23 C 2025

Wisdom, the queen of all the virtues, permeates today’s Scripture readings. Often addressed as “Queen Wisdom,” wisdom is the direct and joyful path to God through love, humility, and solidarity with all creation. St Francis’ insights are a radical departure from the norm of life, focusing on living the Gospel rather than accumulating wealth or prestige.

Who knows God’s wisdom and counsel? Mortals just guess and plan. We are timid and unsure, but God gives His wisdom, sends His Holy Spirit to help us make straight our way in the world. In the first line of Admonition XXVII, Francis writes, *“Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance.”* Wisdom is not mere knowledge but spiritual insight that leads to action. In the writings of St Augustine, wisdom appears as insight to divine things.

We foster practical growth of wisdom in our lives by opening ourselves to the activity of the Holy Spirit through contemplative prayer. Prayer opens the way for the Holy Spirit to act in us through His gifts, leading us into the fullness of divine wisdom. God, who made us and respects us more fully than all others, knows that the greatest gift is our freedom. The power of love abides in freedom.

Jesus invites us to follow Him, imitate Him, taking up the cross--the burden of the Gospel--and what is placed upon us as suffering, because we live and practice the Gospel. Baptism makes us one with Christ and with one another, the lifelong following of Jesus to the cross, and the building of a kingdom at odds with the world, because we build a place of love, justice, forgiveness, mercy, non-violence and peace. Glory comes not from one’s own wisdom, riches, or power, but from embracing one’s weaknesses for the sake of Christ.

In today’s Gospel, and before the healing of a man with dropsy, Jesus uses the opportunity to call the authorities to conversion. He asks point blank, *“Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?”*  The question cries out for an answer from us. We pray for spiritual insight. Contemplative prayer invites the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and fills us with compassion and mercy. God’s Spirit helps us confront our own blindness of those we deem as outsiders, about how we treat those different from us: for men, how do we treat women; for the white folks, how do we treat those of color; for straight people, how do we treat LGBTQ+ people; for the able-bodied, how do we treat those with disabilities; for the rich and powerful, how are the poor and powerless treated. Love abides in freedom, compassion and mercy take precedence over the law. Such compassion precisely fulfills the law, and becomes the work of God.

We are not surprised by the anger, resentment, and hostility Jesus receives by the authorities. Jesus is gentle. He bears no ill will, no anger, no resentment, no self-righteousness. He is not trying to embarrass or anyone, or assert Himself as wise. Jesus wants to open minds and hearts to possibilities of boundless compassion, to the love of God, to divine things, with open-hearted living that sees everyone as sister or brother.

Wisdom continues to be woven into the fabric of daily life. Jesus proceeds to teach the host and other leaders with a parable toward those who have been invited, noticing how they were choosing places of honor at the table. Jesus invites them to practice humility, to put others before themselves. Humility is a Beatitude virtue, infused with wisdom. It does not allow our ego to rule our lives, nor to not walk around thinking we’re greater or more important than everyone else. When God’s reign inhabits our hearts, and when we serve those in need, a whole new world opens before us.

Wisdom brings us to a deeper level. Jesus issues a new commandment: invite and care for those with disabilities. Blessed will we be because of their inability to repay. Jesus calls us to serve those most in need without a trace of desire for reciprocation. Our service must be selfless, generous and loving, going against the way of the world, meeting their needs, serving those who cannot repay. Our long-term goal--*resurrection of the righteous*--is where we are headed. The way into this resurrection is selfless service. Only then will we discover a new world with surprising gifts of God’s unconditional compassionate love.

Wisdom enters minds and hearts that are open to *listening* and *discerning.* Gift of the Most High, wisdom moves us ever more deeply into the center of our transcendent self, grounded in God. This is the identity Jesus provides. Defined as sacrifice of self-giving, discipleship is all sacrifice, *going forth* according to divine purposes. Sacrifice is the energy of the sisters and brothers of penance to restore and build what is broken. From the Cross of the Crucified of San Damiano we are attuned to the overflowing self-giving of God. And carrying the cross of nonviolent resistance is our survival in *“the resurrection of the righteous.”*

Finally, as Jesus walks along followed by the crowds, Jesus issues another stern requirement of discipleship: to follow Jesus we have to sever allegiance to everyone, and give our allegiance to Him. The language is dramatic and harsh, to surrender ourselves to Him and His way of life, surrendering everything, our egos and desires, even our families in pursuit of God’s reign on earth. God and God’s reign in human hearts comes first. Commitment to the non-violent Jesus has to be total for the coming of a new creation of non-violence.

