

MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM, pray for me.

20th SUNDAY OF YEAR B Aug 19, 2012

Theme: Jesus' sacrifice of body and shedding of his blood is fulfillment of word of wisdom ,

We are told Man does not live on bread alone. In the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8, where this statement first appears in the O.T., Moses is reminding the Israelites at the end of their 40 years wandering in the wilderness: "Be careful to observe all the commandments I enjoin on you today...God has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna... in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Obviously the barrenness of the desert could not produce the food for their needs, so the manna had to come from a commanding, creative word of God: Let there be manna and it was.

Even though miraculous, it was still just physical morsels to sustain the body. 'Living by every word that comes from the mouth of God' does not stop there. True, in some one time instances Jesus multiplied bread and fish to feed thousands. There is another kind of hunger to satisfy - a spiritual hunger that needs spiritual food. Made in God's image we have the gift of intellect, of understanding, a faint reflection of God's all-knowing and total comprehension of all that is. What alone can satisfy the insatiable appetite of our minds for knowledge is the TRUTH and in its deepest mode WISDOM.

Job in his unaccountable afflictions questioned the source of wisdom: "Whence can wisdom be obtained and where is the place of understanding? Solid gold cannot purchase it, nor can its price be paid in silver (29: 12-14.) God knows the way to it... For he beholds the ends of the earth and sees all that is under the heavens." As we are told over and over by the psalmists and the wisdom writers, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord, being awed by his majestic sovereignty, authority. It means submitting ourselves to God's right to rule his creation and bring it to his intended end.

King Solomon prayed for it as a gift when he inherited the throne of his father David. "God of my fathers, Lord of mercy, you who have made all things by your word... with you is wisdom who knows your works and was present when you made the world.... Send her forth from your holy heavens and from your glorious throne dispatch her that she may be with me and work with me, that I may know what is your pleasure. Thus my deeds will be acceptable and I shall judge your people justly and be worthy of my father's throne."

The book of Proverbs personifies Wisdom, a divine attribute intimate with God even before the world began. (chapter 8) "The Lord begot me, the firstborn of his ways, the forerunner of his prodigies...before the earth (came to be). When he established the heavens I was there,

when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep, when he sets for the sea its limits, then I was beside him as his craftsman. I was his delight day by day, playing on the surface of his earth, I found delight in the sons of men.”

As we heard in the first reading taken from that book, wisdom plays the role of a woman who has labored in the kitchen preparing a banquet and now goes to invite the simple and those lacking understanding to come enjoy the feast. “Forsake foolishness that you may live.” Wisdom or folly: their divergent paths and outcomes are the core of many proverbs and parables, such as Jesus’ about the foolish and wise bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to come. Someone said that all sin is from ignorance or stupidity, another name for folly. Folly is building one’s house on sand. To put one’s confidence, security, and pursuit of happiness primarily in things that will and must pass away is playing the fool.

In the second reading from Ephesians, Paul urges his readers, “Do not act like fools, but like thoughtful men. Do not continue in ignorance but try to discern the will of the Lord.” Yet as you know at another time Paul urges us to be fools as far as this world is concerned. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1 fol.) “Has not God turned the wisdom of this world into folly? Since in God’s wisdom the world did not come to know him through (so-called) “wisdom”, it pleased God to save those who believe through the absurdity of the preaching of the gospel. Yes, Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews, and an absurdity to gentiles, but to those who are called... (he is) the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

We grow in that divine wisdom by accepting the revelations of the Father’s will for our salvation that are revealed in the incarnation of his beloved Son, Jesus of Nazareth. He is not only the source of our wisdom but the daily bread that satisfies our hungry hearts. What do I hunger for? What do you hunger for? I hunger for mercy, for forgiveness, for love, for peace, and for fullness of life. Wisdom has prepared this meal for all who will accept his invitation. In accepting this invitation and sharing in this sacrificial banquet, we can feast on the true bread from heaven. It is food for the exodus and pilgrimage toward life on high with God. It is a pledge, the first payment on the promise of eternal life with God in Jesus.

The banquet is prepared. Come and eat.

