

Fr. Romeo Homily  
December 9, 2018  
Second Sunday of Advent

An amusing experiment you can make with a young child – say, a two-year old – is this one: You show the child an old, crumpled \$100 bill in one hand, and a shining new freshly minted \$1 coin in the other hand. Then you tell the child, “I’ll give you one of these two things, whichever one you choose”. What do you think the child will invariably choose? The shining coin, of course. Why? Because the child does not recognize the real value of these two currencies. Instead of judging them by their intrinsic worth or, in other words, their respective purchasing power, the child judges them by their appearance. But make the same offer to a teenager and the teenager will invariably choose the \$100 dollar bill. Why? Because the teenager has learned that he/she can buy a lot more things with a \$100 bill than with a \$1 coin. The teaching of his parents and his/her own experience have made the teenager wiser than the child when it comes to discerning the value of different currencies. This kind of discernment is an elementary form of wisdom, but it is wisdom nevertheless. To know the value of things beginning with the value of currencies, is at least the starting point of wisdom.

As usual on Sundays, the Missal offers a choice of two Opening Prayers, and it so happens today that both Opening Prayers mention the word wisdom. The first one says, “God of power and mercy....remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share his wisdom”. Here, the prayer shows Christ as a source of wisdom. The second Opening Prayer goes like this: “Father in heaven, may the darkness not blind us to the vision of wisdom which fills the minds of those who find Christ”. This second prayer somehow completes the thought of the first. The first presents Christ as the source of wisdom, whereas the second quite logically concludes that those who find Christ, so much so that their minds are filled with Christ’s wisdom—somewhat like sunlight fills a room when you open its doors and windows.

At this point you might well ask, “Ah that is very interesting, but what on earth are you talking about? What is this precious wisdom that a Christian can find in Christ? The answer to that question is given in today’s second reading. There the apostle Paul writes to the Philippians what follows, “My prayer is that your love may more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blame less conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter”.

To value the things that really matter is a good definition of wisdom as any. Remember the child and the two currencies. Wisdom consists in choosing the \$100 dollar bill because, compared to a \$1 dollar coin, it is what really matters. And, in this case, the glittering appearance of the new coin is a lure, a trap, which entices the child to make a wrong choice.

In like manner, as we go through life we have to make many choices. Choices regarding our actions, our ways of thinking, our values, our friends and so on. In many of these choices we are confronted with a shining \$1 dollar coin and an old, crumpled \$100 bill. We can choose what is easier, faster, more convenient, more pleasurable—but less honest, durable, reliable, life-giving, generous, loving. A lot of people spend their whole life in pursuit of wealth, fame, power, pleasure. And when they succeed in acquiring these flashy trifles, they discover to their dismay that none of them makes them happy. All along they had been wanting the shiny \$1 dollar coin which can buy very little. On the other hand, when they look around, they discover that the really happy people are those who sacrifice themselves for others, who serve as best they can, and who in general strive to live good lives. Seen from the outside, their lives are not very glittering. Yet, such lives are happy and precious in the eyes of God. These people have learned to value the things that really matter, that is, to love and to be loved.

During this time of Advent, let us ask ourselves this simple question in preparation for our meeting with the Lord. “When Christ comes, will he find a wise person, a person who has learned to value the things that really matter? This is the best way to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his paths in our very own lives.