

Perhaps some of you played the game as a child pretending to have three wishes...if I could ask for anything, what would it be? Our imaginations ran wild. So, imagine how surprised some were when the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and rather than asking for money, power or anything else, he said: “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.”

The humility exhibited in such a request is itself a tribute to the wisdom of Solomon. In life, many of us turn again and again to certain people, whose judgment we value. You may have heard the saying, “By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks his father is wrong.”¹ In short, wisdom takes time to develop.

Some truths are not immediately apparent to people; others only manifest themselves after time. On the anniversary weekend of Pope Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae*, the truth about Natural Family Planning is a prime example. Society will always gravitate towards making life more convenient and less troublesome. We may gaze across the street and wonder what it was like to live in the 36,000 sq. ft James J. Hill mansion. Yet in reality, an efficiency apartment today provides more amenities (e.g. air conditioning) than they had in the 19th century. They rode in carriages.

The easiest way is not always the best way. The sacrifices entailed in observing conjugal chastity are real. Using the knowledge of their natural fertility, couples prayerfully consider whether they desire to achieve or postpone a pregnancy. **“Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?”** This is a serious question asked at every wedding, as couples promise to love and honor each other for as long as both shall live.

¹ Often attributed to 19th c. Presbyterian clergyman Charles Wadsworth; specific citation not found.

Please know that we priests appreciate the challenges in living your vocation; I dare say it seems a daunting challenge. And yet, God's grace is not lacking to those who seek the wisdom of God in living their vocations to the fullest. And don't kid yourself. When you appreciate the sacrifices we make, it strengthens us in our vocations. God does not demand the impossible. Marital chastity is a pearl of great price worth pursuing.

We mustn't be afraid to ask of God what we need, for he desires to give us all that is in accordance with His will for our lives. This does not mean that he will remove all the roadblocks from the paths we forge, for this would not be for our eternal good—and our eternal happiness is Christ's first interest in us. Wisdom helps us navigate challenging waters.

When we seek wisdom, we are truly seeking a treasure beyond measure, a pearl of great price. Are we able to see this as the real goal in our life, the true treasure? From a worldly perspective, Solomon had the right to claim that wisdom was his own. He had the power, and nobody would have called him on it. But he did not.

So often we are disappointed in ourselves by the choices we make. Are we really thinking with the mind of God? Do we seek divine wisdom in our decisions, for left to ourselves do we not fall short? If so, we seek reconciliation and move forward in hope.

A wise person also knows his or her own limits. Speak what you know and know what you speak. For example, I have to trust the best advice of the majority of doctors in the midst of a pandemic, acknowledging that they are not infallible either. The Scriptures tell us that if we frequent the company of the wise, we grow in wisdom.

As a new priest, I was reminded that wisdom could be found right in front of me in the pews, in the daily lives of the faithful. That was sage advice. So, what is our excuse for failing to seek wisdom? We really have none. It is there for the asking; we need to follow through.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that we participate:

“in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator who gives him mastery over his acts and the ability to govern himself with a view to the true and the good...God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world.²

May God grant us the mastery over our own acts, that we may continue to strive to lead lives of chastity according to our state in life, seeing it as a pearl of great price. May we treasure it always and seek wisdom wherever it may be found and rejoice in God’s continued presence in our lives.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 1954