

Homily for the 17th Sunday of the Year

We know that there is a huge difference between knowledge and wisdom. We can find out about someone or something now at the press of a key on a computer as we 'google' the information, though it pays to check sometimes that the information is correct. There is no such short cut when it comes to wisdom which was the gift the young Solomon requested when God said, Ask what you would like me to give you? I wonder what answer you or I would give to that question. It might be worth taking it into our prayer during the coming week. Solomon's answer may well have surprised his contemporaries, indeed ourselves. He asks for the wisdom to discern between good and evil, which is why we have the phrase, as wise as Solomon.

The treasure and a pearl, mentioned in two of the parables were symbols of wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures which is probably why this first reading was chosen to introduce the gospel. There is one significant difference in the two short stories, the treasure is found by accident, the pearl after a great deal of searching, but the act of selling everything in order to buy the field in which the treasure is hidden, or purchasing the pearl of great value is the same. Both are prepared to risk everything in order to own the treasure or the pearl.

With this in mind we remember that these parables, and the others Jesus told are about the kingdom of heaven. When we think of the kingdom of heaven we can often think in terms of life after what we call death. Jesus is reminding us that the kingdom to which he is introducing his disciples is very much of this life. He has already ruffled many feathers, pushed boundaries, associated with the so called wrong people. He has offered those who would listen a different set of values which were not based on the so called four 'P's of blessing, power, prestige, popularity and possessions. What a different world we would be living in if Governments and world leaders had the wisdom to shun violence of any kind, to work for a fairer distribution of the world's precious resources, to uphold the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death, to nurture rather than plunder our planet. The different reactions to the current pandemic graphically show which countries have had the wisdom to take the necessary, sometimes painful, precautions to halt or at least slow the spread of the virus.

The kingdom or reign of God Jesus is announcing is the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price. Some stumble across it, others find it after years of searching, what is important is that we have the wisdom to recognise its value and the willingness to give up anything that will keep us from recognising the kingdom/reign of God and doing all we can to promote its growth. And we do this by reaching out to others as Jesus did, even when this comes at a personal cost; by refusing to be sucked into a world where power or possessions or popularity or prestige take precedence over love for others; by standing up for the disadvantaged, speaking out on behalf of those with no voice; walking the extra mile with, or for, those who are deprived of freedom or friendship. Have we the wisdom of a discerning heart to do this?

Bidding Prayers for the 17th Sunday

Celebrant:

Solomon is anointed by God because he asked for the wisdom of a discerning heart able to judge between right and wrong. We are called to search wisely for the Kingdom present in our midst and to cherish it as a great treasure. With this in mind we pray.

Reader:

For the Church – that all its members, lay, religious, ordained will proclaim by their lives the presence of the kingdom, the reign of God in our world.

Lord in your mercy

For the leaders of nations – that they will have the wisdom to place the needs of their people before any selfish interests or personal ambition.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have been forced to flee from their countries – that they will travel safely and be treated with dignity and respect in their new homes.

Lord in your mercy

For the people of Yemen who are suffering from famine and war at this time – that ways will be found to bring peace and food to those in most need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the coronavirus pandemic, and Ann McCarthy, Barry Hilton, Michael Bradley, Ellen Bradley, Esther Crewdson, Fr Jeremiah Bickley MSC, Ellen Hughes, Mavis Leggett, Eva Howarth, William Lally and Brian Quinn whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, help us to live our faith with conviction so that all the world may be drawn into your kingdom. As we place our needs before you this day renew in us the image and likeness of your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen