

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 19th, 2018

Wisdom's Table: Heavenly Banquet or Soundbite Drive-Thru?

Written by Anna Carter

Proverbs 9:1-6

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58



It's said that we live in an information age. Facts about nearly anything are accessible at the flicker of our fingers on the keyboard or a few taps on our smartphone. [College degree earnings are increasing by 34% to 41%](#). We may know a lot, but are we *wise*?

Wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It's more than knowing truths (that's the gift of understanding). The [Catholic dictionary](#) notes that wisdom "makes the soul responsive to God in the contemplation of divine things." I don't know about you, but it seems like this kind of wisdom might be in short supply these days.

St. Paul seemed to recognize a similar problem. This Sunday's second reading comes from his letter to the Ephesians. Here's what he had to say: "*Brothers and sisters: watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons, but as wise...do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine...but be filled with the Spirit.*" Again, the counter-examples abound. Taking certain ideas — and those ideas alone — into excess can be more than foolishness. This past weekend was the [one year anniversary of the tragic protesters' clash in Charlottesville](#). The passions and anger that stirred to violence could be likened to this "drunkenness" of folly.

So what are we to do? An alternate presentation, along the same symbolic lines, can be found in the first reading. There the author of Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman hosting a banquet. "*Come, eat of my food,*" she says. "*Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding.*" With the 24-hour news cycle and [67% of people getting their current event updates from social media](#), it can often feel like we're cruising into a fast food drive-thru, not partaking of a banquet.

True wisdom takes time. Like a good meal, it takes expertise and personal investment to prepare. Fine meals include multiple courses drawn from a variety of ingredients and seasonings. Similarly, the wise person listens well to a variety of perspectives, taking them in and sorting them accordingly. This world is complex and increasingly interconnected. It's easy to have a quick opinion based on soundbites. But the food critic knows that one bite of one course will not give him comprehensive insight into the entire meal!

Wisdom doesn't rely only on the balanced intake of diverse perspectives. True wisdom is seeing with God's eyes. It means weighing what we see from the divine perspective. We call this the process of [discernment](#). Of what we perceive, what is closer to God's heart and what is farther from it? What reflects the full truth of God's plan for creation? What departs from it? This requires a discerning mind, one that stays "sober" (as St. Paul would advise) and attentive to the movements of the Holy Spirit. It requires knowledge of doctrine and the moral law. Of course, this doesn't mean we need a degree in theology to be wise! As human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we have been gifted with an intellect. We have the ability to "know that we know," as it were. We can analyze and process the world around us. We can draw conclusions from complex data sets. Part of God's intention for us, as His children, is that we would actively seek out answers to our questions and concerns, rather than be passive receptacles for whatever we encounter.

True wisdom, seeing with God's eyes, means recognizing things others do not. It means recognizing the unrepeatable dignity in the poor and marginalized. It means seeing a mixture of truth and lies in misleading statements. It means honoring God's handiwork in creation, from womb to tomb, from spectacular landscapes to the quality of the air. It means, when all physical appearances seem to indicate otherwise, seeing that a little wafer of unleavened bread is truly the Lamb of God.

In this upcoming Sunday's Gospel, Jesus shares the wisdom of faith that baffles the world. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" the onlookers cry. Jesus has multiplied loaves, but his listeners struggle to hear him out on his next miracle. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever."

It's important to stay updated on current events and to interact with others in ways that honor their dignity. It's equally important to draw near to the heart of wisdom, the very Heart of God. There we find the source of all wisdom and goodness, of all truth and beauty. We are invited to His banquet of wisdom in the Eucharist and in our daily prayer. Will you take your seat at the table?

Anna Carter

To learn more about LPi's services and publications designed to help you build a vibrant parish, please visit our website:

www.4LPi.com
LPi
2875 S. James Drive
New Berlin, WI 53151
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

Send email address changes to:
lpiconnections@4LPi.com

To opt out of receiving this reflection, contact:
lpiconnections@4LPi.com

©2018 LPi
All rights reserved.

PRAYER

*In everything we do, O Lord,
give us a desire to seek out the truth;
give us a willingness to heed the advice of others;
give us wisdom in reaching decisions;
give us courage to put our ideas to the test;
and, if we are wrong, give us the grace to admit it.
May we find You in our seeking,
and love You more deeply when we find You.*

— Adapted from "Prayer for Wisdom"