

HOMILY SUNDAY 28 - B (Homily 02)

“Be Wise; Pray the Word; Let Go “

(Wisdom 7:7-11’ Psalm 90; Hebrews 4:12-13; MARK 10:17-30)

Sr. Therese Arcand was a Grey Nun of Métis ancestry stationed in Ile-à-la Crosse, Saskatchewan. One day she performed a service for her superior, who told her that certainly she would have another jewel for her crown in heaven. Sr. Therese, somewhat nervous and trying to be humble, responded by saying, “Oh no, Mother Superior, it would be harder for a needle to go through the hole of a camel than for me to get into heaven!”

Whenever we celebrate the sacraments of initiation, especially confirmation, the gifts of the Spirit come to mind. The ones that usually surface in the minds of most people are wisdom, knowledge and understanding. These three are similar but different. Knowledge is the retention and understanding of facts about life and the universe, whereas wisdom is the ability to learn life’s lessons from one’s own experience.

A message given to us by today’s readings could be put this way: Be wise; ponder God’s Word and practice a spirituality of letting go so as to live in the kingdom of God.

The first reading exalts wisdom, putting it as the first of all God’s gifts, a foundational virtue to be highly prized, and so it is.

The second reading suggests that those who are wise will make the Word of God a priority in their lives. Could it be that as a Church we still lack wisdom in this regard? Whenever I celebrate reconciliation with candidates for the sacraments of initiation, I usually ask them if they read the bible and indeed, do they have a bible in their homes. Most often the answer to the first is only sometimes, and to the second, uncertainty.

Though not surprised, I must admit that I feel dismay at the lack of involvement with scripture that the average Catholic manifests in his or her life. I point out that while we eat food every day to help us live and grow physically, we are starving ourselves spiritually. The Word of God is powerful, active and a gift of God to us, and yet we take it for granted or even ignore it in our daily lives. And so I have set out on a personal biblical quest – to invite everyone I can to fall in love with the Word of God, to have a bible, to read it and to pray with scripture.

The Gospel takes a different tack and offers us a wise insight into the kingdom of God. The young man who approaches Jesus wondering how he can earn or possess the kingdom of God is gently told that he can’t possess the kingdom; it is a gift that is freely given to those who have the faith to let go of anything that stands in the way of doing God’s will in their lives. Good spirituality is all about letting go.

What we need to let go of is not necessarily material wealth, though clinging to possessions may be an obstacle for some. More than likely, what we are clinging to will

be sinful patterns of behavior in our lives, or negative attitudes and painful emotions that lead us to sin, to harm others, to harm ourselves and our relationship with God.

For some, what we are clinging to may be an addiction that we are refusing to admit and address. It is noted Franciscan author and speaker, Fr. Richard Rohr, who coined the saying that *good spirituality is all about letting go*. While many people are obsessed with having more, doing more and experiencing more, the wise person is able to put God first in his or her life and let go of anything that might interfere with an intimate relationship with God.

Good spirituality is all about letting go. We need to let go of sin, of sinfulness (those defects of character that make us sin) and any addiction in our lives, and focus on walking prayerfully with God and lovingly with others and with ourselves. As the prophet Micah put it, we are to love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with our God.

A wise person that I know is a friend who runs a surveying company out of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. His name is Wesley. When he was working in the north years ago, he would stay with me in the rectory in Beauval. Every night he would call his wife Donna long distance to talk about their day.

One day I commented to him that this practice of calling long distance everyday must get to be expensive. He replied very simply that *it was not an expense, it was an investment*. I was impressed by the conviction in his voice as he said that, and marveled at the wisdom his response showed. He knew that a relationship takes work and time and even money, and he was free enough to invest all three in his relationship with his wife, trusting that the sacrifice he was making now would pay off big dividends in the future for his marriage and his family, and it has. He is now happily retired and enjoying both his marriage and his family life more than ever. He was able to let go of a selfish use of time and money to invest in his relationship and now enjoys a solid marriage and a rich family life. I wish that more persons in the Church would be able to share in that kind of wisdom.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a wise action on our part. We have let go of countless other activities that we could be involved in, to make listening to the Word of God together and receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus a priority in our lives.

This celebration then empowers us and sends us out to the world, to be wise, to make the Word of God central to our lives, and to practice the spirituality of letting go so that we can live within the reign of God every day of our lives.