

S. Susan Marie's Final Vows Reflection – May 26, 2018

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Is this not a wonderful day? It is a day of celebration.... of commitment...of God's faithful love... of the encounter between Susan Marie and her God and the change that occurs in one's life when that encounter happens. It is also the celebration of the communal call we each responded to a few or many years ago. As Vision and Journey says so well, "We come together in God's name to seek Christ in our midst and to manifest his presence.....We call each other to continual conversion and we enrich our capacity for service..... We work toward the fullness of creation that is God's plan."

Today our Gospel speaks in parables..stories that teach a lesson.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant's search for fine pearls. A pearl has always fascinated me. It forms deep within the oyster, a response to an impulse deep within itself. Over the years the pearl grows into a beautiful orb, a gemstone unique to itself. Even after it is harvested, the pearl as it ages, develops its own internal glow, and so too, do those who respond to the impulse of God's great love for them. God's love begins as a simple impulse deep within each person. Over the years we each come to know God in our own way. We come to understand more fully the power of God's love; we come to know the fullness of God's love for us and for all of creation. St. Paul says it so well, "we have the power to comprehend what are the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love, we come to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, and we come to be filled with all the fullness of God." This is the pearl of great value that causes us to sell all in order to possess it.

To come to know the great love God has for us and all creation and not to share what we have is like a piece of art work, unseen...a piece of music, unheard...a piece of great literature, unread... or a scientific discovery, unpublished. God's love is meant to be shared with others...that is what we are called to be and do as followers of Jesus and of Francis. Francis tells us: "It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching." Our walking is our daily lives. It is how we can bring God's love to others through our ministry no matter what that ministry may be. It is the willingness to share ourselves with others and to be influenced by others' sharing with us. It is the openness to allow the God within to be seen and to see the God within others. It is the willingness to help others and to be helped by others. It is the openness needed to live in Community and to be part of Community. It is the willingness to walk each day into what is the Gospel message of that day all the while knowing, all the while believing, that the love of God is with us.

The kingdom of heaven is like buried treasure in a field. The ones that found it sold all they had in order to buy the field. I have wondered what that treasure might be but we are never told.....could it be the pearl?...could it be that we come to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge? The passage makes the point that the whole field

was bought, that in order to gain the treasure, everything around the treasure has to be included. When you look across a field, it often looks really beautiful... wild flowers, stands of trees, lots of green grass maybe even a flowing stream. You find yourself drawn into the beauty, the serenity, the power of the creator. You might even say to yourself, I've got to pick some of these flowers, or maybe sit by that stream so you start to walk the field. And that's when you find the stones and rock to climb over, the gentle roll of the landscape is really a group of hills and valleys to work your way through, and there is no clear path to the stream. But you also know that this is where you will encounter God...this is where your life will be changed in ways too many to be imagined. This is where you will encounter God's people, where you will live and work and pray with them. This is where you will come to know God's love for you and for all of creation. Perhaps the field is really the treasure.

The Gospel speaks of "a merchant" searching for the pearl. Sometimes that search can be and should be a personal one. We need quiet and solitude to hear the voice of God speaking within. But the Gospel also says "the **ones** who discovered" the treasure and "**they** sold all to buy the field". I am taking the liberty to speak for all of us now.... Susan Marie, you are not alone walking the field...we (all of us here and all of your Community) are with you. We will walk with you through the blessings and the challenges. We will pray with you and support you in all you do. You can rely on us as we will rely on you. We will come together to seek Jesus in our midst and to manifest his presence to all, as we continue the journey...following the footsteps of Jesus whose vision of peace of justice brings new life to all places in all times.

This is truly a wonderful day.