

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 109

Reading 1 - [1 Kings 3:5, 7-12](#)

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." Solomon answered: "O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?"

The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him: "Because you have asked for this—not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right—I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you."

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#) R. (97a) Lord, I love your commands.

Reading 2 - [Romans 8:28-30](#)

Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

Gospel - [Matthew 13:44-46](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."



Summary

The homily this week synthesizes scriptural readings and theological commentaries regarding the nature of divine wisdom and its role in the life of a disciple. The central theme is the transition from a human-centered worldview to a God-centered "understanding heart." Wrapping it up, Fr. Blair suggests that the authentic disciple must undergo a "surrender" of the self. This involves: **Docility:** Remaining open to the Holy Spirit to receive wisdom as a gift. **Moral Clarity:** Adhering to God's commands as a "lamp" for daily life. **Prioritization:** Recognizing the personal relationship with Christ as the "treasure" that gives transcendent meaning to all actions and relationships. **Rule of Life:** Implementing principles—potentially adapted from monastic traditions like the Rule of St. Benedict—to ensure life remains in accord with Gospel values.

Jesus, Scripture, and Tradition:

Coming to know and understand the real meaning of life and therefore, the most important things in life.

In the first reading, we hear about God's servant Solomon who delighted God by desiring wisdom when offered anything. Solomon, who has the heart of an authentic disciple, teaches us that we must seek the wisdom from God which requires that our hearts are docile to the Spirit of the Lord. The wisdom of God that you and I are called to seek is God's own way of seeing and saving, revealed in Jesus Christ—especially in the Cross—and it is meant to guide our life and reshape our mind and heart. Pope Francis explained it this way, "this wisdom, seeing with God's eyes, hearing with God's ears, and directing things with God's judgment—you cannot generate by yourself, it is *"a gift... given... to those who make themselves docile to the Holy Spirit."*"¹

Imagine, if God spoke to you in a dream and asked you what you most want to have or to be? Most folks would likely ask for money, health, or some other thing of this world. But Solomon asked for what Pope Francis referred to as, a God-centered ability to recognize and discern God's action. The truly wise person knows when something is of God and when it is not of God. He wasn't asking for an answer for everything or knowing everything,² but rather wisdom and discernment the fruit of which would give him understanding to govern God's people well. He asked for the ability to discern between good and evil. He asked for the wisdom that gives insight into what is truly important in life, an awareness of the meaning and purpose of living, of what really matters. It is an understanding of where our real well-being and happiness lie.

In the joyful [Psalm 119](#), written by [Ezra](#) the scribe, priest, and teacher of the law in post Babylonian exile Judea, we hear of that same wisdom and learn that it teaches ethical and moral conduct in keeping with the Law of God, the Torah.³ Jesus is the Incarnation of the Law of God. As disciples of Christ, we must keep the commandments of God, but not only that, we must allow the Spirit to so shape our hearts and minds that we are impelled to sing of the praises of all God's commands that flow from Divine Wisdom. As Christians, we must seek to always follow the Lord's commands, to live our lives for Him.

In the second reading St. Paul emphasizes the wisdom of Solomon who understood the foundational necessity of the later teaching of Ezra and puts this truth to the Romans in a concise manner, saying that if we want things to work out, we must love God in all things. Love and wisdom are conjoined—not as two

¹ Ibid

² Pope Francis. *General Audience*. Saint Peter's Square, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014.

³ The psalmist sometimes complains about his enemies, probably fellow Israelites who were not as dedicated as he was to the Law. The dominant theme is that of joy. Nowhere does the psalmist complain about having to obey God's Law. He never finds the Law restrictive or galling or negative; it is always a source of life, wisdom, comfort, and hope. Oesterley states the matter well: "as he constantly emphasizes, the Law is the expression of the divine will; it is not the Law, per se, that he loves ...; he loves the Law because it tells of God's will; and he loves it because he loves God first." Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reayburn, [A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 997.

separates, but as one divine reality received in different modes. Love for God is therefore always the wisest course of action.

The essential nature of the wisdom of God taught in the readings and Psalm is brought forward in chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew's teaching on the nature of the Kingdom of God especially the last 3 parables in today's Gospel which teach us about what summarizes, epitomizes, and reflects the moral and spiritual wisdom that the Lord has not only woven into creation but revealed and announced. Keeping our gaze focused on the Kingdom of God, Jesus explains that the parables refer to Himself and the Church and that to know God and to live according to the gospel are the most precious things in life. It doesn't come free, and it doesn't come cheap, he calls us to give up everything for the Kingdom. If you're willing to spend everything on obtaining it, it must be of more value than what you already have. The Kingdom of heaven should put everything we have, everything we are, into perspective. When we invest ourselves completely the returns will be unimaginable.

Can it be surprising that according to scripture and tradition the Church would teach that, the most important things in life are: That we are to Know God (the truth that gives your desire its real end) ^{4, 5}; Love God (friendship with Him, where fulfillment coheres) ^{6, 7, 8}; Serve God (which also serves others in charity) ^{9, 10}; So as to reach beatitude, the vision of God and participation in the Trinitarian life. ^{11, 12, 13} In Catholic faith, the meaning of life is not something you invent for yourself; it is the definitive answer God gives in Christ and a path that ends in sharing God's own life. ^{14, 15}

In the Old Testament wisdom tradition, the beginning of wisdom is: "*The fear of the Lord*," that is the right attitude in God's presence. This right attitude can be described as: the art of understanding the world, and the art of orienting one's life in devotion to God. ¹⁶ In this we find moral clarity for authentic human living. Pope St John Paul II, affirming this truth, referred to wisdom as "*a lamp that enlightens the moral choices of daily life and helps you discern what is pleasing to the Lord and aligned with God's commands. It leads you on the straight path, and God's wisdom supports you in your daily work by revealing good and evil, the just and unjust*". ¹⁷

We are challenged by the message of today's readings to 'check' our operational understanding of 'wisdom'. Modern man, unlike Solomon, is increasingly convinced of our own ability to know and do anything we desire, put our minds to accomplishing. We exalt the wisdom of man and deny the need or relevance of seeking the wisdom from above. Though this is not unique to our time, as St. Paul noted in the first chapter of Romans, "*for although they knew God, they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes. Therefore, God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies. They exchanged the*

⁴ Augustine. "The Confessions." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 400.

⁵ Great, Albert the. *On Union with God*. London: R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd..

⁶ Pope Francis. *Dilexit nos*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2024.

⁷ Pope Francis. *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, signed by the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, on the occasion of the 45th Meeting for Friendship among Peoples [Rimini, 20-25 August 2024]*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2024.

⁸ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *Cherishing Life*. 2004.

⁹ Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine (The Baltimore Catechism No. 3)*. 1954. § 126.

¹⁰ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *Cherishing Life*. 2004.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992. § 1723.

¹² Aquinas, Thomas. "Compendium of Theology (Compendium Theologiae)."

¹³ Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. 1274. I-II, q. 1, a. 4, co.

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992. § 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, § 1723.

¹⁶ Commission, International Theological. *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011.

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II. *General Audience*. Saint Peter's Square, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003.

*truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*¹⁸

Human reason or societal constructs divorced from a higher moral order will fail, since replacing foundational principles with purely human desires leads to specific negative outcomes. Such as in the family, where rejection of natural moral bounds, weaken the commitment between parents and break the home. Or in the ethos of education which focuses only on practical skills or human trends, which causes schools to lose a shared sense of truth and right and wrong. As well in law and government; rules based only on what people want at the moment can change justice into a tool for whoever holds power and whoever holds power will come to see themselves as the ultimate authority, increasingly frustrated by any attempts to limit their power, and which can lead to unfair or tyrannical control and a loss of basic human rights.

Solomon asked for wisdom, recognizing that the one who is truly wise is one who truly sees. The ability to see is what opens the door to the Kingdom of God, that world of interlocking relationships between God, human beings and our world. Pope St. John Paul II, reflecting on the biblical tradition and especially Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, summarized true wisdom as *“a participation in the very mind of God”* rather than mere intelligence or technical skill. It is a gift that lets you share in God’s own perspective, not merely more information.¹⁹ This participation enables you to penetrate the deep meaning of being, life, and history, moving beyond the surface to discover their ultimate meaning willed by the Lord.²⁰

The one who has wisdom knows how to cope with the situations of life, whether they bring ease or difficulty, pain or joy. Complex situations, difficulties, and trials all bear the risk of separating us from God, but only if we distance ourselves from him in those moments. Throughout salvation history, God has taught us how to face all these things, until finally the Son came and showed us how to face them, all the way to Calvary. The Church Fathers affirmed the identify Christ as the Wisdom of God. Centuries later and in keeping with the tradition, St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the Word / Concept by which God understands Himself—and therefore Christ is rightly called *“the wisdom of God.”* So, seeking God’s wisdom ultimately means seeking Christ—and receiving from Him God’s light for your mind and heart.²¹

In Our Lord, we find embodied all the moral wisdom for which Solomon could have hoped, but something even more: the spiritual wisdom and power to be holy. The Lord calls everyone to holiness, and those who respond to the call are put back on track through the grace of justification and, if they persevere in holiness, aided by grace, they will one day be glorified. For the authentic disciple, they will find affinity with the experience of St. Paul, *“I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...”*²² And again: *“For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.”*²³

This is what happens to us when we enter fully into Christ’s Kingdom. When we decide to follow Jesus, to obey his teachings and make his friendship our highest priority, we put ourselves under his protection and his guidance, becoming full citizens of his Kingdom. To have a personal relationship with Christ and to have made his view of life one’s own is the most beautiful, the most precious thing in the world. And as soon as we do that, our lives begin to take on a whole new purpose. Our relationships, actions, and decisions take on transcendent meaning; they are connected to eternal life. Suddenly, we are free from the

¹⁸ Romans 1:21-25

¹⁹ Pope Leo XIII. *Aeterni Patris*. Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1879.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II. *General Audience*. Saint Peter’s Square, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003.

²¹ Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. 1265.

²² Philippians 3:8

²³ Philippians 1:21

frustration and meaninglessness that comes from living only for ourselves, for the passing, superficial pleasures and successes of this life, because we have found something infinitely more valuable: a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, King and Lord of heaven and earth. That relationship is our treasure and pearl; it alone can give us the joy and satisfaction we yearn for in the depths of our hearts. It is not enough, of course, just to say this; one must personally experience it as a fact.

Today, if you haven't already or maybe because you have but you've slipped back little by little into the 'old creature', ask the Lord for the courage to truly surrender everything to Him. Lift up all your burdens and trust in Him, knowing that even in our sufferings the Lord is working everything out for good. Commit to a rule of life that summarizes the rules and principles that God's wisdom guides you to recognize as essential for a happy life. The monastic rules of life, such as the Rule of St. Benedict, can be adapted for living your life more in accord with Gospel values. Spend some time this week in prayer to take stock of your life and the rules and principles with which you live it. If you have difficulty sorting things out, consider seeking out a spiritual director.

St. John of the Cross is explicit: God "never grants mystical wisdom without love," because love is what infuses it. In the "dark night," the illumination of divine wisdom is simultaneously purgative—"enlightening the soul and purging it."²⁴

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Beatitude	The vision of God and participation in the Trinitarian life; the ultimate end of human existence.
Discernment	The God-centered ability to recognize God's action and distinguish between what is of God and what is not.
Docility	A state of being open and submissive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, necessary for receiving divine wisdom.
Fear of the Lord	The beginning of wisdom; a right attitude of devotion and understanding in the presence of God.
Glorification	The final stage of the divine calling where the believer fully participates in God's own life.
Justification	The grace by which a person is put back "on track" and made righteous before God.
Kingdom of Heaven	The world of interlocking relationships between God, humanity, and the world; a treasure worth total surrender.
Moral Clarity	The insight into good and evil, just and unjust, provided by divine wisdom to guide daily choices.
Pearl of Great Price	A metaphor for the Kingdom of Heaven or a personal relationship with Christ, representing the highest possible value.
Rule of Life	A set of principles or guidelines (such as the Rule of St. Benedict) adapted to help an individual live in accord with Gospel values.
Torah	The Law of God, which guides ethical and moral conduct and is viewed as a source of joy and life.
Wisdom	A participation in the very mind of God; the gift of seeing, hearing, and judging life from a divine perspective.

²⁴ Juan de Yepes y Álvarez (St. John of the Cross). *The Dark Night of the Soul*.