

My Brothers and Sisters,

We spend our lives trying to make sense of our lives. However, as I have gotten older, I realize I have more questions than answers. There is more that I do not understand than I do understand.

Today's readings, especially the reading from the Book of Wisdom, offer us answers to some key questions. Among our biggest questions and our biggest struggles is making sense of suffering and death. Today's reading from Wisdom offers us some answers. *"God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome..."* At the first moment of creation, God created the world and everything in it, and everything was good in God's eyes. In other words, in his original plan of creation, there was no sin, suffering, sickness, or death. Even when we sinned, God did not make death, but *"by the envy of the devil, death entered the world."* However, God never rejoices in the destruction of the living.

This passage has a particular relevance to our times. It mentioned that in the beginning, there was no *"destructive drug"* among them. In recent years, we have witnessed the destruction that illegal and sometimes even legal drugs work among us, our families, and our communities. The opioid crisis offers the perfect example of the destruction drugs bring.

The author of Wisdom reiterates that God formed us to be imperishable because he created us in the image of his nature. This means that as Catholic Christians, we believe that we have an immortal soul and, therefore, have the gifts of intelligence and freedom. Because we have the gifts of intelligence and freedom, we are responsible for our choices and our actions.

To understand today's second reading, we need to know that when Paul was writing, there was a famine in Judea, and Paul was taking up a collection to assist the Jews most afflicted by the famine in Jerusalem. Paul reminded the Corinthians of all their blessings and encouraged them to give thanks by sharing those blessings with the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

*...as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their needs... As it is written, "Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less."*

In other words, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul challenges our notions of riches and poverty. Christ, although he was rich, became poor that we might become rich. St. Paul suggests that riches and poverty are not, first of all, about money. Since Jesus came to reconcile us with God and one another, true riches are about relationships: our relationship with God and our relationships with others. Even if we have all the money in the world, if we do not have a real relationship with God and good relationships with others, we are the poorest of the poor. Likewise, even if we have very little in the way of material goods, if we have a real relationship with God and good relationships with others, we are rich. We need to remember the words of Jesus in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels: *"For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be"* [Mt. 6:21 & Lk. 12:34].

Finally, in today's Gospel, Jesus calls the daughter of Jairus back to life and heals the woman with a hemorrhage. Again, as we heard in the reading from Wisdom, God created us for being and life. Suffering, sickness, and death entered the world because of sin. As Jesus said in John's Gospel, *"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full"* [Jn. 10:10b; NJB]. The power that Jesus felt go out of him was the power of his healing love.

My brothers and sisters, as Jesus' followers, we are called to be life giving to everyone we encounter. Love, and only love, is truly life giving.