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17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, July 26, 2026 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** A
First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7–12
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:57, 72, 76–77, 127–130 | **Response:** Psalm 119:97a
Second Reading: Romans 8:28–30
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:25
Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:44–52
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

We have just heard that Solomon met the Lord in a dream. He was young, newly crowned, and carrying a burden too heavy for his shoulders. In that dream, God said to him, "Ask what you would like me to give you." Solomon could have asked for a long life, great wealth, strong armies, or victory over his enemies. Many rulers would have asked for those things. Many of us might ask for them too, in our own way: security, comfort, success, health, money, peace of mind.

But Solomon asks for something better. He asks for a heart that can discern between good and evil. He asks for wisdom. He asks for the grace to judge rightly, to govern well, and to serve God's people with a clean heart.

That is a beautiful prayer. Solomon does not ask to be famous. He does not ask to be feared. He does not ask to win every argument. He asks for the inner light to see what is right and the courage to choose it.

This is wisdom. Wisdom is not the same as cleverness. In our age of artificial intelligence, we need this distinction more than ever. AI can help process information. It can gather facts, sort words, find patterns, and offer answers quickly. That can be useful. But wisdom is different. Wisdom judges what is good. Wisdom asks what serves life. Wisdom listens to God. Wisdom guides the heart towards love, justice, and truth.

A clever person may know how to get what he wants. A wise person knows what is worth wanting. A clever person may know how to rise in the world. A wise person knows how to walk with God.

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The psalm says, “Lord, how I love your law.” The psalmist says God’s word is better than gold. He does not speak as someone trapped by rules. He speaks as someone who has found a light for the road. God’s word helps him see where to place his feet. It keeps him from walking into darkness.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us three pictures of the Kingdom. A man finds treasure hidden in a field. A merchant finds a pearl of great value. A net is thrown into the sea and gathers fish of every kind.

The first man was not searching for treasure. He was simply working in the field. In the time of Jesus, people often buried valuables in the ground. Ordinary villagers did not have banks. War, danger, flight, and sudden death meant that treasure could remain hidden for years. So the people listening to Jesus knew this scene. A man digs in the soil. His spade hits something hard. He opens the earth and finds treasure. He was not looking for it, but he knows what he has found.

The merchant is different. He is searching. He has trained his eyes. He knows the difference between a common pearl and a rare one. When he sees the pearl of great value, he recognises it at once.

So it is with Christ. Sometimes we meet him when we are not looking: in work, in sickness, in a brother’s kindness, in a failure that humbles us, in a poor person who asks for help. Sometimes we find him after a long search: years of prayer, study, service, struggle, and silence. But when we truly meet him, we begin to see life differently. Money matters, but it is not the treasure. Success has its place, but it is not the pearl. Comfort is welcome, but it cannot save us. Christ is the treasure. His Kingdom is the pearl.

Both men sell everything. They do not do this with sadness. The man sells everything “with joy.” He has found something so precious that all his other possessions now seem small. This is not grim religion. This is the joy of a heart that has finally found what it was made for.

Saint Paul says, “All things work together for good for those who love God.” He does not mean that all things are good. Hunger is not good. Corruption is not good. Violence is not good. A family in Zimbabwe unable to pay school fees is not good. A sick person unable to buy medicine is not good. A young person losing hope is not good.

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Paul means that God can work even there. God can enter the broken place. God can bring courage out of fear, mercy out of pain, patience out of waiting, and new life out of loss. More than that, God uses even the hardest parts of life to shape us into the image of Christ. Paul knew this from his own life. He had been beaten, imprisoned, rejected, and left in danger. Yet he knew that God was still at work.

This is why we need Solomon's wisdom. Without it, we look at life and ask only what we have gained or lost. With it, we begin to see where God is leading us. We begin to notice the treasure hidden in the field.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola knew this well. Before his conversion, he chased a small treasure: honour, glory, fine clothes, brave stories, and the admiration of others. Then a cannonball shattered his leg. During his recovery, he began to notice the movements of his heart. Dreams of glory left him restless, dry, and empty. Thoughts of serving Christ left him peaceful, alive, and generous.

In those movements, Ignatius found the true treasure. He later called them desolation and consolation: desolation pulls us away from God and leaves the heart dry; consolation draws us towards God and gives deep peace. So he laid down his sword, gave away his rich clothes, and offered his life to God. He teaches us to notice what leads us towards God and what leads us away from God. The true treasure is often found where pride would never look. The wise heart will recognise it.

Jesus then speaks of the net. It gathers fish of every kind. This is the Church. It is not a room for perfect people. It is a net full of mixed lives. We carry faith and fear, goodness and sin, courage and weakness. We must not be quick to sort others as if judgement belonged to us. Our task now is mercy, truth, patience, and mission. Yet Jesus also tells us that judgement is real. At the end, God will separate what is good from what is evil. Mercy is not carelessness. It is the form God's love takes in relation to sinners. It is also the time God gives us to come back to him.

Then Jesus speaks of the scribe trained for the Kingdom, who brings from his storeroom things both new and old. That is our calling too. We receive the old treasure of Scripture, the sacraments, the saints, and the Exercises. We also bring

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the new questions of our time: AI, poverty, migration, loneliness, wounded families, and a nation longing for justice and hope. The wise disciple holds both together and asks where Christ is calling now.

At this altar, God gives us more than Solomon received. He gives us his own Son. Christ is the treasure in the field. Christ is the pearl of great value. Christ is the wisdom of God made flesh. Let us ask for Solomon's gift: a wise heart. A heart that can hear God. A heart that can recognise the poor. A heart that can choose the Kingdom with joy.

This week, let us pray with these three questions:

- What false treasure is leaving my heart dry?
- Where is Christ hidden in my daily life?
- What must I let go of to follow Him with joy?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.