

SERMON 921

March 4, 2015

Feast of Gregory of Nyssa

987th Week as Priest

814th Week at St Dunstan's

79th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee



WISDOM

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Wisdom is first among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not because it is more important than the others, but likely that it is a more ancient and recognized sacred gift than are Knowledge, Understanding, Strength, Counsel, Faith, and Holy Fear. Wisdom is named more than 150 times in the Old Testament, most often in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Wisdom is often called Sophia, and it is generally associated with the feminine.

Wisdom seems to have more depth, more complexity, more nuance than the other spiritual gifts named by the prophet Isaiah. Knowledge is the accumulation and recall of information. Understanding is the application of knowledge. Strength, Counsel, Faith, and Fear are qualities of character. But Wisdom is subtle and “more mobile than any motion.” She pervades and penetrates all things, meaning that her influence is felt in all of our goings and doings, or should be. Imagine what our life, our common life, would be if all people were to seek wisdom in the ordering and conduct of their lives.

But “fools despise wisdom and instruction,” says the writer of the Proverbs. On the other hand, those who are wise build their lives on righteousness, a house supported by seven pillars, so strong that it cannot be moved.

Those who are wise recognize that their wisdom is not of their own creation or doing. Wisdom is “a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty.” Though these words are from the Apocrypha, they remind me of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The apostles, on that day, are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and their lives are transformed. From that day, they show forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are Love, Joy, Peace,

Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, and Self-Control.

Wisdom is also compared to light, “For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the Light of the World, and with good reason. He is the creative Word, by whom all things are brought into being—and the first creative act of God was to bring forth Light.

So let us seek Wisdom in all that we say and do. Let us listen carefully to the Spirit of God that we may learn and grow in Wisdom and Understanding. For this purpose, we are most nobly human—and we are never too young to begin, nor too old to cease learning.

For “God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.” AMEN.