

## Homily for the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

In our first reading today, we hear from the Book of Wisdom, also called the Wisdom of Solomon, since it's attributed to this very wise King of Israel. It's counted among the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, which also includes the Book of Proverbs and the Psalms. It's a book that we don't hear too much from, and yet it's theme of seeking wisdom is absolutely central – As we hear Solomon himself write, “I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her...” But while Solomon shows us that wisdom is such an important thing to seek and attain, what exactly is it?

Is wisdom the knowledge of a NASA scientist who has safely conducted many missions to space? Is wisdom the life experience of a woman who's lived 90 years, whose lines and wrinkles contain precious insight gained over time? Is wisdom the fresh outlook of a teenager, who seems to “know it all”? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, wisdom as one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is “a spiritual gift which enables one to know the purpose and plan of God.”

So, I guess that leads us to the question: What is the purpose and plan of God? Well, wisdom of course! OK...case made...homily over! Not so fast. As the Scriptures tell us, God's plan was to create us out of love and then redeem us in love through the very person of His Son, Jesus Christ. And what this means then, is that in the very person of Jesus Christ we encounter God's wisdom. In fact, one of the very ancient titles for Jesus was Wisdom Incarnate – God's wisdom made flesh.

Enter now our Gospel today, where Jesus encounters this rich man. Now, this zealous man really wanted to be a good disciple of Jesus. And, he thought that he'd truly be wise and seeking the Kingdom of God if he just *did* the right things. That's part of the truth. But, as we just said, wisdom is found in a person, our Lord Jesus Christ. And in His conversation with that rich man, Jesus invited him to discover that wisdom by growing in His personal relationship with Wisdom Incarnate. You see, this rich man came to Jesus, showing him all the things he'd already *done* right – all the things he could check off on his spiritual check list of things accomplished. But it wasn't just about *doing* the right things. It's about *doing* the right things for the right reasons. And this means that we do the right things so that we can grow in imitation of Jesus, our model, who brings us into right relationship with God the Father.

Now in the case of that rich man, Jesus knew that it was his possessions, which were keeping him from completely following Him. He was so attached to his stuff apparently that he wasn't really free to detach from it in order to attach himself more to Jesus. And so Jesus told him that if he would just sell what he had and give to the poor, he would not only have treasure in heaven, but he would also be able to follow after Him. But of course we know the outcome: the man went away sad, for he had many possessions. In the end it just seems that he wasn't willing to detach from his stuff in order to more fully attach to Christ.

My friends, the Wisdom of God tells us that the life of discipleship is about growing in conformity to Jesus. And I'm sorry, but being Catholic does not mean blindly obeying Church teachings and simply keeping the 10 Commandments, like that rich man apparently had. It's much more than this. It means, above all, becoming attached to the very person of Jesus in intimate relationship, which therefore obviously means detaching from that which is not of Him. And I'm not just talking about the bad things in life either. That rich man apparently had detached himself from sin – after all he was keeping the Commandments. But what Jesus wanted to show him was that he also needed to be willing to detach himself even from the good things in life.

In other words, having material wealth is not a bad thing – it's actually a blessing to be thankful for. But when something else or someone else or anything else or anyone else becomes more important to us than our relationship with the Lord, then we're making idols of those people or things, because we're putting them in God's rightful place. Then we're putting ourselves in the same boat as that rich man, who wanted to be a better disciple of Jesus, but wasn't willing to do whatever it took.

So, what might this wisdom look like as lived out in **our** lives? Perhaps coming to Mass faithfully each and every Sunday, instead of attaching our heads to the pillow. Maybe detaching from our phones and technology for a while in order to spend quality time with God in prayer. Perhaps speaking up for someone in need, rather than being too attached to what people would say. And when we try to live according to this Wisdom – God's wisdom – we begin to see how the great and wise King Solomon could have preferred her to everything else too. God bless you.