

- The pearl of great price...the treasure hidden in the field. What are these? Simply analogies for the law of God and the wisdom of God...
- ...because God—our creator and Father who loves us far beyond our capacity to understand—gives us His Word not to constrain us unnecessarily, but to guide us into truth, and thus the salvation that Christ has won for us.
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- It's easy to be led off the right path. Time and company can wear us down.
- We hear in our first reading of Solomon, and though he was made wisest of all men by God, even he was led astray by ungoverned passions...not acting in accord with reason and his knowledge of what is truly good, but rather gave in to idolatry to please his foreign pagan wives.
- This is why we must be attentive to what we read, what we watch, what we are constantly exposed to...because if we constantly expose ourselves to the bad or the evil, over time we become deadened to it, or begin to see it as the “norm” of human life.
- For example, child pornographers and pedophiles don't become so overnight. They generally begin with “soft” porn, and then when that no longer thrills, they increasingly digress...eventually going to the criminal...and worse.
- As the old saw goes: “If you lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas.”
- It's similar to drugs. People rarely begin w/ the hard stuff, but start with softer drugs, and when those no longer thrill, go on to stronger stuff. Same with alcoholics.
- And then we see the funeral home sites populated with young and relatively young people.
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- This is how evil worms its way into our minds: disregard of the good, and the undisciplined indulgence of our baser sensual nature.

- Like we read in the story of Eve in the Garden, Satan whispers in our ears, telling us that the forbidden fruit is actually good and will make us happier, stronger, more powerful, more famous, cooler, or whatever.
- But if the apple is sweet, and yet poisonous and kills...we only lose...and lose all.
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- With drugs, how many of us have heard young addicts say: “I wanted the thrill; I thought I would be able to handle it.”
- Sin is very similar. A little soft porn here, a little petty theft there, and little flirting and touching with the coworker...and soon it’s the moral gutter with child porn, felony larceny, embezzlement, shattered families...and perhaps even Hell in the end if unrepented.
- The solution? The pearl of great price. The treasure in the field. The Word of God in Jesus Christ, and fidelity to Him.

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- After all, what IS wisdom?
 - As we hear in Proverbs: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight...”*
 - *“... If you are wise, you are wise for yourself [meaning that fidelity to God is the most beneficial thing possible]; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.”* [referring to our individual choice, and our attendant individual responsibility] (Proverbs 9:10-12)
 - “Fear of the Lord” is not meant to be servile fear...though that, too, can be helpful in turning the hardened sinner from his way.
 - “Fear of the Lord” in scriptures is meant more to convey the sense of a filial fear—a fear of hurting Our Father...Our Lord...offending against the incomparable and undying love He has for us.
 - And thus wisdom is not simply knowledge; this is the common error of our day. Many have knowledge, but little wisdom.
 - Wisdom involves knowing, yes...but even more so, understanding and following the teaching of God...not through mere feelings,

which easily lead us astray, but through our reason—turning away from those things He teaches are wrong, and embracing those things He teaches are right and good.

- This is why we fast and do spiritual exercises—to train ourselves in self-denial in small things, that we may stand steadfast and faithful in bigger things.

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- How much self-denial? How much should we be ready to give up?
 - Whatever is necessary. Because what is NOT worth giving up for eternal life and joy...existing in the embrace of the pure love which God is?
 - This is why Jesus says if your right eye or right hand causes you to sin, pluck it out!...cut it off!...throw it away!...not so much literally, but understanding Him to mean that even our most cherished possessions are not worth losing that pearl of great price—eternal life with God—especially knowing that the only alternative is eternity in Hell. (cf. Matthew 5:29-30)
 - And this is why Jesus says: “*For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his [eternal] life? For what can a man give in return for [that] life?*” (Mark 8:36-37) Because nothing even remotely compares to that eternal embrace of God... proven so starkly in Jesus allowing Himself to be tortured and murdered for His and His Father’s beloved. **You.**
 - And as St. Paul writes: “*...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him...*” (1Corinthians 2:9)

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- So let us not be so shallow as to see in God’s Word and Church teaching mere rules and regulations to be followed in fear and servility, but rather realize in them the wisdom and the path to eternal life. The path of love given by Our Father—Our Lord—who is pure love.

- Yes, it's not an easy path. Many enticements, temptations and traps are in the path. As Jesus warns us: “...*the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life...*” (Matthew 7:14)
 - And yet, St. John tells us: “...*this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*” (1John 5:3)
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- And so we pray with Solomon as in our first reading: “*Give your servant, an understanding heart...to distinguish right from wrong*”...to be faithful to you, and thus to the true Good.
- God's answer to that prayer?
- “*The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him: “Because you have asked for this—not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right—I do as you requested.*”
- ...for Jesus assures us: “*If you then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*” (Luke 11:13)

Reading 1

[1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12](#)

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night.
God said, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.”
Solomon answered:
“O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king
to succeed my father David;
but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act.
I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen,
a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted.
Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart
to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.
For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?”

The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request.

So God said to him:

“Because you have asked for this—
not for a long life for yourself,
nor for riches,
nor for the life of your enemies,
but for understanding so that you may know what is right—
I do as you requested.

I give you a heart so wise and understanding
that there has never been anyone like you up to now,
and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

R. (97a) Lord, I love your commands.

I have said, O LORD, that my part
is to keep your words.

The law of your mouth is to me more precious
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Let your kindness comfort me
according to your promise to your servants.

Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

For I love your command
more than gold, however fine.
For in all your precepts I go forward;
every false way I hate.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Wonderful are your decrees;

therefore I observe them.

The revelation of your words sheds light,
giving understanding to the simple.

R. Lord, I love your commands.

Reading II

[Rom 8:28-30](#)

Brothers and sisters:

We know that all things work for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.

For those he foreknew he also predestined
to be conformed to the image of his Son,

so that he might be the firstborn
among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined he also called;
and those he called he also justified;
and those he justified he also glorified.

Gospel

[Mt 13:44-52 or 13:44-46](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.

When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea,
which collects fish of every kind.

When it is full they haul it ashore
and sit down to put what is good into buckets.

What is bad they throw away.

Thus it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous
and throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

“Do you understand all these things?”

They answered, “Yes.”

And he replied,

“Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven
is like the head of a household

who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”

or

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