

## WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE: DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCE

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” For many, this prayer is recognizable due to its adoption into the Alcoholics Anonymous program. However, its historical origin traces back to the eminent Protestant theologian-philosopher **Reinhold Niebuhr**, who wrote it in the 1930’s. Indeed, wisdom is a constitutive element of any solid spiritual life, and one for which we will search most likely our entire lives with only mixed success. I still recoil at the frequency with which I judge myself to have acted perhaps too rashly, too quickly or unreflectively, lacking wisdom. Still, I’d like to think I am getting better over time!

There is a subtle, but important difference between **wisdom and intelligence**, and the difference may be discovered first by looking at the root meaning of the words. Intelligence is of Latin origin, from *intus* (inside) + *legere* (to read). Thus it signifies an in-depth study, reading, considering all the angles, extracting the real (and perhaps hidden) truths. I have known some very intelligent people who, quite frankly, came up short in the common sense department! They simply did not have gifts in that area, yet I respected how they used their intellectual gifts for the betterment of society. Wisdom goes much deeper, and cannot be measured in an ACT score. Recall this famous kernel uttered by **Socrates** at his own trial: “An unexamined life does not merit to be lived.” We must be willing to carefully examine life and its innate meaning. Quite simply, it takes hard work to examine one’s life. It requires a commitment for one who believes that learning is a lifelong pursuit and not a chore to be checked off one’s “to-do list.”

Wisdom originates from the Greek *sophia* and later the Latin *sapientia*. But it is also related to the word *sapere* meaning “to taste, to be wise, to know.” The emphasis here is upon a quality more profound, one that signifies a complete internal experience. It envisions a “touch,” a more personal appropriation of the knowledge learned. At its core, we desire to “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” as the psalmist proclaims (Ps 34:9). To “taste” implies a deeper level of engagement, one that is intimate and personal. People who truly have gained wisdom are somehow freed from the sickness of worry and preoccupation with world events. They manage to stay “above the fray,” so to speak, above the struggle. Their calmness in the face of turmoil soothes those around them. We are drawn to them. Far from showing a lack of concern, their demeanor flows from the fruit of their own experience that God is always in control, that they need not worry.

Those of us who seek to manage everything— we ought to learn from our own failures in this regard. Wisdom draws conclusions that others miss in the midst of the frenetic pace of life. I recall the story of the 1960’s **Fisher Pen Company** executive who authorized \$1,000,000 in research and development funds to pressure a cartridge with nitrogen, so that a pen could write upside down in outer space, a marked improvement over conventional ballpoint pens. Truth be told, that newfangled pen was designed to function in extremely low temperatures, and so obviously had uses beyond space. But people still love to cite the story and ask— “Why didn’t they just use a **pencil**?” Now that is wisdom!

Here are a few pearls of wisdom from **Saint Teresa of Calcutta**: “Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.” Or “ I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” Finally— “A life not lived for others is not a life.” These quotations exude wisdom and are all the more meaningful because Saint Teresa “walked the walk,” as they say! When speaking about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, **Pope Francis** noted in his General Audience of 9 April 2014: “And wisdom is precisely this: it is the grace of being able *to see everything with the eyes of God*. It is simply this: it is to see the world, to see situations, circumstances, problems, everything through God’s eyes.”

The Scriptures remind us of the necessity of being like newborn infants, longing for pure spiritual milk. And yes, St. **Irenaeus** rightly cautioned that there are those false teachers who **mix chalk** with **milk**. (*Against Heresies* 3.17.4). Others worry us with their demands for immediate results and actions, failing to see that while we plant the seeds, God himself allows the plants to grow. Steering clear of the noise, we seek none other than to taste and see the goodness of the Lord, He who is the source of all wisdom.

- Former Kansas Governor **Sam Brownback** has been named the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. He is a devout pro-life Catholic, husband and father of five. In a tumultuous White House scene to say the least, this is an excellent selection. He will work in the State Department and was a key sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.
- The Cathedral will resound with the voices of our **Children's Choristers** this coming week in their annual Camp. **Mrs. Jayne Windnagel** leads the charge, as the program takes another step forward, and I hope that our parish families will consider this wholesome activity for the upcoming season. They'll return on August 15 to sing for our 12:00 Noon Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption.
- I encourage adults in the parish (especially our young adults) to consider serving as lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. We need your help, and will provide training this fall. One of our lectors, **Stephanie Grundtner**, was personally recruited by Monsignor Hayden when that ministry was first opened to all the laity. She has graciously served ever since, as have some of our veteran EMHC's. But I desire to add to their number— please pray about joining us.
- The crisis in **Venezuela** continues following President Nicholas Maduro's special referendum, a move that church leaders have indicated is but window dressing designed to appear democratic in an increasingly despotic regime, transferring many powers to the Supreme Court, a body entirely selected by Maduro himself. The bishops pleaded for the intercession of the Virgin Mary to free their country from the "claws of communism and socialism." Pray for **Fr. Greg Schaffer and Fr. James Peterson**, our two Archdiocesan priests serving at the mission parish of Jesucristo Resucitado.
- Year of Mercy, Cubs style! The Chicago Cubs presented a 2016 World Series Championship ring to **Steve Bartman**, the man who interfered with the Cubs 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman trying to catch a foul ball in a 2003 playoff game in which Chicago was up 3-0 in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning and 3-2 in the series. They ended up losing and the World Series drought continued. The fans mercilessly blamed Bartman! Good for the Cubs to close a chapter with a loyal fan!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector