

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
(YEAR A)

First reading:

1Kings 3:5, 7-12

Responsorial Psalm:

Ps 118:57,72,76-77, 127-130. R.v.97

Second reading:

Romans 8:28-30

Gospel reading:

Matthew 13:44-52



THEME: THE GREATEST TREASURE IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Reflection by Fr. Bartholomew Zubeviel

Any time we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, we listen to the Word of God. And the message of the scripture readings always tells us something about what we are expected to do or how we are expected to live our lives in order to enter the kingdom of heaven at the end of time.

The message from the readings of this Sunday is that the way to the kingdom of heaven is through wisdom and not through riches.

In the first reading, we are made to understand that Solomon has succeeded his father David as king of Israel. He knows that he can easily be corrupted and misled because he feels that he is too young and inexperienced to govern a great people chosen by God. As Solomon is still wondering about what to do, the Lord God appears to him in a dream and tells him to ask for whatever he wants. And he simply demands for what you and I may not consider as our first priority if we were to be invited to make a special request.

Solomon asks for wisdom and understanding, a heart that will enable him to distinguish between good and evil. A heart that will help him to discern between what is right and what is wrong. The Lord is pleased with him and immediately grants his request saying; "Since you have asked for this... and not long life or riches or victory over your enemies, here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none after you will ever have".

Accordingly, many people came from all over the world to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem and to listen to his wisdom. And from the Biblical point of view, Solomon was a successful king and he is ever regarded as the wisest man who ever existed. Seeking wisdom is life's best pursue according to the biblical wisdom tradition. Therefore, knowledge or the ability to discern between good and evil is very important if we are to establish the right relationship with God and man and maintain that relationship. And if we are to move forward in our spiritual, social, and economic lives, we need a wise and understanding heart to be able to judge between what is right and what is wrong at different times. And that is what we are praying for today. A heart, wise and understanding enough to guide us discern the ways of God and the ways of people we live, work, and worship with.

The option of King Solomon in the first reading prepares our minds for the message of Jesus in the gospel reading of today.

This Sunday, St. Matthew provides us with three more parables that speak to us about the nature of the kingdom of heaven. In the first two parables, he compares the kingdom of God with treasure and pearls that people considered as the ultimate valuables at the time of Jesus. He says "The kingdom of heaven is best compared to a valuable commodity, that's securely kept, which someone has found, he hides it again, goes home happy, sells everything he owns and buys the fields."(Matt.13:44)

The implication is that anyone who is really convinced that he has found the kingdom of God to be something extremely precious and valuable should be ready to go any length and be willing to sacrifice anything he has in order to acquire it.

"In those days at the time of Jesus, wars and invasions by foreign armies were very common." People who were running away for their safety had to bury their treasures and other important possessions that they could not carry along. These were hidden in their fields with the hope that they would one day return to recover them once the danger was over. And mostly, many people were unable to return and even those who managed to go back were not able to discover everything they hid in the ground. So, there were many stories about treasures hidden in fields at the time of Jesus.

St. Matthew is telling us in the gospel of today that gaining the wisdom of God is more valuable than any earthly treasure. That is why Jesus advises his followers saying, "seek the kingdom of God first and all its righteousness, and all other things will be given you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

The second reading tells us that God will direct all events so that we may have the courage to make all the right choices when challenging options present themselves to us.