

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

July 26, 2026 · Lectionary 109

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

1 Kings 3:5, 7–12

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” Solomon answered: “O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?”

The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him: “Because you have asked for this—not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right—I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 119:57, 72, 76–77, 127–128, 129–130

R. Lord, I love your commands.

I have said, O LORD, that my part is to keep your words. The law of your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Let your kindness comfort me according to your promise to your servants. Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

For I love your commands more than gold, however fine. For in all your precepts I go forward; every false way I hate.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Wonderful are your decrees; therefore I observe them. The revelation of your words sheds light, giving understanding to the simple.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

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SECOND READING

Romans 8:28–30

Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:44–52

Jesus said to his disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

“Do you understand all these things?” They answered, “Yes.” And he replied, “Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 109. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/072626.cfm

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Reflection

Solomon does not ask God for power, wealth, or victory. He asks for wisdom—an understanding heart capable of leading people too vast to number. God is so moved by this request that he grants Solomon everything he did not ask for as well. In the Gospel, Jesus uses three swift parables to say the same thing from a different angle: the Kingdom is a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, a net that gathers everything. Each image makes the same demand—total re-ordering of what we value most. Paul ties both readings together: those who love God are being conformed to his Son—predestined, called, justified, glorified. Spiritual leaders take their cue from Solomon: before asking for outcomes, ask for wisdom. Before expecting fruit, examine the soil of the heart. The Kingdom is worth everything. Give it everything.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Ask for Wisdom Before Asking for Results

Solomon's prayer is a model for every leader: before asking for success, outcomes, or resources, ask for an understanding heart (1 Kgs 3:9). Leaders who begin with the desire to discern rightly—rather than the desire to win—lead from a fundamentally different posture.

PRINCIPLE 2

Acknowledge What You Do Not Know

Solomon says, "I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act" (1 Kgs 3:7). Admitting the limits of your knowledge and experience is not weakness—it is the beginning of wisdom. Leaders who cannot name their gaps cannot grow past them.

PRINCIPLE 3

Re-order Your Priorities Around the Kingdom

The man who finds the treasure and the merchant who finds the pearl both sell everything they have (Mt 13:44–46). Spiritual leadership requires periodic, honest examination: What am I holding onto that I need to release? What does the Kingdom actually cost me right now?

PRINCIPLE 4

Value What Endures Over What Glitters

The psalm declares that God's commands are more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces (Ps 119:72). We are constantly tempted by metrics, recognition, and speed. Wisdom means placing lasting value—character, depth, faithfulness—above immediate reward.

PRINCIPLE 5

Trust That God Is Working All Things Together

Paul's declaration that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28) is not naive optimism—it is grounded trust in divine providence. Those who hold this conviction can navigate setbacks, delays, and confusion without losing their sense of direction.

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Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Solomon asks God for an understanding heart rather than wealth or power (1 Kgs 3:9). If God said to you today, “Ask something of me,” what would you ask for as you strive to lead your family and others? What does your answer reveal about what you value most right now?

QUESTION 2

Solomon admits he is “a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act” (1 Kgs 3:7). Where in your current leadership are you most aware of your own inadequacy or inexperience? What would it look like to bring that honestly before God this week?

QUESTION 3

The man finds a treasure and sells everything to obtain it; the merchant finds a pearl and does the same (Mt 13:44–46). What has the Kingdom cost you personally? Is there something you are still holding onto that the Kingdom is asking you to release?

QUESTION 4

Psalm 119 says God’s law is “more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Ps 119:72). When you strive to lead your family to God, what do you tend to overvalue—speed, recognition, productivity, comfort? How might you rebalance your priorities toward what endures?

QUESTION 5

Paul writes that “all things work for good for those who love God” (Rom 8:28). Reflect on a difficult season in your life - where do you now see God at work in what felt like failure, delay, or confusion at the time?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, pray Solomon's prayer in your own words: "God, I don't fully know how to lead this people. Give me an understanding heart." Then identify one decision, conversation, or situation where you have been relying on your own cleverness instead of asking for wisdom. Bring that specific thing to God before you act on it (1 Kgs 3:9).

"Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong." — 1 Kings 3:9

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you appeared to Solomon and offered him anything he desired. Teach us to desire what is truly worth asking for: wisdom to discern, humility to admit our limits, and hearts trained to distinguish right from wrong. Deliver us from the ambition that asks for the wrong things.

Jesus, you showed us a Kingdom so worth having that a person would sell everything to obtain it. Reorder our hearts. Show us what we are holding too tightly. Give us the courage to let go of lesser treasures so we can receive the one thing of lasting worth.

Holy Spirit, you who work all things together for the good of those who love God—work in us. In our failures and confusions, in our delays and disappointments, be the unseen hand that conforms us to the image of the Son. Make us leaders who trust your providence more than our own plans. Amen.

***"The revelation of your words sheds light, giving understanding to the simple." —
Psalm 119:130***