



AMDG
17TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
30TH JULY 2017



**The Kingdom of Heaven is like
a treasure hidden in a field**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, protector of those who hope in you,
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us and grant that,
with you as our ruler and guide,
we may use the good things that pass
in such a way as to hold fast even now to those that ever endure.

This week's readings lead us to reflect on the priceless treasures of wisdom, faith, and the Kingdom of Heaven itself.

In the First Reading, Solomon does not ask for great honours or luxury goods, but simply for a discerning heart so that he can govern his people wisely. God willingly grants his request. The Psalmist resolves to find the Lord and his love through obedience to his Law and his Word.

In the Second Reading, Paul assures the Romans that God will turn everything to their good as he co-operates with all those who love him. Their faith will not be in vain. They will share his glory.

Finally, the Gospel illustrates what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, using four short parables to help us reflect and understand what the Lord offers us.

This week, then, I might want to spend some time considering God's great gifts to us of faith and wisdom. How do they help me bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth for the people around me, especially for those who are searching for the Lord?

FIRST READING: 1 KINGS 3: 5, 7-12

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, “Ask what you would like me to give you.” Solomon replied, “Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its numbers cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?”

It pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked for this. “Since you have asked for this,” the Lord said, “and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself, here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you.”

I come to my place of prayer, giving time and space to still my busy-ness, and come more consciously into the presence of the Lord. It may help me to slow down if I take a number of gentle deep breaths.

With an open mind and open heart, I read through the passage slowly, a number of times. Certain word or phrases may grab my attention.

Perhaps my imagination helps me to enter into the story and meet the Lord and Solomon: I see the room, I hear their voices, I listen to what they say.

I consider how I would respond to the Lord if he asked me that question: ‘What would you like me to give you?’ I communicate with him freely in my own words, and listen for his response.

I may be struck by the humility of Solomon. I ponder and reflect how humility is active in my life today. Solomon would like to be a ‘servant leader’. I may want to ask myself what opportunities I have to be a servant leader in my life. I finish my prayer thanking the Lord for being with me and saying ‘Our Father...’ slowly and prayerfully.

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 13: 44-52

Jesus said to the crowds, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are of no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They said, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.”

In a place where I like to pray, I take a deep breath and try to slow down. Perhaps I repeat a favourite phrase such as: ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening’. When I am ready, I read today’s Gospel passage prayerfully, maybe more than once. I ponder.

The treasure was found by accident, while the merchant was actively looking for the pearl. When I reflect on my faith and the riches it has brought me, do I identify with the one who found this treasure unexpectedly, or with the one who did a lot of searching first? I speak to the Lord about this and I listen to him.

Perhaps, in my imagination, I see the fishermen hauling a net full of all kinds of fish, but also plastic bottles, and other flotsam and jetsam. Is that the image I have of the kingdom of heaven?

How do I feel at the prospect of the fishermen sorting the contents of their catch: anxious, threatened, or trusting in the Lord’s absolute love for me? When the Lord asks me: ‘Have you understood all this?’, what response do I make? To conclude my prayer, I may want to simply say: ‘Thy Kingdom come’.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute...

Lord, my God give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil. *First Reading*

Lord, let your love be ready to console me ... Let your love come to me and I shall live. *Psalm*

We know that by turning everything to their good, God cooperates with all those who love him. *Second Reading*

O bless the Lord, my soul, and remember all his kindness
Communion Antiphon

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

1 Kings 3: 5, 7-12; Psalm 118 (119); Romans 8: 28-30;

Matthew 13: 44-52



How does this image help me meditate on these readings?



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