

My Brothers and Sisters,

Our three readings today challenge our values and priorities.

In today's reading from the Book of Wisdom, which is often called the Wisdom of Solomon, Solomon prayed for and received the gifts of prudence and wisdom. If we listened closely to the reading, Solomon acknowledged that he preferred wisdom to power, possessions, and pleasure. Today we need to ask ourselves where wisdom ranks among our priorities.

In one of his general audiences, Pope Francis defined the gift of wisdom as "seeing with God's eyes, hearing with God's ears, loving with God's heart, directing things with God's judgement." If we see with God's eyes, hear with God's ears, love with God's heart, and act in accord with God's judgment, God's values and priorities will have become our values and priorities, and we will become the-best-version-of-ourselves and make a real difference in our world.

Today's short reading from Hebrews is one of my favorite New Testament passages: "*Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, ...able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.*" God's word challenges us at the very core of our being. In the past, I have always interpreted the word of God in this passage to be the Scriptures. However, the next verse states that "*No creature is concealed from him...*" In other words, Jesus himself, the Word of God, challenges us at the very core of our being. He calls us to conversion, i.e., a change of heart, a change of values, and a change of behavior, and challenges us to grow into his likeness, i.e., to become his other self.

Likewise, today's Gospel is one of my favorite passages in Mark's Gospel. The rich young man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers by citing the commandments. The young man responds by saying that he has kept all the commandments since his youth. Jesus then challenges him to go and sell all he has and then to come follow Jesus. We are told his face fell, and he went away sad because he had many possessions.

There are several important lessons in this story. The first is that although keeping the Ten Commandments is necessary, it is not sufficient for salvation. Although Jesus does not ask most people to give up everything to follow him, he does ask everyone to become his disciple, which means a lot more than keeping the commandments. Second, Jesus asked the rich young man to give what he had to the poor, showing once again the importance of the poor and the marginalized to Jesus. Finally, the reason this is one of my favorite Gospel passages is one verse: "*Jesus, looking at him, loved him....*" It is the power of God's love that calls and empowers us to be Jesus' disciples.

My brothers and sisters, today Pope Francis canonized Saint Pope Paul VI, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and five others. Pope Paul VI served as Pope from 1963 until his death on August 6, 1978. Succeeding Pope John XXIII, he continued the Second Vatican Council and implemented its reforms. His apostolic exhortation *On Proclaiming the Gospel* formed the basis for the emphasis on evangelization and re-evangelization by each of the succeeding Popes.

As some of you may remember, Pope Paul VI ordained Fr. Jim Farrell and me on June 29, 1975. Fr. Jim and I were two of 359 ordained in that ceremony. Twice during the ordination ceremony we had the privilege of approaching the Holy Father. First, he laid hands on our heads, which is the essential element of ordination along with the consecratory prayer. Second, he exchanged the Sign of Peace with each newly ordained priest. In pictures, Pope Paul VI appeared distant and remote. However, what I most remember about Pope Paul VI from that day was the warmth in his eyes.