Though it’s relatively unlikely any of us will find a lamp and get three wishes from a genie, I imagine at one point or another most of have daydreamed about what we might ask for if we could have anything we wanted, and the man in our first reading gets this opportunity this week.

Perhaps a young Solomon, perhaps another author, the author of Wisdom prays and we are told he gets an incredible gift, that of wisdom - something even greater then money, power, health and beauty. And what he finds is that it makes him truly happy; something that could have happened too to the rich young man we meet in the Gospel had he been able to let go and see the greater good.

Over and over again in literature old and new and in the real world, there are so many stories of people who come to realize this truth. And what they find is that while money, power, influence or the things we so often want aren’t bad, when you find God, and gain the insight into how to truly follow Him, you find true happiness.

One of the biggest stars in Hollywood during the 1940s was a young woman named Betty Hutton, best known as the star of Annie Get Your

Gun (1950). She took Hollywood by storm when she arrived in the film capital of the world in 1941. Hired to entertain people before a show one day, with gusto she told a studio press person‘ I might not be known, but they will [know me] after I’m finished. ’Said a press person “She just brought the house down,” and her star was about to shine.

After word got back to the studio, she was quickly cast in The Fleet’s In (1942), co-starring William Holden and Dorothy Lamour. She “exploded on the screen” with her trademark exuberant performance of “Arthur Murray Taught Me Dancing in a Hurry.”

“A vitamin pill with legs,” as Bob Hope put it a little later on.

A star was born. But along with her “tremendous, tremendous talents” came tremendous challenges and torments.

Betty’s father had abandoned the family in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1923, when she was two. The following year when she was 3 her singing debut was prompted by a drunken man who threatened to beat up her mother in her speakeasy.

Looking back on her childhood, she reflected "… I didn't know about God. My mother was an atheist. And the nuns were right across the street from us. Sometimes I had to run from the brutal stuff going on. And they would hide me in their skirts. I wasn't a Catholic and (non-Catholics) weren't allowed to go to Catholic school. But they would take me, and they taught me Catechism ... and I learned about God."

During the Great Depression, she sang on street corners to help keep food on the family table. Then her mother, who was an alcoholic but also someone who Betty loved deeply and saw as brilliant, took her to see a Charlie Chaplin film. Watching the film, Betty began making her future plans. "I'm going to be a star and my mother will stop drinking."

She quickly began getting one break after another, until the Broadway producer Buddy DeSylva became the production head at Paramount and brought her to Hollywood. She tried to keep her faith, saying: "I never went on the stage without praying," she continued. But she also reflected" When I got to Hollywood, it started to slowly go out of my system, and I got into trouble."

From her first film in 1941, Hutton consistently wowed audiences. But she could never escape the wounds of her childhood, especially the lack of a father figure. And as she drifted a bit from the faith, her life began to unravel.

In January 1950, she divorced her husband of five years. Three months later, she landed the role of a lifetime in Annie Get Your Gun. But despite her professional success, her life unraveled in 1952. Hutton injured her arm while filming “The Greatest Show on Earth” and became addicted to prescription pills. That same year, she tore up her Paramount contract. The studio’s doors slammed shut and she never really recovered.

When the curtain came down, and the love was gone, she felt a terrible void. The fact that she was had bipolar disorder only intensified Betty’s pain. She was friends with Judy Garland, and by 1971, two years after Garland died due to a drug overdose, her life was falling apart; she had four shattered marriages and a wrecked career. She told the late Robert Osborne on TCM “I almost didn’t care anymore. I didn’t want to go on.”

She would become a full-blown addict, hitting rock bottom by 1972. A year later, outside Boston for a revival of “Anything Goes”, Betty collapsed onstage and was checked into a rehab.

Then something miraculous happened. While Betty was being admitted to the hospital, a priest by the name of Fr. Peter Maguire also arrived there to check in his intoxicated cook. (Fr. McGuire had a special gift and calling in helping souls overcome their addictions.) Observing this saintly priest from Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Betty was struck by his calm despite the woman’s agitated state. She said to herself, “He’s going to save my life,” seeing how he was helping his employee. And so he did.

She later asked the cook about Father Maguire and was told, “Betty, he helps everybody.” One thing led to another, and soon Betty was at the rectory cooking and cleaning too. She got to know Fr. Maguire, and her life began to turn around. She’d say “I never found me until Father Maguire. The priest had the heart to understand me.” And for the first time ever, she didn’t have to pretend that she wasn’t upset. The priest looked at her and said “Betty, you’re just a very hurt child. Let’s start from the word go.”

All wasn't perfect. As Betty healed, she initially cleaned and cooked at the rectory, but when the press got wind of it, her delicate recovery was derailed.

But eventually Betty did find healing and, when she was ready, she completed her high school education under Fr. Maguire's tutelage. And even though she had offers to return to the screen, she took another route, going on to earn an advanced degree at Salve Regina College. She'd serve as an artist-in-residence to the theater department and then teach at Emerson College in Boston.

Fr. Maguire had helped Betty Hutton realize that she was "just a hurt child," as she told TCMs Host Robert Osbourne in a "Private Screenings" interview on April 27, 2000.

Betty also became a Catholic. She told Osbourne that as she walked down the aisle after receiving Holy Communion she discovered that "Christ is my heart." She became a daily Mass goer.

In time, she also drew close to the Virgin Mary. On the day she graduated from college, Betty was clasping the green ceramic rosary beads Fr. Maguire had given her. She said that “I don’t move anywhere without my rosary, because I know I’m scared inside,” she told Osbourne. “I’m always scared. I’m never secure. And that’s the way you have to be, (Al) Jolson said: ‘You can’t give them your heart if it’s not there, Betty.’” It was there indeed — a huge heart in need of healing.

Fr. Maguire died in July 1997, after which Betty moved back to the coast to be closer to her children, breathing her last on March 11, 2007. Her life is an amazing testament to the strength faith gives us when we are at our weakest, showing that it is through that very weakness that we find God.

What she found in her life was what gave her ultimate happiness; not fame in Hollywood, but a relationship with a loving God who she just needed to come to know how to love.

In our lives, ideally we seek this wisdom out too, and, like Fr. Maguire, help others to do that too, but it takes work.

This wisdom on how we do this is at the heart of our readings this week.

The first reading, from the book of Wisdom, part of what's called "Wisdom Literature" in the Old Testament, a series of books with much advice on how to be in a right relationship with God and one another, speaks of how this superior wisdom is a gift from God that is given to those who humbly ask of it. What the monarch recognizes in that first reading is that there is no earthly treasure that can match the wisdom God has given. And if you think about it, it makes sense. If you ask for power or money, it's not much good if you don't know how to do with it. Even if you ask for good health and beauty (comeliness as the Old Testament put it) that's all well and fine, but if you aren't truly knowing how to live right, these things also aren't much good. The young man in the Gospel has plenty, and he's on the right track, but for whatever reason he can't fully let go of his attachment to money and material things. For it's not the money that is the obstacle so much as a heart that is preoccupied by it - for if he could, as Jesus tells us at the end of the Gospel, we'll receive so much more in the Kingdom of Heaven. So our choice is are we going to listen to the Word and incorporate it into our hearts, or are we going to walk away?

A good starting point is to evaluate our lives from time to time. Where are our hearts? Money, authority, our hobbies and interests, none of these are bad things. But sometimes they consume us. We become consumed by schedules and busyness. We compare ourselves to other siblings or people in the neighborhood or families and feel like we need to one-up them or have more. We get focused on our careers and advancement. Other times, more seriously, a heart can be taken over by sinful desires, such as lust or envy and greed or selfishness where we just live for ourselves. Sometimes one leads to another; we get away from God, we start making bad choices, and all of a sudden, a bit like in Betty Hutton's story, we go from fame and fortune to becoming addicted to a sin. But in this, God is always seeking us out, for as we hear in our Responsorial Psalm, our God is a God of love. Even this can be hard to understand; CS Lewis encouraged us to think of God loving us so much that even if we were the only creature in the world, He would have died for us. This is the unconditional love of God. We are precious in God's eyes!

So looking at our lives, and asking ourselves how are we doing, who or what am I living for, how do I then respond to the love of God? We listen to God in prayer, and mediate on HIs Law through the teachings of Scripture

and Tradition. We are challenged. How challenging it can be too for us when God is saying you need to change this, you need to do this differently; when we meditate on the commandments and our faith and are challenged to really look at a sin, or how we are living and doing things. How do we love our family in the right way? How do we articulate what it means to be a Christian to others we are trying to evangelize to? All of us are rich in different things, and it takes work to make sure that we aren't consumed by it. Don't just think of "rich" equating with money. It can be other things, it can be intangibles like power, authority, being seen in the world as somebody. So many things can be an obstacle to us finding that true happiness we want, and how often we don't see them. Sometimes a person can't see that how they are looking at the body, objectifying it, is a problem; or how they are treating their family members or coworkers with their attitude is a problem, or how they've drifted from the faith, never coming to really know God because they've become too busy. The way we come to know God is through prayer, through making an effort to come to know His law and what it means. It takes a daily commitment too because wisdom can also be lost - to go from following God to just drifting away or letting our hearts be taken over by other things, as happened to Solomon later in his life.

With that, we strive to be a Father Maguire; a fisher of men. I loved in the story of Betty Hutton's life how the cook said "he helps people" with respect to the good priest. People have such need and they are all around us. They are dealing with stress at work and school. They are learning that faith is just one thing among many. They are battling family problems, or feel lonely, or battling some in in private. This is where we need to open our eyes and reach out, seeking out the lost, helping them to find the true knowledge they are looking for.

And lastly, what ties it all together is prudence. This is the virtue that our catechism calls the charioteer of all the virtues. Much like a quarterback knows the playbook but looks at a defense and makes a judgment call at times in the play that will unfold, we do the same thing with the law. We grow in prudence by praying for God to help us how to use what we've been given; namely how do we use our time and talent? If we have a lot of something - or even not a lot - it won't matter, for God will help us sort out how to use it. The young man meets God Himself Incarnate, but just can't truly choose to follow Him yet in this sad scene, because the words are challenging. Prudence is so helpful because things don't happen overnight

as we try to grow in the faith and tell others about it; much like with Betty Hutton who had setbacks, we do too, as we try to grow in faith and evangelize.

Through the journey of our lives, what so often we'll find is that the choices we make don't add up to happiness. But through it all, Jesus is there at our side with so much to offer us. As we come to receive our Lord at this altar, may we strive to listen daily to what God is calling us to do, for when we do, we'll find the true happiness we long for.