

**“The Best Decision is to know the Lord”**  
**Homily by Bishop Felipe Estévez for the**  
**Retreat of Discerners and Seminarians at Marywood Retreat Center**  
**17 Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**July 30, 2017**

1Kgs 3: 5, 7-12; Rom 8:28-30; Mt 13:44-46

If you want to be free, make good decisions. David’s son had a wonderful dream. Struggling with issues of responsibility and being so young, prays for the wisdom of the heart, to make good decisions, make good choices and good discernment. And God provides-Deus Providebit - God wants him to be the best decision maker.

God always wants the best for us. God created us for excellence. St. Irenaeus said it best, “the glory of God is man fully alive.” This saying is often quoted but what is usually not said is the second part of the saying, “And man becomes fully alive by the knowledge of God.” The image of the Sistine Chapel shows the transcendental touch (echoed in San José Parish, Jacksonville, and sanctuary).

Take the word lucky. Most think you are lucky if you win the lottery, if you gain acceptance to an Ivy League University if you find a dream girl worthy of marriage, a great business deal, etc. But you and I know you are lucky when you are blessed knowing the Lord Jesus. That encounter is truly significant and life changing. That is the pearl of great price. The Gospel of Matthew tells us this morning once you find the hidden pearl, you sell all that you have, to embrace it forever! Unless you sell all that you have, you do not get the pearl. There is a cost related to the total gift of self!

The pearl of knowing and loving the Lord with passion is what being a disciple, and missionary is. We hear each has a vocation. Our vocation is to be a disciple and missionary as Pope Francis reminds us in the *Joy of the Gospel*. I am a missionary not because I like FOCUS but because I am baptized:

I know You and I want others to know You.

I love You and I want others to love You. I cannot be but engaged, committed, apostolic!

Alert! There are danger zones around us. When we get distracted and confused being overly concerned with the tools, the means forgetting the mission. Mgr. John McMahon, director of Field Education for St. Vincent de Paul, would often say, “Seminarians watch out. It is not the rectory that is the main concern, but God’s people, the parish. Our passion is serving God’s people, not our comfort and satisfactions.”

Jesus said in Luke 12: 49, “I have come to bring fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled.” The Eucharistic Lord is that fire, for it transforms my life into his life. Paul said it perfectly, “(I have found the pearl), it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in Me.” Like Mary, I have become a Magnificat, a doxology that fills me to the brim!