

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

CYCLE A

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

(An unlit candle and an open bible rest on a table in the gathering place. As members arrive they place the precious item they have brought with them on the table.)

OPENING PRAYER

(When the community is assembled, the candle is lit. Members pause for a time in quiet recognition of the presence of God. After some time of silence the community sings, "Canticle of the Sun," cf. Internet)

Member: Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your wisdom so that we will begin to understand the depth of your love for us. Grant us wisdom to know your decrees. Breathe your breath of wisdom deep within our hearts and lead us to you. We ask this through your son, Jesus, our brother and Lord.

All: Amen.

COMMENTARY

As his father's only son, Solomon was to rule over Israel after the death of his father, David. Solomon recognized that his father was a great and faithful king. He recognized, too, that he was young and inexperienced. He knew he had a lot to learn. When God approached in a dream, Solomon's prayer was simple and direct. He asked not for wealth, health or any worldly gifts. He prayed for wisdom, for an understanding heart. Wisdom would enable him to recognize injustice and to bring forth justice. With wisdom he could govern God's people with compassion and understanding of others. Wisdom led Solomon to recognize that *his* people were first of all *God's* people. For Solomon, wisdom was the pearl of great price. Living life in relationship to God was the highest value.

Confronted by the proverbial genie from out of a bottle, how many people today would ask for wisdom as one of their three wishes? Such an intangible is wisdom; it is a quality of soul. Wisdom cannot be bought; nor can it really be worked for. It is a grace given by God in a life that is being well-lived. We each have the capacity to receive this gift. The key to receiving the wisdom for which Solomon prayed, is in knowing who we are as servants standing before God and in abiding in God's word. May God give us that treasure.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ When has your sense of inadequacy or lack of confidence before some task moved you to prayer? How did this situation resolve itself?
- ◆ Name one or two of the wisdom figures in your life. What has been their impact on you?
- ◆ How easily do you “distinguish right from wrong” these days?
- ◆ What are the key values in your life at this time? How does what you value most help you to reach the kingdom of God?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Re-read this week's reading about Solomon. Pray for an understanding heart, for the grace to distinguish more clearly between right and wrong.
- ◆ Go to www.crsfairtrade.org to find a Catholic Relief Services partner near you and purchase some of their fantastic Fair Trade coffee to drink at home. Persuade the powers-that-be to serve it in your parish, office and school. Sell it as a fundraiser.
- ◆ When faced with an upcoming key decision in your life or at work, take counsel from three people, at least one of whom you know might offer a perspective you don't really want to hear. Receive their thoughts without a challenge. Let them stay with you for a while before deciding on a course of action.

CLOSING PRAYER

(Members stand in a circle and again join in singing, “Canticle of the Sun,” cf. Internet.. The facilitator invites members to reflect in quiet .

about some area of their lives for which they need the help of God's wisdom. After a few minutes of silence, the facilitator invites people to offer a few words of prayer for the wisdom they need. In response to each prayer, the community prays, "God grant us your wisdom." When these prayers are complete, members join hands and pray the Lord's Prayer. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)

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