

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year "A". July 27/08

(I Kings 3: 5-12; Romans 8: 28-30; Matthew 13: 44-52)

Introduction

Today I want to begin with a modern parable that appeared in the English Catholic publication, *The Tablet*, a few years ago. An investment banker from the United States was at the pier of a coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the boat were several large yellow-fin tuna. The investment banker complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them. "Only a little while," replied the Mexican. The banker asked why he did not stay out longer and catch more fish, and the Mexican said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. The banker then asked: "But what do you do with the rest of your time?" The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, and stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play my guitar with my friends. I have a full and busy life."

The investment banker scoffed: "You should spend more time fishing and, with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles, and eventually New York City where you will run your own expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But how long will this all take?" The banker replied, "15 to 20 years." "But what then?" the fisherman asked. The banker laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right you would float your company on the market and sell your stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions." "Millions . . . then what?" The investment banker said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your friends."

I tell that story because today's *readings* are about *wisdom*, and because that story illustrates so well the *lack of wisdom* in much of modern life. This is a favourite theme of several 20th century philosophers. Martin Heidegger, one of the best-known philosophers of modern times, and George Grant, a Canadian philosopher, have both pointed out that our age is one that has made great progress in technology and communication skills, but that often lacks the *wisdom* that knows *when* and *how* to use them. That is one reason why there is so much *success* in our world, but often no corresponding *happiness*. A brief look now at the *readings*, and what they say about *wisdom*.

First Reading

The *first reading* reflects the fact that the ancient peoples of the Near East had a great regard for wisdom. The Jews knew that no one was *born* wise. Wisdom came by *learning from* the experience of previous generations, and *reflecting on* the important issues of life. Wisdom was found especially by *meditating on God's law*. Above all, wisdom was *God's gift* and so had to be prayed for. Solomon, in the *first reading*, did pray to God for wisdom. Sadly, when God granted him wisdom, he did not always use it.

Gospel Reading

Two of the O.T. symbols for wisdom are *the treasure* and *the pearl*. So when Jesus compares the kingdom He is preaching to a treasure and a pearl He is saying that wisdom consists in embracing that kingdom. In other words, wisdom consists in accepting the reign or rule of God in our life.

To accept the rule of God in our life is the same thing as to follow Jesus. Jesus is the Wisdom of God made present and visible to us. So to be wise means to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to follow Him unconditionally. It means especially to adopt his attitude of total openness to our heavenly Father. It also means to see our relation to Him not just as a part of our life but as the very centre of our life, so that we will never let anything come ahead of it. It means, then, that our faith needs to be reflected not just in our private life, but also in every aspect of our social, economic, business and cultural life.

Conclusion

To conclude, a little story you may have heard before. A chicken and a pig were concerned about hunger in the world. So the chicken said: "You and I can relieve hunger by seeing to it that everyone has bacon and eggs to eat. Isn't that a great contribution we make to the world?" The pig answered, "For you, it's a contribution. For me, it means giving my all." To follow Jesus, and so to be wise, is to be like the pig. It is a matter of giving our all.