

4. September 2022

Saved by wisdom

Wis 9:13-18

*'What human being indeed can know the intentions of God? And who can comprehend the will of the Lord? For the reasoning of mortals is inadequate, our attitudes of mind unstable; for a perishable body presses down the soul, and this tent of clay weighs down the mind with its many cares. It is hard enough for us to work out what is on earth, laborious to know what lies within our reach; who, then, can discover what is in the heavens? And who could ever have known your will, had you not given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from above? Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened and people have been taught what pleases you, and have been saved, by Wisdom.'*

Today's reading can lead us to a true attitude of humility. We human beings are easily tempted to overestimate our knowledge and natural abilities. When others praise us for our gifts, we have to be careful not to be proud of them; on the contrary, we should attribute them to the One who has given them to us.

To this end, it will help us to remember the words of the Book of Wisdom that we heard today: "The reasoning of mortals is inadequate, our attitudes of mind unstable", as well as these other words of St. Paul: *"The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; to him they are folly; he cannot recognise them"* (1 Cor 2:14).

Certainly such statements are not meant to belittle God's natural gifts - such as intellect - for these are a great gift, as is everything we receive from our Heavenly Father. However, it is necessary to consider our limited natural knowledge in proportion to God's infinite wisdom.

Moreover, it must be borne in mind that our understanding was clouded by original sin, and the statement that *"It is hard enough for us to work out what is on earth, laborious to know what lies within our reach "* gives us the right insight into the limitation of our human thinking. The reading goes on to make it clear that a

different kind of knowledge is needed to understand earthly realities correctly and, even more so, to understand the thoughts of the Lord.

Pope Benedict XVI often spoke of "reason enlightened by faith", emphasising that our natural understanding requires the light of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, God offers us this possibility, and it becomes a reality when we open ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit. It is He who guides us into the fullness of truth (Jn 16:13). Above all, he instructs us about divine things and opens an access to understand them from within. The Holy Spirit will always teach us to see God as the ultimate reason for all that exists, and through this fundamental certainty He gives us great wisdom.

But it is not just a theoretical knowledge; rather, this certainty will awaken in the heart a deep gratitude and move it to praise the goodness of God. Here is the unmistakable sign that it is the Holy Spirit who communicates this knowledge to the soul, for He, being the love between the Father and the Son, will always lead to glorify and love God.

A conclusion of the merely natural understanding does not always of itself always arouse this gratitude and love for the Creator, the Giver of all gifts, however contradictory this may be. It could be said that reason does not penetrate to reality in its fullness and, when it is not enlightened by faith, remains in the dark, especially as far as the knowledge of God is concerned. Moreover, the understanding can be led into error and fall into deception when it lacks the light of God.

Not so when the Holy Spirit enlightens us. The seventh of his gifts is that of wisdom, which is a "delightful knowledge" of the Lord and of divine realities, because it is love that enlightens our heart. And it can become effective even in the simplest things. For example, when we receive from the Lord's hands the day that begins and praise him for this new day, wisdom is already at work and we find it "*sitting at our door*" (Wis 6:14). Thus, with such a simple act we can come to profound conclusions:

- a) Today is the day of the Lord, foreseen by Him from all eternity.
- b) We receive this day from the hand of God.
- c) God offers us this day for our salvation, so that we can serve Him.

- d) God will grant us all graces to make this day fruitful.
- e) This day is one more step towards eternity.

We could add many other things, which make us discover the light of God in our lives. Through wisdom, many things can be transformed. The mortal body - which, as today's reading says, "oppresses the soul" - is restrained by the spirit, so that it no longer overwhelms the soul in the same way. Even the mind, weighed down by many worries, is relieved when, according to Jesus' advice, we concern ourselves with the one thing that is necessary (cf. Lk 10:42).

We can never thank the Lord enough for all the good he has done and continues to do day by day for us human beings. As people of faith, we know that we owe everything to Him, and we must internalise this more and more. This certainty must preserve us from all pride, and so we will be able to praise God's wisdom with the words of today's reading:

*"Who could ever have known your will, had you not given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from above? Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened and people have been taught what pleases you, and have been saved, by Wisdom."*