

CHS JMJ

It should be easy to detect the theme for today's readings – it is *Wisdom*, one of my favorite subjects. The word WISDOM is there in the first and the second reading, and the concept is certainly there in the *Responsorial Psalm*. And in the Gospel, even though it doesn't mention the word, it is really all about wisdom. It's from the *Sermon on the Mount* with Jesus uttering a wisdom that was not of this world, but from Heaven.

I said in the past that I sometimes go to *Siri* at the very beginning of homily planning and ask her for a definition. I didn't waste my time this time around because I was quite confident that she would not say that... "*the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord.*" *Siri* is a little too worldly for that type of statement. That passage, incidentally, comes from the *Book of Proverbs* in the Old Testament.

No, we Christians, for our purposes, are not speaking about worldly wisdom, but spiritual wisdom. And I have come up with my own definition. "*Wisdom is the ability to discern between right and wrong, and good and evil, along with the resolve to choose the right, and avoid the wrong, embrace the good, and reject the evil, all with the goal of attaining eternal life.*" And isn't this what the first reading says? *Sirach* is from the *Wisdom Literature* of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, the early name of the book is *The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach* (or Jesus, son of Sirach. Jesus was apparently a common name back then). It's also known as *Ecclesiasticus*, which means *Church Book* because it was widely used in the early Church as a catechism, to teach the catechumens.

But there in *Sirach* we are given some basic information about wisdom. "*If you are wise, you can choose to keep the commandments. They will save you.*" "*God has set before you fire and water, life and death, good and evil. Make your choice, reach out your hand, and it will be given to you.*" In other words, we've been warned; choose wisely, or else.

And the second reading from St. Paul speaks, not about the wisdom of the age, or the wisdom of the world, but a wisdom for '*the mature*'. He says that this world is passing away. And then he uses that famous description of Heaven as a place where ... "*Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and where it hasn't even dawned on us, what God has prepared.....for those who love him.*" And it looks like a lot of people are not gonna make it there because of a lack of maturity. Or a lack of wisdom. Or a lack of..... love.

I'm aware of two movies recently that might help make the point. Maybe you've seen them. The first one is called *What is a Woman?* The movie maker goes around asking what sounds like a pretty basic question. But a lot of moderns, amazingly, were not able to answer that question. This is a reflection of the times that we're in. This is the essence of *Wokeness*, political correctness, and liberal-progressive thinking gone mad. And it has led to great confusion. And confusion, I've heard, is one of the *signs of the times*. And wouldn't you agree that we are all kind of confused these days?

The other movie is called *Birthgap* and it's about a situation that we find ourselves in of not being able to reproduce our population. Fewer and fewer people are getting married and having children. It doesn't take much imagination to discern what's going to happen someday. "*Will the last person alive, please turn out the lights?*" The original wisdom was given quite early on in

the book of Genesis. “*Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the Earth.*” We won’t need an atomic bomb to bring it all to an end. We can do it ourselves by just following worldly wisdom.

One of the many reasons that people are not having children is the fear of overpopulation. I can still remember as a young man, watching this live on the Johnny Carson late-night show where a professor named Dr. Paul Erlich spoke about “the population bomb”, and that we were headed for a disaster where we would have too many people on the Earth and not enough food to feed them. This was not a new idea. It’s been around for hundreds of years. A man named Thomas Malthus, a Protestant minister and a mathematician, began the concerns with his calculations. He did the math and came up with the same conclusion that Professor Erlich would have many years later. Both of their warnings proved to be wrong, but they still produced a fear in people that lasts to this very day. Again, the wisdom of the world. You don’t want to accuse people like this of being evil or liars. We can just presume that their science was lacking. That they didn’t have enough information, and that their data must have been wrong.

In some cases, however, maybe the evil is a bit more apparent. Some years ago, a scientific trio, named *Masters and Johnson*, along with *Dr. Alfred Kinsey*, taught us all about human sexuality. They basically threw out all the old, outdated, and “repressive” morality, and we fallen human beings, having those “itching ears”, bought into their theories. And so began the road to immorality, and the *Sexual Revolution* of the 60s which takes us right up to the present and all of our sexual confusion.

And so we are in the midst of a disaster right now. It doesn’t take a whole lot of imagination to say that really, in the end, we will need to be rescued. We are now midway in that presentation by Fr. John Ricardo called RESCUED. We can say that Jesus rescued us once, at His first coming, and it becomes more and more apparent every day that He will have to come again to rescue us a second time. What will that look like? Will everyone be rescued? Well, that’s a debatable question but there is plenty of info in the *Sermon on the Mount* that should give us pause for reflection. “*If your right hand causes you to sin, it would be better if you cut it off, lest with two hands, you go to hell.*” And, “*not everyone, who says lord, lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father.*” Christ’s words at *The Sermon on the Mount* were a revolutionary wisdom – He turned the world upside down. And He spoke with authority, not like the scribes and Pharisees. And he changed hearts forever, at least for anybody who had the wisdom to listen.

At our death, those who are deserving will go to our home in Heaven, but not as a family, not as a community or a congregation; but only one person at a time. Nevertheless, we are all responsible for each other – I’m responsible for you, and you husbands and wives are responsible for each other’s salvation and together you are responsible for your children’s salvation. But life is complex. The culture is strong. Temptation is real, and people have the free will to make their own choices, frequently taking the wrong path and risking the loss of their salvation. What we do is to pray for them, and hope for them, and trust that the Lord hears our prayers on their behalf. Perhaps, he will be merciful to them. After that we can always hope for that “Warning” that we have been hearing about. The promised *Illumination of Conscience* in which everybody on the planet will see themselves as God sees them. Hopefully, they will have the humility, the maturity and the wisdom to repent of their sins and be saved.

And then there was even a scene in that last episode of *The Chosen* where Jesus feeds the 5000. Each of those people witnessed a miracle. Did all of them convert? Did all of them live righteous lives from that point on? Well, He answered that question with His parable of the seed falling on good soil where it takes root, grows and produces fruit. But the seed also falls on rocky ground. Again, not all will be strong enough, wise enough or mature enough to finish the course and secure their salvation...

I'm going to close now with the last stanza of today's *Responsorial Psalm*. I think we should write it down on a little sheet of paper, or better yet, memorize it, and make it one of those little prayers we say from time to time. "*Instruct me, oh, Lord, in the way of your statutes. That I might follow them exactly. Give me discernment that I may observe your law..... and keep it with all my heart.Amen.*"

+Fr. John