

Homily
July 30, 2-23
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
21:38 – 28:09

To Do Lists.

How many here have “To Do Lists” in your life. Raise your hands. – Aha!

They are very many, aren’t they? Some of us may have three or four different types of them and they help us organize our daily lives.

We have To Do Lists for work. Yes? We have To Do Lists for retirement. Right, Bill? You have certain things that you’ve got to do on certain days, like play golf. And that’s the day we pray for your immortal soul.

We have Honey Do Lists. And then we have the personal To Do Lists.

And each of those lists asks us to set priorities. For example, what is first to be done in a process, so that everything else will follow smoothly? Or, what’s most important of all these tasks that needs to be attacked first? And what will gratify us as the person doing the task, as well as gratify the people who will receive the fruits of the task.

All those tasks are important, to be true, but what guides those choices of what comes first? What is the goal under which to order the tasks? And even more important, what is the first principle that moves us to action?

In our First Reading from the Book of Judges, Solomon recognizes his youth and inexperience. He needs help if he is to fulfill the goal given to him. And so he turns to the Lord and asks for understanding, an understanding heart and wisdom. To meet the goal and do what is required to care for the people. That’s the goal...to care for the people.

That same basic gift of wisdom stands behind the two parables in our Gospel today. The Kingdom of God is the preeminent value or goal for life. Wisdom is the driving force to discern the Kingdom, to name it, to pursue it, to find it, and then to invest “all in,” as it were.

Now, we all have priorities in our lives, whether we are aware of them, or not. Some of our lives, consciously or unconsciously, are directed by the pursuit of wealth or comfort or security. Some of our

lives are directed by our love of God and neighbor. And some of our lives are a mish-mash of competing goals between which we vacillate in periodic states of confusion.

Our priorities, whatever they may be, are what determine what kind of life we have and whether it is a self-serving life, a godly life or a confused life.

Jesus' parables, both those today and in other passages, remind us that it is reasonable, even necessary, to have priorities. We need to be aware that some things are more important than clothes, than power or prestige. And that no sacrifice is too great to acquire what is most important.

And our reading from Judges today teaches us that one of the most basic priorities for a person of faith is the determination to do what God wants done.

In Solomon's case, it was the care of God's people.

In our case, it is the love and concern for our neighbor, in accord with what God wants for that neighbor.

Having the right priorities, having priorities that are in harmony with the priorities of God, is what constitutes "wisdom." That is what God confers upon Solomon. That is what Jesus invites his disciples to embrace. And that is what God invites us to pursue in our relationship with him. To align our priorities with those of God.

You know, wisdom does not mean the ability to work out esoteric problems that ordinary people cannot handle. It's a wonderful thing that we have certain members of the human family who can do that. But most of us are not that person.

No. For us, wisdom means having the right priorities and knowing how to apply those priorities to the nuts and bolts of our daily life.

And so, wisdom is not just for kings. Wisdom is something that God offers to every believer. And it is something that every believer needs.

Perhaps this week we can take up Solomon's prayer from our First Reading and modify it for our reality. What is our goal? How are we to serve it? What are the priorities and actions that will serve it? And having rewritten it, pray it.

That would be a valuable exercise, don't you think? In fact, we might just be wiser for doing so.