

(17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12—Solomon’s Request for Wisdom and Understanding

1. Solomon’s Request: “an understanding mind” to “discern between good and evil”

Psalm 119—Lord, I Love Your Law

1. God’s Law: “better than thousands of gold... pieces” (v. 72) “my delight” (v. 77)
2. Love of Scripture: “I love” God’s commandments “above gold, fine gold” (v. 127)
3. Wisdom: “imparts understanding to the simple” (v. 130)

Romans 8:28-30—God Predestined Us to Be Conformed to His Son

1. In Everything: “God works for good with those who love him” (8:28)
2. “Predestined” (Greek *proorizō*) to be conformed to “the image of his Son” (8:29)

Matthew 13:44-52—The Treasure in the Field, the Pearl of Great Price, the Dragnet

1. The Treasure Hidden in the Field (13:44)
 - a. Twist: if you found a treasure hidden in a field, would you bury it again?
 - b. Response: “sells all he has” and “buys that field”
 - c. Meaning: you cannot *steal* the kingdom; you must give *everything*
2. The Pearl of Great Price (13:45)
 - a. Merchant: in search of fine pearls (quest)
 - b. Pearl of Great Price = the kingdom
 - c. Response: “sold all that he had and bought it”
 - d. Twist: If he sells all for a pearl, how will he provide? (Food, clothing, shelter?)
3. The Cast Net: (13:47-50)
 - a. Cast Net = the Kingdom gathers “fish of every kind”
 - b. Good Fish = keep in vessels (e.g., Bass) (Buckets = kingdom)
 - c. Bad Fish = throw away (e.g., Choupique, Garfish) (Trash = hell)
 - d. Meaning: all will be separated at the Last Judgment
4. The Scribe of the Kingdom: brings out of his “treasure” both “new” and “old”

St. Irenaeus: Christ is the “Treasure” Hidden in the Field of the OT

For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, that is, in this world (for “the field is the world”); but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.26.1; ANF, 1.496)

St. Francis de Sales: the Spirit of Poverty for the Layperson

[W]e must practice real poverty in the midst of all the goods and riches God has given us. Frequently give up some of your property by giving it with a generous heart to the poor. To give away what we have is to impoverish ourselves in proportion as we give, and the more we give, the poorer we become... If you meet with losses that impoverish you either very much or a little, as in the case of tempests, fires, floods, droughts, thefts, or lawsuits, that is the proper time to practice poverty by accepting your losses meekly and

patiently and by courageously submitting to such poverty. (Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 3.15 [trans. John Ryan, pp. 153, 155])

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Reflect on the story of young King Solomon’s dream in 1 Kings 3. If God appeared to you in a dream and offered to give you whatever you asked, what would be your response? What would you ask for? This is a good way of examining your heart, and where your priorities lie.

2. How should a lay person interpret Jesus’ parables about “selling everything” for the sake of the kingdom of God? What are some practical ways a layperson with a family to provide for live out the “spirit of poverty” and detachment from the world? Do you regularly give alms to the poor? If not, why not? If so, what are the fruits?

3 St. Irenaeus described Jesus himself as the “Treasure” hidden in the field of the Old Testament. How much time do you spend reading the Old Testament? How familiar are you with the books of the Old Testament? What are some practical ways to increase you knowledge of the Old Testament so that you might bring out treasures both “new” and “old”?

For Further Study

1. CCC 897-913: official teaching on the status of the Lay Faithful, who live in the world (but not ‘of’ it)
2. CCC 914-933: official teaching on the Consecrated Life, those who respond to the vocation to radically live “for the sake of the kingdom” by living out the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience in various forms.
2. St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* (trans. Thomas P. Scheck; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 163-65. A readable translation of one of the most ancient commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew; written by a Father and Doctor of the Church.