Good Morning,

Today’s pastoral letter was inspired by the Epiphany reading Matthew 2:1-12. While reading one of the commentaries, the author said, “Many voices try to guide and shape our lives. When is a call God’s call? How do we decide?” (Herbert O’Driscoll). You know the story, a star appears and groups of wise men notice the star. Some of them compose reflection papers on the implications of the star appearing at that time and in that place. Some astrologers would have been fascinated by the conjunction of the stars. There were a few magi who were especially fascinated and decided to journey to discover the meaning and purpose of the star. Meanwhile, King Herod heard about the star and instructed the wise men to follow the star and find the child. The seldom discussed point here is the Bible tells us that the way of wisdom is to react to specific intellectual, emotional or spiritual promptings which could be the call of a loving God. In this specific situation, the wise men find the child and in the midst of their journey are prompted to evaluate their experience and make a new decision. That decision was not to return to Herod. Some would say that wisdom is about evaluating everything in our experience.

Today I would like to narrow my focus on some potential wisdom for our own lives. When we feel called to a specific course of action we need to be aware that sometimes it’s God calling and other times it’s another presence or force that threatens to disable or disarm us. True wisdom is found in prayer and searching the guidance and direction of those whom we trust. If we make decisions in the context of prayer, bible study, worship and a trusting community, God will surely give us the strength through His grace to enable us to live out the implications of our decisions.

In very practical terms, “We have to do the best we are capable of. This is our sacred human responsibility” (Albert Einstein). John Maxwell put the same bit of wisdom in these words, “Learn to say no to the good so you can say yes to the best.” Sometimes wisdom is about making healthy choices and healthy choices can sometimes be risky. Thomas Jefferson put it well when he said, “If you want something you never had, you have to do something you’ve never done.” Faith is at the core of all wisdom. Jesus Christ once said, “Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find; knock and a door will be open to you.”

I’ve always been impressed by the words of Henry Thoreau who said, “Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around.” That sounds like a rather extraordinary claim doesn’t it? Until you consider the words of Aristotle, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit.” As we embrace the new year, we can embrace new habits and consider new beliefs that allow growth that result in new insights, and therefore wisdom. Martin Luther King said it well when he stated, “You don’t need to see the whole staircase, just to take the first step.” Some would say that faith has a great deal to do with praying your way through each step and circumstance, searching for God’s wisdom in all things.

As we begin a new year, it’s helpful to consider the words of Denzel Washington who wrote, “At the end of the day it’s not about what you have or even what you have accomplished… it’s about who you have lifted up and who you have made better, it’s about what you have given back.” Robert Louis Stephenson phrased it differently when he wrote, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”

I admire the words of Zig Zeigler who once wrote, “If you can dream it, then you can achieve it. You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want.” May God bless you in 2019. May your relationships be filled with wisdom, hope, joy and love.

Blessings

Fr Stephen