

Fr Alan's Homily

SIXTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME (A) February 12, 2017

Today's Readings are all concerned with wisdom - with the wisdom that is of God (the Spirit of God) - and reminds us, by way of contrast - of the 'wisdom' (the spirit) that is merely human. The Readings also reveal a certain 'evolution' of wisdom, as it were: Old Testament believers thought the Law ("Torah") to be the summary of all wisdom, human and divine. But it was incomplete. It was not the revelation of God himself, not a complete and secure guide of conduct, nor endowed with a sacramental assurance of good relations with God. As we see so well in this morning's Gospel, Jesus did not - and could not - see it as such. But it was not his mission to cast the Law aside. It was his work to fulfill, to complete it. Recall his very last words: "It is finished".

In his wisdom God wills that all men and women should be saved. In his wisdom he knows all things, even our most hidden weaknesses. The actions enumerated by Jesus in this Gospel can and will happen if we are predisposed to them. Our individual acts, sinful or virtuous, flow from within, from who and what we are. For example: Two people, each kill another person. For one, it may be murder, the other may be praise-worthy - like a police man on duty. It is not individual acts that can separate us from God, but our hearts fractured and divided as they are. Jesus insists that our conscience must go deeper than external deeds. We must ask ourselves what is going on in our hearts, our thoughts, our motives; what moves us.

Again, our sinful acts come from within. Wisdom, God's wisdom, the insight of faith, helps us to make the right decisions in life, to avoid sinful acts and respond whole-heartedly, single-mindedly to the Holy Spirit gained for us by our Redeemer. That is what the Lord desires for us and from us.

Today's 1st Reading (Sirach) contains one of the most classic texts for the doctrine of free will. God in his wisdom has given us free will. Freedom, as St Paul puts it is not so much freedom from, as freedom for. That is free to love God as his sons and daughters. We are called to be wise, to choose God, to choose the good - and to ask God for the strength to overcome evil.

In the Second Reading St Paul strikingly contrasts the wisdom of God - "Jesus Christ and him crucified" - with the wisdom of those whose 'wisdom' led them to crucify the Lord of Glory. This reminds us that the search for wisdom divides people into two classes: the wise and the foolish. One way follows the way of life (The Spirit of God), the other pursues the way of death: merely human wisdom.

In the Gospel this morning, one who is far greater than Moses (of whom Moses prophesied) Wisdom Incarnate - speaks to us. Now the Wisdom of God, Jesus thru his Spirit commands us, exhorts us, empowers us to love one another, as he and the Father love one another. To live such a life is to overcome the wisdom (the spirit) of the world which leads to selfishness and death - and to share instead in the wisdom of God and life eternal. Perhaps never before in the history of the world has the human family had a greater need to transcend merely human wisdom. No need to spell it out!

This is so important. As Christians we know that the wisdom of God is not an ideology or a philosophy. The Wisdom of God is a Person, the Christ, Jesus Christ - crucified and risen! To be wise as he is wise - is to love as he loves. On all levels we must love. Jesus calls us to be the 'salt of the earth', the light of the world. We can have no 'enemies' on any level of social intercourse, whether it be of family, state, national or transnational. Now, we didn't just make this up!

Love of God and fellowman is the great Law, the NEW LAW. Again, we are called to live an inspired life. The Law of Jesus spelled out today in this Gospel is very demanding and we often don't measure up. But there remains, thanks be to God, forgiveness and grace - and the coming Season of LENT.