

20. February 2023

## Wisdom, prudent intelligence

Sir 1:1-10

*All wisdom comes from the Lord, she is with him for ever. The sands of the sea, the drops of rain, the days of eternity - who can count them? The height of the sky, the breadth of the earth, the depth of the abyss - who can explore them? Wisdom was created before everything, prudent understanding subsists from remotest ages. For whom has the root of wisdom ever been uncovered? Her resourceful ways, who knows them? One only is wise, terrible indeed, seated on his throne, the Lord. It was he who created, inspected and weighed her up, and then poured her out on all his works- as much to each living creature as he chose - bestowing her on those who love him.*

Wisdom is a very precious treasure, which Holy Scripture praises highly. And it is not surprising that it does so, considering that, as today's reading says, wisdom comes from the Lord Himself and it is He who bestows it.

The wisdom that comes from God is distinguished from the various forms of knowledge by its inner beauty, by its special "taste", which allows us to taste God Himself in His innermost Being: "*Taste and see how good the Lord is*" (Ps 34:8).

King Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom, and this desire of his was in perfect harmony with God's will (1 Kings 3:5-12). The Lord granted it to him in abundance, for Solomon had asked for the best that a king could ask for in order to glorify God and fulfil his task.

Solomon's wisdom became so famous that even the queen of Sheba came from afar to admire it, as Scripture tells us (1 Kings 10:1-9).

Today's reading speaks of wisdom as "*she is with him for ever*". It is therefore a participation in the wisdom of God. Indeed, this is what gives wisdom its special "taste". This is that one comes to understand that love is the basic tonic of all existence, and from this love one begins to see all things in the light of God. Wisdom

is thus distinguished from merely external knowledge, which does not penetrate to the essence of things. And the essence of all creation and of all that God does is precisely love, because He had no other motivation for bringing all things into being. Therefore, it is this love that gives that spiritual flavour to wisdom in all its domains.

A poet or a good artist is able to perceive and feel the wisdom of creation in a different way from science. Science can gather much data and penetrate into the natural laws of things; but it cannot touch their essence.

Perhaps it can be said that wisdom is a kind of spiritual poetry, which begins to grasp from within the beauty of Creation and the glory of God's various works... It goes hand in hand with wonder and can even reach the point of rapture, when, beyond marvelling at Creation, it begins to grasp the love that comes to meet us in the Redemption brought to us by the Son of God. It is also related to contemplation, which, as it brings God's love into the depths of man, introduces him into the Kingdom of His wisdom.

Among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, wisdom is considered to be the highest and is spoken of as "delightful knowledge". Thus God does not only grant us a merely external knowledge of things, nor only a distant intuition of their greatness. No! He wants us to share in the mystery of His work and to perceive that love which moved Him to call all things into existence.

And not only that, but He wants to welcome us, through His Son, into the love of the Holy Trinity and make us taste something of it, to the extent that we are able to assimilate it, something that only He knows exactly how to determine. In our earthly life we can only bear it up to a certain point, otherwise it would happen to us like St. Francis of Assisi, who, on hearing heavenly music once, exclaimed: "If I hear one more note, I die!"

How can we acquire wisdom? Today's reading gives us the answer: "*The Lord himself (...) poured her out on all his works-bestowing her on those who love him*".