

THE 17TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR 'A'
(I Kings 3:5-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52)

July 27, 2008

THEME: WHAT IS YOUR 'SUMMUM BONUM'?

In Christian philosophy there is a something called *summum bonum* or the **supreme good**. The *summum bonum* is believed to be not just the best thing one could ever have but also that good which contains in itself or brings along with it all other good and desirable things. It is that, which completely satisfies the otherwise insatiable desires of the human heart.

In the first reading **Solomon** prays for and is granted wisdom which he sees as the *supreme good*. As a young King, Solomon had many legitimate needs. He needed wealth, military might, fame, security, prosperity, long life and happiness. But when God asked him to ask for one thing, he asked for the **wisdom** from above. He knew that with wisdom (*the supreme good*) comes every other good thing he needed and desired. And God confirmed his choice in these words:

I will do what you have asked....I will also give you what you have not asked for; all your life you will have wealth and honor, more than that of any other king (I Kings 3: 12-13).

The contrast between wisdom and the other things that Solomon might have asked for connects this reading with the Gospel reading. In the **Gospel**, Jesus tells us two short parables that point out the exceedingly great value that we must place on the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is to be seen as the *summum bonum* or the *supreme good* which we must sacrifice everything so as to possess it.

When I was a little boy, my mother bought a beautiful puppy. She placed it in front of a magnifying mirror. The reflection of the puppy in the mirror was ten times bigger than the real puppy. My mother then called my elder sister and I to come and choose one of the two puppies – that is, between the small but real life puppy and the very big but fake one in the mirror. I was asked to choose first. Of course, I quickly chose the big one in the mirror. When my sister was about to cry, my mother pleaded with her to accept the small one. Immediately she got hold of the small but real puppy and left the room, the big one (**my own**) in the magnifying mirror also disappeared. It was then that I noticed that whoever has the real life puppy (*summum bonum*) has also the reflection we see in the mirror.

The reflection of the puppy in the magnifying mirror can be compared to all the wealth, pleasures and glories of this passing world. They look very big, so real and good, but they

are mere shadows and will all fade away with time. On the other hand, the real but small puppy can be seen as the supreme good (*summum bonum*) of the kingdom. Whoever possesses it has everything. Like my little self, what we pursue at times are nothing but mere reflections when compared to the value of the kingdom which is the supreme good.

Today's readings invite us to ask ourselves this important question: Among all the things I desire in life, which one of them is the real puppy and which one is the big reflection in the mirror? What is the one desire of my life that once found will bring all my other legitimate desires in its train? The Gospel calls this ultimate desire of the human heart "*the kingdom of God.*" "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom of God is God's reign in our hearts, in our lives, in our homes, in our society, and in our world.

The one who finds the kingdom of God finds everything desirable besides. That is why it is compared to hidden treasure in a field which a man finds, then goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. Or a precious pearl which a merchant finds, then goes and sells everything he has and buys this one pearl.

In fact, these parables invite us not only to seek **first** the kingdom of God but to seek **only** the kingdom because with the kingdom of God comes every other good thing that we desire and long for. Getting the kingdom of God is like my sister who took the real puppy and immediately the one in the mirror followed her. Solomon in the first reading is a good illustration of a man who went for the real puppy rather than the shadow.

If God came in your dream tonight and asked you to ask for one thing and one thing only, what would you ask for? Would you have the Wisdom of Solomon to ask for the reign of God in your personal and business life? Is the kingdom of God so important to you that you are prepared to sell and part with all you have in order to have it? Remember, the kingdom of God is not just one among so many other good and desirable things. It is the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, the one and only good thing we shall ever need to achieve total satisfaction and fulfillment in life. If you have the kingdom of God you have everything and if you don't have the kingdom of God you have nothing.

Let us pray: "Lord Jesus, reveal to me the true riches of your kingdom. Help me to set my heart on you alone as the treasure beyond compare with any other. Free my heart of any inordinate desires or attachment to other things. May I always find joy and delight in your presence" AMEN!

GOD IS GOOD! ALL THE TIME!