

St Pius-St Anthony 17th Sunday Ordinary Time Year A

Solomonic Wisdom! The man whose name becomes synonymous with wisdom, is introduced in today's gospel. Great Solomon! We hear of some of the wonders of his wisdom in that popular case he settled between two women's claims to maternity over a child, and his clever test to discover the true birth mother-divide the child with a sword so the true heart of the real mother would be revealed (1 Kings 3:16-28) or the visit of the great Queen of Sheba who herself testified that (1 Kings 10:7) "I was amazed at the reports of you and they are not even half the story!" Well, we hear how Solomon received this wisdom in today's first reading. God appears to him in a dream, saying "Ask for anything, I will give it to you". It reminds me of all the stories told when I was a kid about Aladdin and his lamp. We kids would play a game imagining an angel appearing and asking us "What one thing would you wish for?" What might that be? How about this story? *"At a board meeting once, everyone gathered around the table to meet. Suddenly an angel appeared hovering above the room, and asked the Board President, "You are favored. You lead this powerful company stretching all over the world, and I will grant your request, "Would you like all the wealth of the world, all fame and popularity or the greatest wisdom-knowledge of all things?" He thought a minute, "Wealth goes up and down with the market, fame fades with the headlines, so I'll settle for the lasting wisdom." After saying 'wisdom', the angel commanded it done with a pop and smoke in the room and disappeared. The whole board stared in a daze at the president chair and then asked, "Don't make us wait after that; tell us something; Share your wisdom". He looked a little dazed too, and replied, "I should have taken the money!"* I don't know if that is his wisdom or his desire to shirk his newfound responsibility.

When I was a kid our stories of the genie or angel went like being asked, "Make one wish and I will grant it." And we said we'd reply, "Can I have ten more wishes?" Or what about this worst outcome that loses such an opportunity: angel asks, "One wish and it is all yours", and then we respond, "Can I think about it a minute?" and the angel says, "Granted!" and "See Ya!" But with Solomon, I like how God seems to remind him of what he did not ask for: 1 Kings 3:11 "you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—**"As if to say, 'Are you sure *you do not want those things for yourself*'-That's a final test that Solomon passes. He does have a true wise and 'listening heart'- a discerning heart-for purpose of leading-assisting others.**

This request of Solomon for only wisdom and a reflecting heart brings us to the gospel where Jesus tells three parables about a true treasure, the precious pearl and a full fish-catch to sort through. The parables tell us something of the Kingdom of heaven. He had said, "The kingdom of heaven is like....." It's like..... We have to ask and answer how is it like..... a buried treasure, scouted pearl, or

full net of fish?" I think Jesus is teaching us that the kingdom of heaven is to be sought for, discovered, but then continually gone over and re-examined. The first two parables speak about the all-encompassing 'buying in' to the Kingdom for its treasure and preciousness to be enjoyed (selling everything-letting go of all else to appreciate it-I have to be looking-- it is there, I have to find it) Did Cheryl Crow have it right, that true happiness is not seeking what you love, but loving what you have?" And then the third parable of the fish picking or sorting, introduces an element of 'discerning' or 'testing' the enduring value of the find-what is worth keeping and what can be tossed. That is the gift of Solomon-that discerning heart. These three parables are in Matthew chapter 13, but so interestingly one chapter earlier, we heard Jesus drop in Solomon's own name, in a dispute with some unwise scribes that 'there is something greater than Solomon here' (Matt 12:42). I suggest that Jesus is saying that 'Wisdom or the Kingdom will be found in the 'discerning heart'. It takes examining, like searching out--surveying the boundaries of the land to buy containing a treasure, or watching the market conditions in which a 'great pearl is found' or determining which fish are keepers and which tossed back. That is discerning (checking it all out). I think that is why Jesus brings up the 'good householder' next as being that person who can bring out of the storeroom both the new and the old (knowing what one's got and what one's not) (Matt 13:52). I love to point out that this may be an editorial comment by Matthew, the gospel good scribe himself, who happens to be excellently skilled at blending the Old Testament and the New Testament (seen in how he expertly manages utilizing Old Testament quotes the most with new prophecy acts of Jesus and bridges the index of books from old to new in the Bible). His skill is weaving the old and new together, knowing the place of each and what best complements fulfills the other. That takes 'listening-discerning weighing heart'. Wisdom. This divine gift of wisdom God granted Solomon may all be contained in the Book of proverbs, but taking it up we have to discern a proverb's place-its applicable time-proverbs might or might not fit every time. Like with the parables, dig, bury and dig the field, or visit and revisit the market, or sit and sort through the fish net.... Wisdom comes from discerning. Word for the day: discernment. For example, consider common proverbs. Do you notice that sometimes they even oppose one another: such as 'Haste makes waste' but what about 'early bird (hasty one) gets the worm'? However, discerning their best use, they can both be supplanted and wisdom revealed when like Solomon or Matthew, or we come to this one, "a stitch in time saves nine". Wisdom is finding each one's place; or better said, knowing each one's humble place is true wisdom. That is the Kingdom of Heaven. So we have to explore the 'storeroom'. That is Jesus's life. He is Wisdom Incarnate. And wisdom is as wisdom does (did Forrest Gump say that?), so we can embody this 'discerning-listening heart' if we live as Jesus did (speak what he spoke and act as he acted). Said another way, "If we simply follow Him."