

## Homily of Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

**Wisdom 7:7-11; Psalm 90:12-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30**

The first reading explains the importance of wisdom. The Book of Job describes wisdom as the fear of the Lord and avoiding evil (Job 28:28). The fear of the Lord should not connote fear of God who punishes sinners. Fear of the Lord means to have profound reverence for God, to keep his commandments, and to distaste sin. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy one is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

The first reading says the following about wisdom: Wisdom is greater than scepter and throne. One can have scepter and throne (power), but has no wisdom. Wisdom is greater than silver and gold. One can have silver and gold (opportunities), but wastes them. Wisdom is greater than health and comeliness. One can have health and comeliness (good-looking), but foolish.

Today, we are advised, "Get wisdom, get understanding! ... Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will safeguard you" (Proverbs 4:5-6). "For by [wisdom], your days will be multiplied, and the years of your life increased" (Proverbs 9:11).

Despite his wealth, the young King Solomon prayed for wisdom: "Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil" (1 King 3:9). If God asks us what we need him to do for us, how many of us would pray like Solomon? I am sure that the things of this world would be our priority. How many young people would desire wisdom as their priority?

The second reading tells us that the best source of wisdom is the word of God. The reading says, "Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12-13). This means that if we rely on God's word, we will gain the wisdom that can always guide us to discern properly and to judge wisely. As believers, we need to refer to God's word to guide us in all we say and all we do.

In the gospel, the man did nothing extra-ordinary by keeping the commandments. "You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother" (Mark 10:19). These natural and civil laws were required to be kept by everyone or face the wrath of the law. At that time, dishonor to parents was a criminal offense that attracted the death penalty! Leviticus 20:9 says, "Anyone who curses their father or mother must be put to death." But there was no legal punishment for failing to do works of charity.

Therefore, Jesus challenged him to step out of his comfort zone and begin to live a more radical life of self-giving and self-sacrifice that were beyond keeping to the letter of the law. "You are lacking in one thing," Jesus says, "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor ..., then come and follow me.' At the statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:21-22). His major problem was not only that he had many possessions, he lacked the spirit of self-giving and self-sacrifice.

"Peter began to say to him, 'We have given up everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come'" (Mark 10:28-30).

Some persons have the special calling to, practically, give up material possessions and family in order to serve God and humanity. However, in one way or another, everyone is invited to a life of self-giving and self-sacrifice. We can respond positively to Jesus' invitation. Or, we can have excuses and go away sad.

Also, our many possessions that make our faces fall and make us walk away sad are our spiritual baggage: unforgiveness, guilt, hatred, immoral life, anger, envy and jealousy, fear, anxiety, vanity, power, ego (pride), lack of faith, and so on. The wisdom to repent and have the Sacrament of Reconciliation means selling everything!

Therefore, let us pray to reject the wisdom of this world, which St. Paul calls foolishness before God (1 Corinthians 3:19), and embrace Jesus Christ who is the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). With the power and wisdom of God, we can distinguish between good and evil, and do good and avoid evil. We conclude with a paraphrase of Proverbs 4:5-6 cited above: Have a relationship with Jesus! Do not forsake him, and he will preserve you; love him, and he will safeguard you. Amen.

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