

17th Sunday per Annum - A  
I Kings 3:5-12;  
Romans 8:28-30;  
Matthew 13:44-52  
Little Flower - 7/27/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus once said to his disciples, *"For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."* [Mt. 6:21]. We love most who or what we value most.

In today's Gospel, the parable of the buried treasure and the parable of the valuable pearl make essentially the same point. When a person finds buried treasure or a valuable pearl, he or she goes and sells everything and buys the field where the treasure is buried or the pearl.

In these parables, Jesus is asking us to ask ourselves who or what is most important in our lives or, perhaps better, how important is the kingdom of heaven in our lives. How much priority are we willing to give to God in our lives? Where do God and our relationship with God fit into our priorities? How much are we willing to sacrifice for God?

If we really put God first in our lives, we will pray every day. We will celebrate Sunday Eucharist every week unless there is a very good reason to miss. When we are confronted with moral choices, we will pray over them and consider how our choices will impact our relationship with God. We will try to become more like Christ. For example, although Paul was the strongest personality in the New Testament next to Jesus himself, by the time he wrote to the Galatians, he was able to write, *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"* [2:20].

To be willing to put God first in our lives, we have to be convinced of the truth of Paul's words in today's second reading: *"we know that all things work for good for those who love God."* However, this does not mean that life will always be easy or that everything will always go according to our plans. What it does mean is that in the end everything will work out for the best: *"and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified."* At the same time, I think most of us struggle with balancing both our relationships and our priorities. If we really put God first in our life, all of other priorities and relationships fall into place.

Finally, in today's first reading, God promised Solomon that he would give him whatever he asked. Recognizing his youth, Solomon asked God for an understanding heart. Because Solomon did not ask for a long life or for riches or for power over his enemies, God promised to give him *"a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no none to equal you."*

Paradoxically, as a young man, Solomon had to have already been fairly wise to ask for wisdom and understanding. Solomon asked for a discerning heart, a heart of wisdom in practical matters. No matter how young or old we are, we could all use a more discerning heart. However, I think this passage is addressed particularly to the young among us. At a very young age, our young people are making decisions that have the potential to affect their lives and their futures for better or for worse. They make decisions about education, jobs or careers, and lifestyles. I think God is asking all our young people to ask for a discerning heart to make good decisions as they enter young adulthood. On the wall of my office, there is a framed verse: "Prayer does not change things, it changes people and they change things."

My brothers and sisters, today's readings challenge us to really put God first in our lives and to seek an understanding or discerning heart, confident that if we love God, all things will indeed work together for good.