

July 26, 2020 | 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

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

[PS 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

[ROM 8:28-30](#)

[MT 13:44-52 OR 13:44-46](#)

By Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF

A story is told about a taxi passenger who needed to ask the driver a question. So, she gently tapped the driver's shoulder. At that – the driver screamed, lost control of the vehicle, swerved across four traffic lanes, and came to a screeching halt on the opposite shoulder! For what seemed like hours, no one spoke. Then the driver anxiously burst out “ –I'm sorry – but you scared me to death! Stunned that her action caused such an extreme response, the passenger explained she meant merely to ask a question. Immediately the driver interrupted “ –Oh no! It's my fault! It's my first time driving a taxi, but for 25 years, I've driven a hearse. So much of our “usual “ways of being and knowing” is so deeply ingrained in us that we aren't rationally conscious of the reasons for acting as we do, though we continue to behave in habitual ways.

Some six months ago, we had “normal” ways of going about our lives (for good or for ill). Then we were confronted by a global pandemic, “Black Lives Matter,” – all on top of “a climate emergency.” These were “taps” on our shoulders! Each and all, of these events, have cut deeply into our personal, communal, and national coping capacity, exposing the stark fallacy of our national myth of “rugged individualism.” By contrast, today's readings call us to attend to the “Kingdom of Heaven,” – a community of all who believe in Christ – but ultimately, the entire global community. We are called to live as a human family.

If anyone could have cause to champion individuality – it would be King Solomon. By all accounts, he was smart, handsome, and powerful. But instead, he chose WISDOM – and the ability to save his people. What can we learn from Solomon's choice?

These days we have been forced to confront sobering and serious questions about what we REALLY VALUE in life. The need for our very survival has pushed us to take another long hard look at the true meaning of what it takes to live as a member of a community – local, national or global – that is, the “Kingdom of Heaven.” Our Christian faith pushes us to desire to do good both for others and for the common good for all. How many times have we heard “ –We are all in this together?” Will we let this become just another cliché or can we who believe in Jesus Christ take it to another level?

Today's Gospel concludes: “Every scribe of the Kingdom is like the head of the household who brings out from his storeroom both the new and the old” (Matt.13:52). Jesus' mission was built on the long prophetic and wisdom traditions of the Jewish people. He called everyone to treat each other – especially the weakest and poorest – with the same love and justice as God. Jesus points our way when he says that “Wisdom” knows how to use what is old and what is new. So, what does that mean today?

We need to focus on the values of the Kingdom of Heaven and use them wisely. These past months have exposed the reality that we, “the world’s richest nation,” have harbored many sins – racism, classism, destruction of the ecological systems, inadequate health care, lack of affordable housing - and much more. Millions are now more insecure in America than in several 3rd world nations! We, like Solomon, are offered WISDOM for a return to the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven. We can move forward from our past sins of omission and commission. What of our very best our nation’s vision and values and our Catholic social teaching will we restore to our laws and practices? What of our current laws and practices must we halt and remove? Who are the leaders we can elect in November who will choose WISDOM?

Today’s readings teach us how to, not only “pray” – but more importantly – to be attentive to hear the voice of God within our current crisis. The second reading assures us:

Brothers and sisters:

*We know that all things work for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose....*

Let us love enough to ask for wisdom, really listen, and then together let us act!

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