

Homily of Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12, Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130; Roman 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52

Solomon was a young man when he became the king of Israel. In his dream, God said to him, “Ask something of me, and I will give it to you.” Solomon replied, “...I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act...Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.” God was pleased that Solomon made this request, and said to Solomon, “Because you have asked this – not for long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right – I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you... In addition, ... I give you such riches and glory that among kings there will be no one like you all your days.”

Solomon’s encounter with God brings Jesus’ words to mind: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides” (Matthew 6:33). Solomon’s prayer challenges us since most times our prayers are for our material needs.

The Book of Proverbs says, “Get wisdom, get understanding!... Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will safeguard you” (Proverbs 4:5-9). Wisdom is the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:3).

In today’s gospel, Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of heaven is so priceless that we are to “sell all that we have to buy it.” Jesus means that we must give up all worldly things which might prevent us from entering the kingdom of heaven. St. Paul describes the kingdom that awaits us, “What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him, this God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Why should I allow worldly passing things to prevent me from going to such an eternal place?

On the way to the kingdom are constant challenges of distinguishing right from wrong, of discerning between good and evil, and of making wise judgements and good choices. It is a journey beyond human wisdom alone. St. Paul says, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight” (1 Corinthians 3:19). When and where God is set aside and we operate only with human wisdom, we put ourselves in danger of mistakes, errors, bad choices, sin, and destruction.

With God’s wisdom, we are able to put what is good into the bucket and throw away what is bad. Therefore, we are encouraged to pray for God’s wisdom to guide us at every moment. St. James advises us, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and [the person] will be given” (James 1:5). Tobit advised his son Tobiah, “Seek counsel (wisdom) from every wise person, and do not think lightly of any useful advice” (Tobit 4:18). Sadly, some people seek counsel from unwise persons and from evil minded persons who lead them astray.

St. Paul states in the second reading, “Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for the good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” This statement has three segments. (1) “... all things work for the good.” (2) “... for those who love God.” (3) “... who are called according to his purpose.” The second and the third segments are requirements for the first segment. While we pray that all things work for our good, we are to love God by obeying his commands, trusting in him, and surrendering to him. We are to follow God’s call and purpose, not our desires and will. We are active participants for all things to work for our good.

There are five graces we can pray for from today's readings:

1. We pray for the grace to be guided by God's wisdom to enable us distinguish right from wrong, to discern between good and evil, and to make wise judgements and good choices.
2. We pray for the grace to love God by obeying his commands, by trusting him, and by surrendering to him in all things.
3. We pray for the grace to follow God's call and purpose, not our desires and will.
4. We pray that all things, even the ugliest things which come our way, may work for our good.
5. We pray that on our way to the kingdom of heaven, we will run a good race and keep the faith and earn the crown of righteousness at the end. Amen.

Fr Martin Eke, MSP