

Wisdom's Friend

Homily for October 13-14, 2018

What happens on a honeymoon? A husband and wife celebrate the lifelong commitment they've made to each other at their wedding, often with a special trip and time to just enjoy one another. But the time comes when they need to head home. For it is here in their home that they begin to build a life together as they assume the responsibilities daily living side by side.

I have experienced these past two months as a kind of honeymoon, since assuming the role as St. Peter's pastor. What a pleasure it has been to receive your kind words and appreciation and to have the knowledge that it is good to be sharing life together. This is a very joy-filled time for me, and I hope for you too.

However, it is time for the honeymoon to come to an end. This is a good thing and doesn't mean that it's all down-hill from here! Just the opposite. I want us to engage in the enriching task of working to further the care for our Spiritual home of St. Peter's. Such care has a special word in the Church, it is called *stewardship*.

Stewardship is a word used to translate several terms and expressions in the Bible. Common to all is the idea of 'overseeing' the possessions, business affairs, property, servants, the training of children, of an owner or master. Bishops and priests are called stewards and are expected to possess holy qualities as they manage the household of God. The Apostle Paul saw himself as a Steward and tells us so in 1 Corinthians 4:

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

² Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. ¹

At the heart of stewardship are the two ideas mentioned here by Paul. Stewards of the Church are asked to tend to a household belonging to another, Jesus Christ. Therefore Paul says he is a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God. Stewards are also to be experienced as trustworthy – both by Jesus and those among whom they live.

As we think about this at St. Peter's, I am the one who has been entrusted with the primary stewardship of St. Peter's by the Bishop. This is why I want to talk with you over the next Sundays about what it means for you to further share with me in the stewardship of this wonderful parish. Between today on November 11th all my homilies will focus on different aspects of stewardship.

What I want to do today is help to give a perspective on the attitude we want to cultivate in shaping a deepening stewardship culture at St. Peter's.

¹ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 1 Co 4:1–2). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Let me ask you a question. What are the things people most desire? Isn't it often position, wealth, health and beauty? Whenever we click on the internet browser we see videos of people, like the one I saw profiling Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, where position, wealth, health and beauty were the governing themes.

Many centuries ago there was a man named Solomon. He was the son of King David. Talk about position, wealth, health and beauty. He had it all! Listen to how he described his life:

I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself; ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

It is this man who wrote today's first reading. What does he prize most in Wisdom chapter 7? It isn't his position, wealth, health and beauty, rather it is wisdom. More than his throne; accounted of greater worth than his wealth; more important than health and beauty was Solomon's discovery of wisdom's surpassing value. Remember how he put it:

***I preferred her to scepters and thrones,²
all gold is but a little sand in her sight,
and silver will be accounted as clay before her.
¹⁰ I loved her more than health and beauty,
and I chose to have her rather than light,³***

Position described as scepters and thrones, wealth captured in the language of gold and silver, and wisdom's value surpassing health and beauty.

So, what is wisdom? The Greek word for wisdom is sofia. The name Sophia comes from that. The Greek word philosophy literally means a friend of wisdom. Filos means friend, sofía means wisdom. Philosophy really means the love of wisdom, friendship with wisdom. In that sense, it's the most important thing you can do is to pursue knowledge, to pursue wisdom above all the other good things of the earth. In fact, the Wisdom of Solomon is saying here that when I made wisdom first, above all the other good things, there came to me along with her, and in her hands was uncounted wealth. What kind of wealth? Spiritual wealth.

It is this wealth Jesus addresses with the rich young man. The young man was a person who was living life with real purpose and attentive to the commandments. Jesus says to him:

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Wis 7:8). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Wis 7:9–10). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.”⁴

Notice what Jesus is doing here. He is quoting from the second tablet of the 10 Commandments, the commandments dealing with our relationship with others. Every one of these commandments is mentioned, except the 10th. “You shall not covet”. Why is that? Because in this man’s life the sin of avarice, an inordinate love for things, controlled him – in others words “covetousness.” It was this that he put first in his life.

Jesus loves this man so much, that he speaks to him directly. So he says, To discover the fullness of life, detach yourself from things and attach yourself to me and the wisdom that comes from me.

It is this perspective, of putting wisdom first, when governing our lives allows for the deepening conversion of heart thus enabling us to be stewards. Why is that? People who live practicing detachment realize that my life has been entrusted to me by God and he has made it possible for me to know how to live a purposeful life. The kind of life succinctly captured in the prayer that is the first verse of today’s psalm:

***So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.*** ⁵

We are all invited to learn this kind of spiritual arithmetic so that we can discover the way of wisdom leads me to discover life’s true riches. For it is these riches that have been given into our care here at St. Peter’s as part of the Universal Church.

I’m glad the honeymoon is over, so we can get down to the wonderful work of the stewardship of philosophy, as together with Solomon we declare:

***Therefore, I prayed, and understanding was given me;
I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.*** ⁶

⁴ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Mk 10:19–20). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ps 90:12). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Wis 7:7). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.