



Reflection 17th Week of the Year 26 / 27 July
by Mgr Daniel McHugh

The Treasure Beyond Price

On reading this Sunday's Gospel where the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a "treasure hidden in a field", my mind went back to the discovery near Lichfield, of the Staffordshire Hoard in 2009. We British have a great interest in searching for hidden treasures and this find was one of the most significant in modern times. A hoard of magnificent gold and silver, intricately worked, items worn or carried by the leaders in battle, including some religious symbols. A picture of a gold pin worn (possibly by the King) to fasten his cloak, is to be seen on the Burning Bush Vlog, produced for this Sunday's pause for reflection and prayer. Some of the find is displayed in the Midland Art Gallery, and well worth a visit.

In these days, you might wonder why such a valuable hoard of gold and silver items are hidden in a field, but of course, back in the 7th Century, a time before Banks, it was a way of keeping something precious to be picked up later. Around the same time, St Chad would have been at Lichfield and you may remember later in the 1600s, his relics were quietly hidden away at the time of the Reformation, to be discovered later, at Sedgley, where they had been carefully hidden for safekeeping. Now of course, they are our precious treasure from earlier times in St Chad's Cathedral.

Going back to the parable in today's Gospel, you can see that the story told by Our Lord of the discovery of the treasure hidden in a field was very understandable and meaningful to people of his day. Treasures in those days were frequently hidden for safekeeping, to be returned to or forgotten to be discovered later. Whoever found such treasure, would have plenty to celebrate as did the man who made some millions from his find in Staffordshire.

The Kingdom of God is shown by Our Lord to be something worth searching for and to be celebrated once found! It is St Paul in the second reading of this Sunday's Mass, who has more to say about becoming one with Our Lord in His Kingdom. We can take so much for granted when we are members of His Family, sharing His life, something that begins with Baptism, and that will end in the glory of Heaven.

I watched a video of the cleaning and piecing together of the Staffordshire Hoard: the excitement of those who were studying the intricate workmanship and relating it to the history of the day in 7th Century Mercia, was palpable.

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The readings should lead us to think about the awe and wonder of the Kingdom of God, the intention of Jesus in illustrating the Kingdom with the parables of the discovery of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price that the merchant sells everything to buy. I imagine Princess Beatrice, wearing the tiara worn by her Grandmother, the Queen, at her wedding recently, was very conscious of the honour given to her by this gift for her special day (even if it was only a loan!).

There comes a time for us to become more conscious of the treasure, the pearl of great price, we have been given in being Brothers and Sisters of Our Lord Jesus, to study, reflect, give thanks, and of course, to understand to what we have been called.

In the Burning Bush Vlog on the Website of the Ethnic Chaplaincies (Our Lady of Good Counsel) for Sunday's Mass, we have included a picture of the painting by Domenico Fetti in the National Gallery, of the face of Jesus left on the veil of Veronica, on the Road to Calvary. The original veil (often called the Sudarium) is kept high above the Altar in St Peter's in Rome and brought out with other special relics, on the 5th Sunday of Lent each Year, to bless the Faithful.

It's a most striking painting, and for me, a reminder of who we have been called to be one with through Baptism. In our vlog for this occasion, we have accompanied the picture with the hymn "Do Not Be Afraid For I Have Redeemed You". As disciples of Jesus in His Kingdom, we give thanks for the Treasure stored up in our hearts, not to be kept hidden, but to be brought out for others in our day.

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