

## **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2021**

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of wisdom. They show that only God gives true wisdom that leads to making good choices in life. They invite us to yearn for divine wisdom so that we walk in God's ways and come to our eternal salvation.

The first reading describes the important choice Solomon made at a crucial moment of his life as King of Israel. It shows how, instead of asking God for riches, health and honor, he prayed that prudence and wisdom may be given to him as he governed God's people. It shows also that he preferred wisdom to scepter and throne, prudence to gold and silver. Finally, the text shows that as he did so, God gave him everything he needed beyond his own expectation.

What is behind this text is the idea that the attractions of the world are transitory and only God is an eternal value. Another idea is the truth that divine wisdom leads to good choices in life. The last idea relates to the recognition that divine wisdom is more important than human knowledge and riches.

This text helps us understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus presents the rich man with a difficult choice of abandoning his possessions and following him. First of all, the Gospel starts by mentioning the trip of Jesus and the action of the man who inquired about eternal salvation. Then, it gives the response of Jesus who pointed the man to the respect of the commandments. It also gives the reaction of the man who alleged that he has observed the commandments since his youth.

After that, the Gospel talks about the demand of Jesus that he sells his possessions in order to follow him. Then, it gives the reaction of the man who went away sad because of his wealth. It gives also the reaction of Jesus to the attitude of the man by saying that it is difficult for the one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

The Gospel ends up with the question of the disciples to Jesus about their own fate as they left everything to follow him. As a last word, Jesus reassured them about the recompense that awaits them in the present life and in the future of the kingdom of heaven.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about the wisdom to grow in the knowledge of God. What do I mean by that? Let me explain by way of an observation. Our whole life is a long development process. It starts from our birth to our death. As we grow up, we pass from childhood to adulthood and old age.

Each step of this development is accompanied with a kind of change we can easily see on the physical aspect of the individual. What we do not realize, however, is that the physical aspect is just one pole beside which there is a moral or a spiritual dimension. For instance, the way we considered things when we were young is not the same as it is today. What were important values for us a couple of years ago might not be the same today. The way we believed 50 years ago is not the same today, etc.

Unfortunately, it can happen that the development of the individual is one-sided; the physical development occurs without necessarily the moral dimension accompanying it. If that is the case, there is a kind of psychological or spiritual imbalance in the individual and a discrepancy in the appreciation of the values of the things of life. That inadequacy is illustrated in today's readings in the case of Solomon and the rich man.

Solomon has come to a balanced maturity of age, where he could distinguish what was important to his life in the moment and what was less valuable. What he expressed in his prayer to God was that he gave him more wisdom than health, riches, honors or victories over his enemies. He was aware that, as a young man put as a leader over the house of Israel, he was without experience in governing. He needed the most wisdom and prudent judgment.

The rich man, however, did not see things in the same way. His grasp of material things interfered with his relationships with God. When the moment of making a choice came up, he opted for riches than for God. He did not have the wisdom of understanding the temporality of material things compared to the eternal blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven. The invitation of Jesus to sell his riches was not about selling at the New York stock exchange or to transfer his capital to Switzerland, but to transfer it to heaven by making friends with the poor. As a result, he went away, blinded, as it were, by his many riches.

The observation of Jesus about the difficulty for a rich to enter the kingdom of God does not mean that he condemns wealth or earthly goods. The Bible says that some of his friends were rich. We have the example of those rich women who were providing for him and his disciples out of their money (Luke 8: 1-3); we have the case of the rich man, Zaccheus who, as a tax collector was considerably rich. Even if at his conversion, he gave away the half of his money, he still kept the other half of his goods to himself. We have also the case of Joseph of Arimathea who gave his tomb for the burial of Jesus.

The problem of Jesus, in fact, is not about the riches in itself, but rather about the exaggerated attachment to money and property, which makes someone dependent on these and accumulates riches only for himself (Luke 12:13-21). In that case, money becomes an anti-God because it creates a sort of alternative world, it changes the object of the theological virtues. Faith, hope and charity are no longer placed in God, but in money. We have again here, an inversion of values.

If the Bible says, "Nothing is impossible for God," or "Everything is possible for the one who believes", the world, on the contrary says: "Everything is possible for the one who has money." With such a philosophy, the race for greed, selfishness, competition and destruction of the competitors, is open. The truth, however, is that happiness and eternal life cannot be bought with money, but can be brought to us by faith.

We need personal wisdom today more than ever. How do we live spiritually, in a broken world, in a divided nation, in a Church wounded with sin? What do we possess that must be used for others, today, here and now? What must we conserve and save for what God expects of us in the future? So, let us pray for Wisdom. Let us pray for the grace to let nothing keep us from what Jesus asks of us. And may we walk each day with him who is Wisdom Itself. God bless you all!

**Wisdom 7: 7-11; Hebrews 4: 12-13; Mark 10: 17-30**



Homily Date: October 10, 2021  
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Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20211010homily.pdf