
Bishop Paul Bird's Homily on the Occasion of Beginning School Mass
St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat – 29th January 2013

Imagine you're at your desk, working away quietly, answering some emails or doing some lesson preparation. Then you notice a strange light seems to be filling the room. You don't see anyone else around but you hear a voice and the voice says: "I am Christ Jesus and I am with you to support you. I have seen how hard you are working and I would like to offer you some special help. Tell me, what would you like me to give you?"

You're stunned by this strange experience and for a few moments you don't know what to say. But then you answer: "Well, yes, I have been working hard and I would appreciate some help. I've got a lot of issues to deal with. I've got problems with some of the students and some of the staff and there are tensions with some of the parents too. I've got some ideas for improvements at the school but we always seem to be short of money to get new equipment and do all the things we'd like to do. All in all, though, I suppose the main thing I'd like is wisdom to make good decisions, to know how to relate to the students and the staff and the parents and to know how to use the resources we do have as well as we can."

Then the voice speaks again: "I'm glad you have asked for wisdom. You might have asked for more money. You might have asked to be free of problems with students. You might have asked to be free of difficult staff or difficult parents. But you have asked for wisdom. Now I grant you the wisdom you need to make good decisions. And with this I am granting you all the gifts you need. You will know how to do what is best for the students. You will know how to relate well with staff and with parents. You will know how to use resources well to do what you need to do." And with that, the strange light in your office disappears and the office seems normal again.

I've based this story on a story we find in the Scriptures where God speaks to King Solomon. God asks Solomon what gift he would like. Solomon asks for wisdom so that he might govern the people well. God is pleased that Solomon has asked for wisdom and not for a long life or for wealth or for vengeance on his enemies. God grants Solomon great wisdom and God also grants him all the other gifts he needs to have a splendid reign as king.

This is beautifully summed up in the first reading we had this morning, from the Book of Wisdom. "I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I deemed riches nothing in comparison with her. Beyond health and beauty I loved her. Yet all good things came to me with wisdom and countless riches at her hands."

This is very like the teaching of Christ in the gospel where he speaks of seeking first the reign of God. "Don't worry about what you are to eat or what you are to drink or what you are to wear. God knows you need these things. Seek first the reign of God and all these other gifts will be given to you as well." May Christ grant us wisdom. May Christ help us to seek first the reign of God. As we continue this Mass, let's pray especially for the gift of wisdom. The Scriptures teach us that if we ask for wisdom, all the other gifts we need will be given to us as well.

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