

Later this month Kansas City will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Westport. The sites of the battle were near Loose Park, the Blue River, Swope Park, and Westport. That year, 1864, Fr. Bernard Donnelly was working at the old St. Regis log cabin church where the cathedral stands today in downtown Kansas City. Kansas City was a war zone. Our population would fall from 6000 to 1000 that year. As the soldiers marched in, the people were afraid of a run on the banks, so they gave their jewelry and money to Fr. Donnelly for safekeeping. He took the treasure, put it in a box, buried it, and spent the rest of his life trying to remember where it was. It may still be under a parking lot down there. Fr. Donnelly never again found the treasure he wanted to share.

The rich man in today's parable knew exactly where his treasure was, but he would not share it with the poor. The Gospel implies that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor, and the rich may share in it if they treat the poor with kindness. It's a tragedy when the wealthy do not share what they have.

Pope John Paul II described the world's economy in these terms. In his recent encyclical, "On Social Concerns," he says that rich nations have helped poor nations by loaning them money, but now the program has become counterproductive. Poor nations must export what money they have and they have no hope of refinancing. The Pope calls this the "world debt crisis." It's another example of today's parable: how the rich do not share with the poor.

Now, the parable can also be applied to other kinds of wealth. Like Father Donnelly, we all hold a treasure inside us. We're all rich in something we're able to share. Let me show you some treasure chests.

This is the first. It's painted by hand. It's filled with gifts from friends. Gifts make us rich. There are two ways to spend this treasure. We may compliment our friends and we may thank them. But some people close the treasure and keep it to themselves.

This is the second. It's inlaid pearl. It's filled with faith. Faith makes us rich. There are two ways to spend this treasure, too. We may worship God at church, and we may tell others about our faith. But some people close the treasure and keep it to themselves.

This is the third. Two human hands. They are filled with love. Love makes us rich. There's only one way to spend this treasure, and that's to give it away. But some people close the treasure, and keep it to themselves.

These treasure chests are magic. No matter how much we spend they never go empty. The rich will share the kingdom of God if we treat the poor with kindness.