

- How many of you when you were kids made treasure maps and dug into the ground looking for buried treasure?
- When you're out and about some old homestead or some old building, how often do you look around and think: "*I wonder if there is some jar of coins hidden in a wall or buried out here...*"... and maybe you'll kick up an old board or look behind a wall. Just in case.
- Now imagine being the plowman in Jesus' day.
- You're just a poor man in a field plowing behind some moody oxen...sweating, dusty, calloused hands, aching joints...dodging bovine land mines...no end in sight...day after day...
- And then your plow hits something hard... "*another durn rock*", you think...but it turns out to be a large jar full of gold coins.
- Your world changes completely. Within your grasp is rest from backbreaking labor forever. And you go and sell all you have so that you might have that treasure.
- Or the merchant going around looking for deals.
- And one day he finds a tremendous deal on a beautiful pearl. It costs a lot, but its value far more than he ever dreamed he would have...and he tucks it away as his security.
- Isn't that what we long for—the relief that comes with the assurance of security?
- Well...we know that our treasure, our reward, our eternal happiness and security is not in our earthly lives...but we can glimpse it...in the quiet beauty and smells after a rain, in the magnificent expanse of the clear night sky, in the squeal of delight of the child on Christmas morning...in the helping hand offered in need...in the hug of a beloved.
- Because even the hardest, toughest thug delights in the embrace of his grandmother.
- As for security...we have the promise of God Himself to His faithful...His love absolutely proven by Jesus upon the cross.

- But our true treasure is not here on earth. We may see shadows of it, like in Plato's famous cave...but the brilliance of Heaven is beyond us...and yet awaits us.
- And we, like the plowman...like the merchant...must first go out and sell all that we cling to so stubbornly in order to buy it...rid ourselves of our pettiness, our arrogance, our selfishness—in short...all of our immaturity of spirit.
- We must give our time, talents and earthly treasure to feed the hungry, heal the sick, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, to give hope to the hopeless...and to bring to God those who do not yet know Him. That is the greatest charity of all.
- For Jesus exhorts us: *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* (Matt 6:19-21)
- Where is the map to this inexhaustible treasure?
- In the Bible...in the teaching of the Church...and in prayer. They are what guide us home.
- Yet the way is not an easy one. Jesus warns us: *“...the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life...”* (Mat 7:14 RSV)
- It is a road littered with obstacles and roadblocks which present culture and opinion and temptation throw against us...but which we defeat if we remain faithful to God...loving Him (and, therefore, loving what is truly good) with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.
- And toward that goal, we pray with Solomon as in our first reading: *“Give your servant, an understanding heart...to distinguish right from wrong.”*
- The answer to that prayer?
- *“The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him:
“Because you have asked for this—
not for a long life for yourself,
nor for riches,
nor for the life of your enemies,*

*but for understanding so that you may know what is right—
I do as you requested.”*

- And Jesus tell us: *“If you then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* (Luk 11:13 RSV)
- So we keep our mind’s eye focused upon our goal as we journey toward eternal life, for always we hear St. Paul: *“...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him...”* (1Cor 2:9 RSV)
- Speaking of wisdom...as we close Natural Family Planning Week this weekend, I pray you child-bearing-age couples re-center yourselves upon the treasure that is your married life...which depends of the whole being of each spouse.
- I literally lie awake nights trying to think of ways to persuade people of the importance and joy of adhering to the will of God through NFP rather than contraception in spacing children.
- I know that many will not alter their use of contraception, but consider this point of history.
- Paul VI led the Second Vatican Council into what many believe were very liberal reforms.
- But one thing he would not alter is the immemorial teaching on contraception...even though he was criticized severely.
- And even to the end of his life, he never wavered in believing he had done right...and some have told me that his encyclical addressing this—*Humanae Vitae*—was life-changing in the realizations that it help them discover.
- And I tell you, that after I preached about NFP last weekend, men and women who have practiced it told me: *“Father, if they only knew what a difference it makes to your marriage!”*

- NFP practitioners become its greatest advocates.
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- Like I said last week, wives tend to be more accepting of NFP than husbands.
- But do pills and IUDs and such work better than NFP?
- No; they're just easier...and require no need to sacrifice.
- But just one of the wonderful things about NFP is that the husband learns so much about his wife's body and physiology.
- So guys: Realize that your wife is a God-created Steinway piano...and as such, would she not long for the artist who appreciates the full range of beauty that she can provide?
- God has created the woman in her whole beauty for a purpose.
- If you want to think of it in terms of evolution, then did not evolution and natural selection bring woman to their current point of perfection for a reason?
- And yet contraception dampens that wholeness of that life-giving, God-given beauty and natural design.
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- Your wife is the beautiful instrument; be the Rachmaninoff.
- Learn the full symphony that is your wife...from the quiet playful movements of Mozart to the thunder of Tchaikovsky to the exuberant ecstasy of the Ode to Joy...each movement contributing (and essential) to the beauty of the whole.
- Yes, to learn to play well takes effort and practice and patience... but aren't all good things worth the effort? That is the difference between chopsticks and Chopin...between the boy, and Beethoven.
- And when you master the true melody which is your wife's body, then you will truly be able to make beautiful music together... music which will be heard even in Heaven.

Reading 1

[1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12](#)

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night.
God said, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.”
Solomon answered:
“O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king
to succeed my father David;
but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act.
I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen,
a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted.
Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart
to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.
For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?”

The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request.
So God said to him:
“Because you have asked for this—
not for a long life for yourself,
nor for riches,
nor for the life of your enemies,
but for understanding so that you may know what is right—
I do as you requested.
I give you a heart so wise and understanding
that there has never been anyone like you up to now,
and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

R. (97a) Lord, I love your commands.

I have said, O LORD, that my part
is to keep your words.
The law of your mouth is to me more precious
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Let your kindness comfort me
according to your promise to your servants.
Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

For I love your command
more than gold, however fine.
For in all your precepts I go forward;
every false way I hate.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Wonderful are your decrees;

therefore I observe them.
The revelation of your words sheds light,
giving understanding to the simple.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Reading II

[Rom 8:28-30](#)

Brothers and sisters:

We know that all things work for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.
For those he foreknew he also predestined
to be conformed to the image of his Son,
so that he might be the firstborn
among many brothers and sisters.
And those he predestined he also called;
and those he called he also justified;
and those he justified he also glorified.

Gospel

[Mt 13:44-52 or 13:44-46](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.
When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.
Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea,
which collects fish of every kind.
When it is full they haul it ashore
and sit down to put what is good into buckets.
What is bad they throw away.
Thus it will be at the end of the age.
The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous
and throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

“Do you understand all these things?”

They answered, “Yes.”

And he replied,

“Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven
is like the head of a household
who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”