for it, the child gives up the futile pursuit and it is then that the child's mother comes to the rescue. First she would get a large basket, lure the mother hen into the basket and cover her up. The mother hen safely covered in the basket would then chuck for the chickens and they would all gather around the basket. Raise the basket a little and the chickens all rush into it to be with their mother hen. In a couple of minutes you've got the mother hen with her brood of seven chickens. In this example the baby chickens can be compared to the many good things of life and the mother hen to the *summum bonum*, the supreme good which brings in its train all other goods.

Today's readings invite us to ask ourselves this important question: Among all the things I desire in life, which are the chickens and which one is the mother hen? What is the one desire of my life that once found will bring all my other legitimate desires in its train? The gospel calls this ultimate desire of the human heart "the kingdom of God." **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"** (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom of God is God's reign in our hearts, in our lives, in our homes, in our society, and in our

world. The one who finds the kingdom of God finds everything desirable besides. That is why it is compared to hidden treasure in a field which a man finds, then goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. Or a precious pearl which a merchant finds, then goes and sells everything he has and buy this one pearl. In fact, these parables invite us not only to seek **first** the kingdom of God but to seek **only** the kingdom because with the kingdom of God comes every other good thing that we desire and long for.

Solomon in the first reading is a good illustration of a man who went for the mother hen rather than the chickens. As a young king Solomon had many legitimate needs. He needed wealth, military might, fame, security, prosperity, long life and happiness. But when God asked him to ask for one thing, he asked for the *summum bonum*, wisdom from above. He knew that with wisdom comes every other good thing he needed and desired. And God confirmed his choice in these words:

**Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. (1 Kings 3:11-13)**

If God came in your dream tonight and asked you to ask for one thing and one thing only, what would you ask for? Would you ask for wealth or success in business or love life? Would you have the wisdom of Solomon to ask for the reign of God in your personal and business life? Is the kingdom of God so important to you that you are prepared to sell and part with all you have in order to have it? Remember, the kingdom of God is not just one among so many other good and desirable things. It is the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, the one and only good thing we shall ever need to achieve total satisfaction and fulfillment in life. If you have the kingdom of God you have everything and if you don't have the kingdom of God you have nothing.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

1 Kings 3:5-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

July 27, 2014

# 靈 修 生 活

## 唯 一 的 需 要

張 春 申 神 父

那時候，耶穌對群眾說：「天國好像埋在地裡的寶藏；有人發現了，就把它藏起來，高興地去變賣他所有的一切，買了那塊地。」

「天國又好像一個尋購貴重珍珠的商人，他發現了一顆很貴重的珍珠，就去變賣他所有的一切，買了那顆珍珠。」（瑪十三 44-46）

耶穌宣講時，喜歡應用不少日常生活的事情作為天國的比喻。的確，這樣比較容易令人了解。但比喻還有別的作用，由於它的具體、切身；引人設身處地，猶如身歷其境，因此非常容易立刻產生反應。我們今天聽到的兩則極短的比喻，在意義方面幾乎完全相同，而且極為簡單。不過如果能夠接觸到發現寶藏，以及發現珍珠的人之經驗，也許我們對於天國的意義，不再只是頭腦中的了解，而是整個人的反應。這樣，兩則極短的比喻，真能令人回味無窮。

一個商人尋購貴重的珍珠，代表一種渴望、一種需要。人生具有好多不同的渴望與需要，其中最為重要的一種，也是不少人經驗過的，是宗教的渴望與需要。或者是在生、老、病、死的問題前；或者是在生命的短促，渴求無限的經驗中；或者是愛到極點，難以分手時；或者是苦不堪言，無言問蒼天時，誰也都想尋找一個答案，回答那些人生的基本問題。耶穌籍着比喻，刺激聽眾尋找人生、歷史等等的解答。如同覓寶和尋購珍珠的人一般。

覓寶的人發現了寶藏，商人發現了珍珠。耶穌的聽眾，今天的聽眾都知道寶藏和珍珠是什麼。它使人高興，使人滿足。可是兩則比喻都說天國是埋在地裡的寶藏，貴重的珍珠。於是不能不問天國是什麼？它能使人高興嗎？它能使人滿足嗎？原來天國便是耶穌宣講的天父的救恩計劃之實現，是天父的仁愛、憐憫、許諾和要求。它答覆生、老、病、死的問題，因為生是來自天父，老是成熟於天父的懷中，病是與主一起受苦，死是安息於主懷。天國滿足人心無限的渴求，是永不消失的愛，是支持痛苦者的聲音。

天國實在是寶藏和珍珠，它使尋求解答人生問題的人高興滿足，因為天父答覆了宗教的渴望與需要。耶穌籍着比喻，也在詢問群眾，詢問我們今天聽到福音的人，天國真的為我們是寶藏、是珍珠嗎？信仰基督的人，真的如同發現了寶藏、發現了珍珠那樣的滿足高興嗎？這是我們必須反躬自省的。

為了那塊埋有寶藏的地，為了那顆貴重的珍珠，變賣所有的一切，去買地買珍珠，這是急不能待，立刻應當去做的事。否則，說不定失去良機，再也得不到寶藏，買不下珍珠。聆聽耶穌的宣講，知道天國已經來臨的門徒，在比喻的過程中，發現天國的要求：要求當下拿定主意，相信耶穌傳報的一切，接受在自己生命中的天父，要求立刻改變自己的生活方向，視耶穌基督為唯一的需要，其他所有的一切再也不是捨棄不掉的事物。事實上，耶穌也向與祂同行的群眾說過：「你們中不論是誰，如不捨棄他的一切所有，不能做我的門徒」。今天要求變賣所有一切為了買地買珍珠的比喻，促使我們聽了天國道理的人：信從福音、悔改、捨棄一切跟隨基督，以祂為唯一的需要。

兩則短短的比喻，如果我們只用頭腦去了解意義，那是非常簡單的。不過比喻並非只是教導一些真理，而且還有引人進入氣氛與情緒的作用；幫助我們如同覓寶的人和尋購珍珠的人一般，甚至比他們更加認真：探討人生的基本問題，發現真正答覆了一切的天國，於是立刻改變自己，按照耶穌的要求而生活。

摘自「妙音送長風」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 七 月 廿 七 日

列上:3:5-12; 羅 8:28-30; 瑪 13:44-52