

The Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - The Wisdom of the Kingdom of Heaven July 26, 2020.

Modern society often seeks solutions, but most times it has stopped or missed seeking wisdom. This Sunday's readings begin with Solomon's request for Wisdom and conclude with a summation of the Lord's teaching on the parables on wisdom.

The First Reading (1 Kings 3:5, 7-12) recalls why King Solomon was considered one of the wisest kings of Israel, so much so that almost all the wisdom literature in the Old Testament was believed to have been written by him. His father David had established a united and prosperous kingdom. It was a tough act to follow. When the Lord offered Solomon help as he began to reign, he didn't ask for wealth, power, military strength. He knew something would help him address them all: **An understanding heart that could distinguish right from wrong. Moral wisdom would not only ensure that he was a good king, but that the good of his subjects under his leadership would endure as well because the common good is just as important as the good of the individual.** An excellent example for leaders nowadays!!!

In the Second Reading (Romans 8:28-39), St. Paul reminds us that **if we want things to work out, we must love God in all things. Love for God is the wisest course of action.** Complex situations, difficulties, and trials all bear the risk of separating us from God if we distance ourselves from him in those moments. Social distance is not required between us and God!! Throughout salvation history, God has taught us how to face all these things, and finally the Son came and showed us how to face them all the way to Calvary. **In Our Lord, we find embodied all the moral wisdom for which Solomon could have hoped, but something even more: the spiritual wisdom and power to be holy.** The Lord calls everyone to holiness, and those who respond to the call are put back on track through the grace of justification and, if they persevere in holiness, aided by grace, they will one day be glorified.

The three parables in the Gospel (Matthew 13:44-52), summarize and reflect on **the moral and spiritual wisdom that the Lord has not only woven into creation but revealed and announced: the Kingdom of heaven.** First, the **hidden treasure is our faith** which tells us we are heirs to the kingdom of God. It is valuable and important and should be our main concern in life. God, above all else, should be our priority in life. **The Kingdom of heaven put everything we are and have into perspective. When we wisely invest ourselves completely the returns are unimaginable.**

In the second parable, the Kingdom of heaven is like **finding a great pearl.** The Kingdom of heaven is not something totally different from the "treasures" we hold and experience in life. **When we seek the true, the good, and the beautiful in this life, we are paving the way for the Kingdom, already present in those things, to come to full fruition.** Pearls actually get their start in oysters because something is irritating the oyster. When a grain of sand or a bit of floating food slips in between one of the two shells of the oyster, it starts secreting a substance called nacre, the same substance that lines the inside of its shell, in order to cover the sand and eliminate the irritation. This process takes as little as six months or for years if the oyster is not harvested. Layer after layer of nacre slowly form a pearl. **"Pearls of wisdom"** is a well-worn expression: **we can learn so much from our difficulties and trials, and when we face them with wisdom we grow in wisdom from them as well.** Not all pearls come out perfectly round: applying wisdom to our lives can be messy, but it is always fruitful.

The final parable reminds us that **the Kingdom of heaven will come fully for everyone one day.** The Kingdom is not only the work of salvation, it includes all the other natural good that in some way result from that work, a healthy society, solid families, true

concern for the spiritual and material needs of others, etc. We can be actively working to be a part of it and to extend it to the rest of the world. We need wisdom to understand the past to deal with the present. I like to keep things for memory sake. I still have boxes and boxes of my stuff from Hong Kong: elementary school report cards, high school year books, university assignments, My wife has spent time "thinning" them out. Finally, with a little "wisdom", I realize that **to handle the past is to know what to keep and what to discard.**

Nowadays, especially during home-isolation, WiFi becomes a top priority in our lives. Servers are competing with each other offering plans with more GBs of storage space for less cost. The Internet is a tremendous accumulation of information, some of it good, some suspicious and some contradictory. It's also a virtual community where people exchange information, help others or do harm. While it can store up photos, emails, documents, data, ... it is also useful for keeping in touch with distant friends and finding solutions to practical problems. Sometimes, I wish God will send me an email telling me exactly what I should do in a difficult situation. We all want definitive answers to our troubles, like signs. But sometimes the signs we receive are subtle, or perhaps we don't see them because we do not like the answers that God reveals to us in prayer. Instead of seeking a sign **when we have a problem, we can pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as understanding, knowledge, and wisdom to help us discern God's will.** We are given the Gospel. In times of difficulty, **the Gospel will help us sort out the useful and discard the junk that blocks out the light.** Solomon prayed for wisdom. It takes wisdom to combat the challenges of life. It takes wisdom to be a good parent, a good husband, a good wife, a good priest, a good person.

So where do we get this wisdom? The same place that Solomon received his: the Kingdom of Heaven - the Word of the Lord!!! Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will fill us with the gifts of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom so that we might receive the Word and make it flourish in us. Let's focus our search on a good relationship with God.