

17th Sunday OT Year A
July 26-27, 2014

Finding the Pearl of Great Price.

Readings: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13: 44-52

I still remember playing the game as a child pretending to have three wishes...if I could ask for anything, what would it be? So imagine how surprised some might have been when the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and rather than asking for money, power or anything else, Solomon replied: "Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong." The tremendous humility involved in his request is itself a tribute to Solomon's wisdom.

But how do we recognize acquire wisdom? Perhaps you have heard the old saying, "By the time a son realizes that his father was right, he has a son of his own who thinks his father is wrong." There is a lot of truth to it- wisdom takes time.

In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante discussed the gift of wisdom in his final book on *Paradise*. There, Solomon is put forth as the "fifth light" in the circle of the souls of the Wise and Learned:

The fifth light, the most beautiful of all,
Breathes from a love so passionate that men
Still hunger down on earth to know his fate;
His flame contains that lofty mind instilled
With wisdom so profound- if truth speak truth-
There never arose a second with such vision.¹

No, we may count ourselves as wise as Solomon; nevertheless, we are called to seek wisdom, both on earth and from above. Do not be afraid to ask God for this gift, for he desires to give us all that is in accordance with His will for our lives. No, He will not remove all the shadows from the paths we forge, because in point of fact, this

¹ *Paradiso*, Canto X, lines 109-115

would not be for our eternal good, which is Christ's sole concern.

Shadows are part of life for every single human person. But sometimes, the shadows of doubt grow thick. When we seek wisdom, we seek a treasure beyond measure, a pearl of great price. From a worldly perspective Solomon had every right to claim that wisdom was his to hoard. He had the power, and who would have called him on it? He could have flaunted his ego, and no one would have dared question it. But he did not.

The Scriptures tell us that if we frequent the company of the wise, we grow in wisdom. As a new priest, I recall being told that wisdom would most often be found right in the pews, in the daily lives of the faithful whom I was privileged to serve. So what is our excuse for failing to seek wisdom? We have none.

So often we are disappointed in ourselves by the choices we make. At other times, we are disappointed in the decisions that others make, especially those in positions of authority. So when Solomon asked for wisdom, he modeled great humility for one in authority. We ought to ask ourselves if we are really thinking with the mind of God? Nor can we fail to seek the wisdom of others. We in the Church need to seek your wisdom on all matters in which you have experience and expertise- we'll be a better and stronger Church for having done so. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

“Man participates in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator who gives him mastery over his acts and the ability to govern himself with a view to the true and the good....God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world.”²

Let us seek this wisdom wherever it may be found, and rejoice in God's continued presence in our lives and in the Church that Jesus

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 1954.

Christ founded.