

Homily of Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalm 34:2-7; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

The first reading tells us that Wisdom built her house. She sets up seven columns (canopies), dressed her tables with all kinds of meat and mixed wine. Buffet presents us with an imagination of this set up. Wisdom sends out her errand men to invite us, the simple and who lack understanding saying, "Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding" (Proverbs 9:5). This invitation is for us by Jesus Christ who is "the wisdom of God and the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Through the Eucharistic celebration, Jesus invites us to a spiritual banquet. In the Eucharistic celebration, we consume God's word and the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus says in today's gospel, "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (John 6:55). Whoever remains in him draws from the wisdom of God and the power of God.

St. Paul in the second reading continues the invitation. "Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise... Do not continue in ignorance... Do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Ephesians 5:15-20). St. Paul was addressing the Ephesians; many of whom were in the habit of getting drunk and living immoral life. At that time Ephesus was a city that produced a lot of wine. St. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians to stop living foolish and ignorant life is to us since we at one time or another find ourselves behaving foolishly or ignorantly. Whenever we ignore the word of God, we behave foolishly.

Many governments, many institutions, and many media outlets propagate and promote policies and strategies that alienate the knowledge of God from the world.

I once watched a TV program where the panel spent an hour discussing the reasons for so much violence in our society. The panel also suggested solutions. Throughout the discussion, the alienation of God from our world never came up as the primary and major reason of violence. The Scripture says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). A godless people are a lawless people. Wherever God is alienated, there is anarchy. Prophet Zechariah confronted the Israelites during a chaotic time in their history with the following words, "Because you have abandoned the Lord, he has abandoned you" (2 Chronicle 24:20).

Recently, the Governor of the State of Louisiana signed into law the display of the Ten Commandments in every classroom in public schools. Recently, also, the State of Oklahoma's Department of Education ordered every teacher in the state to have a Bible and to teach from it. These actions will go a long way to imprinting God's values in the hearts of many children. We pray that anti-Christian groups and courts do not frustrate the implementation of the laws. C. S. Lewis writes, "Education without God makes a person a mere clever devil." If God is absent in whoever we are, and wherever we are, and whatever we have, whatever we are doing, then the Evil One is present.

Religious leaders, elders, parents, and teachers have a lot of work to do since we pass on to our children what we have. Jesus asks, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39). It is said in Latin, "*Nemo dat quod non habet*," meaning "No one can give what they do not have."

Another type of ignorance that is hurting our society is ignorance of history and ignorance of culture. In some places, history is no longer studied in schools. In some places the study of history is watered down. Many people's language and culture are dying out since they are being abandoned. Those who lose their history and those who lose their culture lose their root. As quoted earlier, indeed, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

The first reading invites us, "Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding." St. Paul invites us in the second reading, "Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons... Do not continue in ignorance..., but be filled with the Holy Spirit." The gospel encourages us to feed on Jesus the wisdom of God and the power of God. Jesus assures us, "The one who feeds on me will have life because of me." Jesus says, "Because I live, you shall live" (John 14:19). May God's wisdom and power and the Holy Spirit cast out all foolishness and ignorance, make us advance in the way of understanding, lead and guide us in all we say and all we do. Amen.

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