

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 6th 2016

Memorial of Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

Solomon asked God for wisdom and understanding, but it appears that he already had a good measure of it when he responded to God in a dream. In the dream, God invites Solomon to ask for anything and it would be given. Was that such an unusual offer on the part of God? I don't think so. I think God continuously makes this offer to each of us. God asks us what do we really want in this life. This can be our story too. But Solomon's story suggests that what we want should focus on what God wants if we are to gain God's favor.

The Solomon story, I think, however, is less about how to gain God's favor than it is about how we are to interact with God's goodness to us. The first thing Solomon said to God was that he had already received much. I think that before we ask God for anything, we should take stock of all the blessings we have already received. That will better help us see what else we need. There is a common practice in Christian spirituality retreats of asking participants to take a blessing inventory. What God has already given us helps us see what God expects us to do with our blessings. But all of us need help in further spiritual development to direct our blessings toward their best use. We need help in discerning and developing our gifts more purposefully and effectively. We need to have those regular conversations with God in our prayer life. So, rather than what do we want, our question should become what do we need in order to do what God wants us to do?

In Solomon's case, he recognized that God had placed him in a very high servant's position, that of the successor to King David. Then he did a reality check and humbly recognized that he did not know how to act with all those blessings. He wanted to do a good job, to be responsible. But he was young. He lacked experience. Solomon knew he needed help. I think that made him already pretty wise. He asked God for an understanding heart in his judgement of the people so that he could govern well. God was pleased and he gave it to him, along with all sorts of other blessings.

The lesson we learn from this is that God is always blessing us with gifts to become God's servant. But God wants us to all ask for what we need to do our job well. If we ask well, he will give it to us. So today, we pray with gratitude for our gifts, our callings, our wisdom, our weaknesses and our humility. They all draw us closer to God to discern what we need and how to better use our gifts to do God's saving work in the world. We pray that we will seek God with all of our hearts and desire to know the wisdom of God's statutes, rejoicing as if we have been given great riches! Alleluia, alleluia!

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