

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 30 July 2023

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

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading from the Book of Kings, we heard one of the more memorable stories of the young king Solomon, who prayed for wisdom more than any other gift. Solomon was a young man when he inherited the throne from his famous father, King David. He also had no experience and needed to learn a great deal. But he had enough wisdom to ask for wisdom.

When in a dream, God offered to grant him whatever he wished, Solomon did not ask for long life or wealth or power over his enemies. He asked for the wisdom to rule well, and for the ability to discern right from wrong.

This gift is, in fact, the most precious gift of all, greater than length of life, more valuable than riches, more powerful in people's lives than any force or favor. To be wise is to possess a power to guide the way you live your own life, a grace of personal tranquility, which is able to bless and benefit others at the same time. It is no wonder, then, that people flocked to Jesus, the young carpenter and preacher from Galilee, when he started to walk among them, preaching and teaching, and healing those who were sick. Here was a power and a wisdom they had never experienced before.

When the people listened to Jesus they said of him, "This man speaks with authority and not like the scribes and Pharisees". The official representatives of religion might garble pious dictums to their listeners, but Jesus spoke powerfully from a loving heart and an understanding mind.

In our Church today, we need wise and effective preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today the world is in admiration of the simple, direct, and saintly style of Pope Francis. He has truly brought the Gospel to the world. Yet, there are many more preachers of the Gospel around the world, and not all of them in pulpits. Indeed, many of the preachers of the Gospel do not use words at all, but rather they preach by the example of their good moral lives faithfully lived in dedicated service to all those in need, especially the poor.

We can easily think of parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers,

friends; so many people in this world who demonstrate by their daily life that they have found the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in a field. The love of God alive in their hearts blesses our lives each day. These people are true images of Christ Jesus, and the wisdom of the Lord shines through them.

Each one of us is called to become wise. That prayer of Solomon can be our prayer. Not to ask for a long life, attractive as that may be. Not to seek wealth or riches, attractive as that may seem. But rather to have a heart wise and shrewd, able to decipher the rights and wrongs of this world; and more, to have a heart free of fear, able to love others simply and sincerely.

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