

## ***EARTHLY VERSUS GODLY WISDOM***

**25<sup>TH</sup> Sunday OT**

**Year B**

**Wis 2:12,17-20; Ps 54:3-8; Jas 3:16-4:3; Mk 9:30-37**

**Homily by Dcn. Tom McConnell**

**Wisdom is a central theme in the letter of James. The very first injunction in the opening section of the book is advice on how to obtain wisdom (Jas 1:5). In today's second reading, James tells us that there are two kinds of wisdom, worldly and Godly wisdom. He further explains why many Christians seem to be caught up in the web of worldly wisdom and never grow up to attain Godly wisdom.**

**Today's passage is part of a general message which James gives in 3:15, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.” James maintains that there is a wisdom that is not true wisdom: “Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish” (Jas 3:15). James advises that Earthly wisdom is driven by “envy and selfish ambition.” Its effect on the community is “disorder and wickedness of every kind” (verse 16).**

**He contrasts this with Godly wisdom: “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or**

*hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”* (Jas 3:17-18)

Divine wisdom is perfect wisdom. It has these seven characteristics:

1. It is pure: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*” (Mat 5:8). The truly wise are single-minded in their service of God, free from all ulterior motives and of self-seeking.
2. It is peaceable: “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*” (Mat 5:9). Arrogant worldly wisdom often breeds dissension and division, but Godly wisdom always produces harmony and right relationships among people.
3. It is gentle: “*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*” (Mat 5:5). The Apostle Paul declares to the Thessalonians that “*we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children*” (1 Thess 2:7). The truly wise are very considerate, knowing when to temper justice with mercy.

**4. It is forbearing (i.e., willing to yield): Jesus was known for his “gentleness and forbearance” (2 Cor 10:1).**

**Similarly, Christian Philippians are to be known for their forbearance (Phil 4:5). Truly wise people are not stubborn or unwilling to listen to reason. On the contrary, they know when to accommodate other people’s points of view and yield to them.**

**5. It is full of mercy and good fruits: Christian mercy distinguishes itself from natural pity in two ways. Firstly, whereas we naturally feel pity for one who is suffering unjustly, Christian mercy extends to all who suffer, even if they have brought the suffering on themselves. Secondly, natural pity is an emotion that one feels, whereas Christian mercy is an action that one takes. It must issue in good fruits, that is, in a good deed. Truly wise people feel pity for all who suffer and go on to do something concrete to help.**

**6. It does not vacillate or hesitate: Although Christian wisdom is open to other people’s ideas, it does not**

doubt its own basic convictions. “*For the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord*” (Jas 1:7).

**7. And finally, Divine wisdom is without a trace of hypocrisy:** Paul advises the Romans to “*Let love be sincere*” (Rom 12:9). True wisdom is not a pretense or a make-believe, but a genuine expression of faith.

After this extensive description of Godly wisdom, James asks a very pertinent question: “*Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from?*” (Jas 4:1) We live in a world ridden with conflicts and disputes. So, this is a very important question. James answers that they arise from the inordinate cravings that are at war within us. He explains: “*You want something and do not have it; so, you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so, you engage in disputes and conflicts.*” (verse 2) We have a tendency to blame others and hold them responsible for the conflicts and disputes in our lives. But James asks us to look in the mirror to discover who is ultimately responsible for our acts of

**violence. His analysis holds true for us both as individuals and as a society.**

**James doesn't blame us for wanting a better life. He blames us for seeking a better life on our own terms, in order to satisfy our selfish desires. “*You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.*” (Jas 4:2-3) In other words, our hope for a better life will be realized if we recognize that everything good and perfect comes as a gift from God, and that these gifts are given to us in trust to spend in the service and glory of God and not on our selfish pleasures.**

**The problem with our world today is that Godly wisdom is in short supply. Let us today resolve to stand up and be counted with the few children of God who have and live and move in the wisdom from above. And this is how, says James: “*If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.*” (Jas 1:5)**

**God bless you all!!**

