

The Book of Wisdom, from which our first reading comes this weekend, is a book whose aim is to edify and enlighten its readers in the way of faith, to guide them on the path to knowing and serving our Lord, and today's passage raises a profound question. The author asks, "Who can conceive God's counsel . . . scarce do we guess the things on earth, and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty; but when things are in heaven, who can search them out?"

Addressing God directly, the author asks our Father, "Who ever knew your counsel, except you had given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high? And thus were the paths of those on earth made straight."

In other words, we know with confidence that the Lord provides. Its difficult enough to figure out what we are to do with the things we face in this world, but how much more difficult it is to discern the will of God. Yet we know, that God, through His Holy Spirit, guides and directs His people. He gives His people what we need. he shows us the paths we are to walk. The Psalmist confirms this, proclaiming, "In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge."

In every age our Lord reveals His counsel, His help, His wisdom, to guide us in our lives. When you look at the long history of our Church, one way we see the revelation of the wisdom of God has been through the treasure that is the saints of our Church.

In every age, God has chosen countless men and women to be instruments through which we may better understand His will and better face the challenges of that age.

For example, think of the early Church, of the first Christians, living in a time of uncertainty and even persecution. The saints of the early Church lived with courage and boldly shared the seeds of the Gospel despite the great obstacles. Not even the threat of death could prevent them from sharing the truth of Jesus Christ. A second century writer described this age of courageous faith saying, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." It was that example of courage, saints going to their death in the arenas of the ancient world with a song of joy on their lips, that courage brought many to see that the truth of Jesus Christ was worth living and dying for. Great courage and great love set the ancient world on fire as Christianity grew exponentially.

The Lord provided for His people.

Throughout the centuries of the first millennium, as the Church grew, so did our attempts to understand and explain the mysteries of our faith. In that age, the Lord provided such great saints as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Benedict, Patrick and Boniface - and so many others, to not only share the faith by their examples, but to teach the faith with clarity and fidelity. Great saints, great thinkers, great writers, the Fathers of the Church, as we call them, who reined in error and guided the Church.

Again, through His saints, the Lord provided for His people.

In the middle ages, when corruption was rampant throughout the hierarchy of the Church - popes, cardinals and bishops seeking wealth and power, serving their own needs instead of the people they were chosen to serve. From within the darkness of that corruption, our Lord sent us such great saints as Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena, powerful women who fought for reform and faithfulness. And of course, the simple, little poor man, St. Francis, whose love for Christ and Christ alone changed the world and continues to guide people even today in their lives of faith.

In that age, the Lord provided for His people.

There are so many other examples we could share of how the Lord provides for His people in every age, how His saints rise up as guides and examples for us, but what of our age?

It is easier to look back with a broad view of history and see the way in which our Lord has provided for His people in the past, but it is not always so easy to see how He is working in the world now. Yet surely He is. In every age He provides for His people.

So the question is, what is the need of our age? What have we forgotten as a culture? What are the ways in which we may have lost sight of God? Where is the wisdom we need?

I'm sure we could each come up with our own diagnosis of the woes of our age, but what I find particularly striking is that we live in an age, in which there is great material wealth, but a poverty of spirit. We have so much stuff, but so many people describe an emptiness in life. We have the ability to communicate in amazing and efficient ways with more people, more immediately, and to connect with relative ease to so many people all around the world, but yet study after study reveals greater feelings of isolation and loneliness, even despair.

Science and medical technology have advanced to the point that the average life expectancy around the world over just the last fifteen years has increased by an average of almost six years. Yet the preciousness and dignity of each life is marked by a person's utility or so-called quality of life. The unborn, the elderly, the disabled are seen more and more as “dispensable”.

And in the midst of this culture, in 2016, our Church elevated to the honor of saint, Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

St. Teresa of Calcutta is well known to many, and clearly her great love for the poor and her powerful example would be a great gift to any age, but what makes Mother Teresa such a needed example for this age is the intimate relationship she had with Jesus Christ that gave her the strength to do the incredible and difficult work she did with joy in her heart.

Many people know the story of what Mother Teresa referred to as the “call within a call” that she received on September 10, 1946. While on a train headed to a retreat house in Darjeeling, Mother Teresa heard our Lord speak to her, “Come, come, carry me to the poor. Come be my light.” She knew the Lord was calling her to serve the lowly and the abandoned in the streets of Calcutta, to be his love in the lives of those forgotten people. She heard Him say the words He spoke from the cross, “I Thirst”. She understood that the same thirst that drove Him to the Cross, the thirst to save us all from sin, that same thirst still longs for souls, He still thirsts for His love to be shared with those who need to know and experience His love. It was that thirst that Mother Teresa made her own.

Over time, Mother Teresa came to realize that the Thirst our Lord had shared so intimately with her was not just for her work or for the poor of Calcutta. She came to believe that the whole world needed to know of our Lord's great thirst. She shared this message frequently with her sisters in her letters and conferences, that in this age filled with such wealth, yet such spiritual poverty, in this world - so connected yet so isolated - we needed to be reminded that Jesus Christ thirsts for the love of each and every person, not as some abstract theological proposition, but in a very real and intimate way. He wants to love us and to be loved by us.

His thirst is infinite, and Mother Teresa reminds us that we who seek fulfillment in the wealth and privilege and pleasures of this age, we need to know that the thirst within our hearts can only be quenched by Jesus. “I thirst for you” is the cry of our Lord, but it is also the cry within our hearts. This message is one we need to understand.

For this reason, as a parish, throughout the coming year, we will be looking more closely at the life, the works, the writings, and the spirituality of St. Teresa of Calcutta, in the hope that each of us will discover Jesus' infinite thirst for us, His desire to have a relationship with each of us.

There will be opportunities throughout the year, so please be attentive to the bulletin, our parish website, and other communications as we explore this great spirituality of St. Teresa.

It is a simple phrase, really, “I thirst for you”, but within those words lies the infinite love of Jesus. May this year be one in which all of us come to know that love more personally so like St. Teresa of Calcutta, we too may give our lives to Jesus with all our hearts.