

17th Sunday per Annum - A
I Kings 3:5, 7-12;
Romans 8:28-30;
Matthew 13:44-46
Little Flower - 7/30/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

When my nephew was four years old (he is 34 now), I asked him if he had any wisdom to share with me. He immediately said, "Uncle Bob, I don't know what wisdom is." So I asked him if he knew anything that was really important. His face became contorted as he struggled to answer the question. Finally, he said with a big smile, "I know that when you color, you're supposed to stay inside the lines."

People to whom I have told this story have found very different lessons in it. Some thought Shaun demonstrated wisdom when he acknowledged that he did not know what wisdom was. Others thought that life really is about learning and staying inside limits. Still others thought one of our major mistakes we make is to stifling the creativity of children. Shaun's answer reminded me that life can be a lot simpler at 4 than at 6, 12, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, and so on.

According to tradition, the Oracle of Delphi made the statement that the philosopher Socrates was the wisest man in Athens. Socrates set out to prove the oracle wrong by visiting all the recognized wise men in Athens. However, after he had visited them all, he concluded that he was indeed the wisest of them all because he was the only one who knew what he did not know. In fact, when I give marriage instructions, I always tell couples how important it is to know what they do not know, i.e., when they need to slow down making a decision, when they need to do more research, and/or when they need to seek advice.

In today's first reading, God promised to give Solomon anything for which he asked. Knowing what he did not know, he asked God for wisdom defined as an understanding heart to judge God's people and to distinguish right from wrong. Wisdom, then, is seeing right and wrong as God sees right and wrong and then acting accordingly. Because Solomon also asked for wisdom to judge God's people, we can conclude that wisdom also empowers us to be servant leaders, i.e., to influence others in a positive way.

Today's Gospel consists of two very short parables. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure buried in a field or a pearl of great price. In both cases, the finder goes and sells all he has to purchase the field or the pearl. These parables, then, challenge us to examine our priorities.

Where is the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God among our priorities? In other words, where is God in our priorities? More specifically, how much priority do we give to Sunday Eucharist, daily prayer, and our relationship with God and Jesus? For example, what do we allow to take priority over Sunday Eucharist? For parents of grade school and high school students, what priority do you give to the religious education and formation of your children? Of this much we can be sure. If we put God first in our lives, the rest of our priorities will fall into place.

My brothers and sisters, as Paul wrote to the Romans, "*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God...*" If, as we heard last Sunday, God's mercy and forgiveness are a basis for hope, this promise gives us another basis for hope. If we love God, everything will work out for our good. This does not mean that everything will work out as we might want. It means that God's plan for us will be realized, i.e., we will become the best version of ourselves in this life and live in God's life and love forever.