

Fr. Brad Neely

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

Peter and Paul: Nezperce: Cycle A: Feb 13, 2011  
Sir 15:15-20; 1 Cor 2:6-10; Mt 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a,  
27-28, 33-34a, 37

These are the words of Sirach we heard [this morning]:

“Before man are life and death, good and evil,  
whichever he chooses shall be given him.”

Remember the two empty lots  
I homilized about some time ago?--  
one named something like “Heavenly Estates,”  
and the other, “Throw Your Money  
Down a Rat Hole Acres?”  
As far as spending the rest of your life  
on one of these lots,  
it was all too obvious  
which of the two would be preferred.

Considering this today,  
what if we knew that some people  
could *have* Heavenly Estates,  
but didn't pay much attention to that possibility,  
and really didn't give much thought  
to *where* they wanted to end up.  
The best choice is obvious.

Assume that we can *see* the properties.  
So why end up on the Rat-hole lot?

Going back to life and death,  
good and evil---  
we of course can *see* and *experience*  
manifestations of life and death---  
of good and evil,  
But we do have to admit  
that there is a good bit  
of abstraction attached to them.

Part of entering into the abstract parts  
of life and death, good and evil,  
is developing a sense of *wisdom*.  
People in Sirach's time  
were also in need of wisdom.  
The Book of Sirach was written about 175-200BC  
by the son of a sage named Sirach.  
This son, [who was interestingly named Jesus],

had a true love for Mosaic law,  
the priesthood, the temple,  
and divine worship.

He was wise,  
and a keen observer of life.  
He addressed his writings  
to those at that time---  
helping them to maintain  
religious faith and integrity.

Again, let us consider Sirach's words:  
“If you choose you can keep the commandments,  
they will save you;  
if you trust in God, you too shall live;  
he has set before you fire and water  
to whichever you choose,  
stretch forth your hand.  
Before man are life and death,  
good and evil;  
whichever he chooses shall be given him.”  
We choose:  
\*to keep commandments,  
\*to trust in God,  
\*to stretch forth our hands,  
\*to receive what we choose,  
*precisely* because we are given  
the **freedom** to do it.

St. Paul, in our second reading,  
reminds us the origins of **wisdom**----  
that of course, being God.  
Paul describes God's wisdom,  
which naturally is of a higher order  
than human wisdom,  
as *mysterious* and *hidden*---  
known to God before the ages---  
and interestingly enough, Paul says,  
*for our glory*.

To be **wise**, according to its definition,  
is to “have the power of discerning  
and judging properly  
as to what is true and right.”  
Great! How do **we** know  
what is true and right?  
More and more people,  
as time goes on,  
claim *they* have the truth---  
at least what is true for them.  
But truth *is not relative to individuals*.

We can search the world over,  
but ultimately we must look to God,  
whose wisdom is of a higher order---  
mysterious and hidden---  
but whose wisdom has been revealed to us  
in sufficient amount  
for the cause of our salvation.  
It is *wise* of us to seek the *wisdom* of God---  
mysterious or not---  
hidden or not.  
There is no other than God's wisdom  
for measuring truth and righteousness.

Let's pause again over the wisdom of Sirach:  
"If you choose you can keep the commandments,  
they will **save** you;  
if you trust in God, you too **shall live**;  
he has set before you fire and water  
to whichever you choose,  
stretch forth your hand.  
Before man are life and death,  
good and evil,  
whichever he chooses **shall be given him.**"  
And all of this, Paul says,  
*for our glory.*