

2nd Sunday of September Message Series: LEARN
23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time C

This is the second week of our message series on LEARNING. Last week I made the point that humility is necessary to be a good learner. This week the first reading speaks about a type of learning called wisdom – a wisdom that comes from God. The reading is from the prayer of King Solomon who, as he prepares to inherit the kingdom of Israel from his father King David, asks God for wisdom. Solomon believes that wisdom knows and understands all things and will guide him as he serves his people. As Catholics, we understand wisdom as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that comes to us through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. According to the book that we are reading for the message series (*A Well-Built Faith*), God-given wisdom gives us the ability to recognize the importance of keeping God central in our lives. Have you experienced this type of wisdom?

Beside God-given wisdom there is also the wisdom that comes from just living life. The type of wisdom that is accumulated with age and experience. (We need to remember that, however, that while aging is mandatory, wisdom doesn't necessarily come along with it!) Would you say that you possess this type of wisdom? It is the kind of wisdom, for example, that prevents us from making the same old mistakes over and over again.

St. Paul uses this type of wisdom in the second reading in his letter to Philemon. It is Paul's experience as a Christian that baptism does away with all distinctions between people. He writes, for example, in his letter to the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul's child in the faith, a run-away slave by the name of Onesimus, has a Christian master by the name of

Philemon. Paul is appealing to Philemon's experience of the Christian faith to take Onesimus back no longer as a slave but a brother in Christ. What wisdom have you accumulated over the years when it comes to relating to people who are different from you?

As you know, the scriptures don't say anything about Jesus' life from age twelve when he got lost in the temple until he began his public ministry at the age of thirty. We can image, however, that he had all kinds of experiences that made him the "wise man" that we all know. As we learn in the gospel reading that accumulated wisdom lead him to ask three things from those who would be his disciples. First, disciples must "hate" their families, that is, they must prefer their relationship with Jesus above all others. Second, disciples must be prepared to endure the suffering that discipleship demands. Third, disciples must chose Jesus over human relationships, the possessions of material goods, and positions of honor and power.

This type of discipleship is obviously not easy. One day a good number of Jesus' disciples began to leave him because discipleship was getting too "costly" for them. As they were leaving Jesus turned to the twelve apostles, asking them if they too were going to leave. Peter, as usual, spoke for them all telling Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of external life." Here Peter expresses the wisdom that he gained from the many experiences that he had of Jesus. What about us? Do we also have that kind of wisdom?