

Wisdom Comes in Many Forms

One of my earliest memories as a child was going to school for the first time. There was preschool which was held just a couple of blocks from our home, and then on a fall day in 1983 I entered kindergarten. What I remember is that at first, what seemed most important was recess, breaks, and play time after school and in summer. And there were a lot of memories of kickball, football and carefree days. But there was also a lot of learning that went on too. It wasn't always easy; at times I'd just long to get through the work to get back to playtime outside or to a video game. But my parents in their wisdom and my teachers kept encouraging me, and what I'd find is that with a little bit of work, so many doors would be opened. I'd gain the freedom to read books that took me into the worlds of hobbits and elves, action and adventure. I'd learn about the world around me. I'd learn about my faith. And to this day, while my days of formal education have come to an end, my goal is to always be learning more as I grow as a person.

At the same time, there is so much more to learning than books. Teachers have certainly taught me much, but just as if not more important than the stuff in textbooks have been the lessons learned from the people in my life who have put the faith into action. People like my parents and grandparents, who have been so loving and patient and done so much for our family. People like the incredible married couples I have come to know as a priest and see how they live out their vocation as husbands, wives and parents. And people like those on our amazing parish staff, who give so much to help our parishioners on their faith journey.

This week in the first reading, we meet a young Solomon, who can ask for anything he wants in a dream, and his reply to God is that he is young, and does not know how to act yet, and so asks for wisdom and understanding. God gives him this gift.

The beautiful thing though is this is a gift that is given to us, too. God gives us all virtues, including faith, hope and love at our baptism, and virtues of justice, temperance, prudence and fortitude. On top of this there are gifts of the spirit, wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord. To these we add the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

That's quite the tool box. But God while He gives us these gifts does not magically bring them to perfection in us. Rather, He invites us to take what we've been given, and grow with it. So, how are we doing?

With respect to the "book smarts," we can continue learning about the world we live in and it's wonders. But we also learn about this wonderful gift called faith. Why do we believe what we do? How might you answer when someone asks you what happens at Mass, or who is Mary to you, or who are the saints, or why do you believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, or who is the devil? When we learn about the faith, we can articulate it and help others on their faith journeys too. We also need to remember we are always students; the Church is our teacher. This means not rebelling, or ignoring

things we have a hard time with, but patiently trusting in the wisdom of the Church and listening to Her guidance. We keep studying the faith over our lives and also the world God created not to get on Jeopardy one day, but because in doing so we can come to know God at a deeper level.

Though commonly referred to as “street smarts,” I’ll use the term “saint smarts.” (I just made that up). Think of it as how to live out the faith we learn. The point is that a person can know a lot of book knowledge, but if they can’t apply that to working with people or in the workplace or daily life, it won’t do them a lot of good. Similarly, we know even the devil can quote scripture. There are people who may be experts on what the faith teaches, but need to also look at how to put that into action in their lives. And this is where the rubber hits the road. If we know more about God who is love, we can then emulate that through a way of life. Showing love, kindness, and patience to others, doing good works of love and charity, we can do so much to grow as people and to help others grow too. This means looking at our lives and doing a regular examination of conscience, making use of confession, turning our sins over to God, and trying to grow as people in being patient, forgiving and loving. In these actions, we grow in holiness and help others to do the same.

Solomon is given a great gift in the first reading, but sadly towards the end of his life, he loses his way and begins to turn from God’s ways, as his wives cause him to lose sight of God. If we aren’t careful this happens in our lives too. Just as when we are kids we have to do the homework and study to pass the test, we need to do the same thing to prepare for God’s final exam. So lets make sure we always make use of the wisdom God has given us, truly growing our minds, hearts and souls in knowledge of our God who is love.

Have a wonderful week,

Fr. Paul