



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

October 10, 2021

The Wisdom of the Cross

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Book of Wisdom is attributed to King Solomon, son of David. Solomon asked God for the gift of wisdom rather than longevity or power. To be a good ruler, he desired to know the truth, to have depth and understanding. He knew this was the strongest foundation a ruler could have. Even if he were a king appointed by God, he would one day have to render an account at his own judgment.

The Roman Emperor Constantine also learned this truth. Giulano Romano's fresco in the Vatican, *The Vision of the Cross*, is dedicated to a vision of

Constantine's. The historians Eusebius of Caesarea and Lactantius tell us of how—ahead of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in which Constantine would attack Maxentius to reunite the empire under himself—he had a vision of a cross in the heavens and heard these words: "In this sign, you will conquer."

Constantine was not a Christian, yet he had this sign emblazoned on the breastplates and shields of his soldiers. They won that battle against great odds. Archeologists have uncovered shields, helmets, breastplates, and coins with this symbol, attesting to the truth of his vision.

Eventually Constantine, the most powerful figure in the world, was baptized a Catholic and built several large churches in Rome, including St. Peter's Basilica. This was not to his political advantage, and the risk he took in promoting the faith showed the sincerity of his conversion. He understood the wisdom of the cross, and it was worth selling all to follow Jesus and receive the treasure of eternal life. +

Constantine had a vision of a cross in the sky before a battle. Later, he became a Catholic.

A Word from Pope Francis

In Jesus' final...invitation, there is no proposal of poverty, but of true richness....Being able to choose between an original and a copy, who would choose the copy? ...The challenge [is] finding life's original, not the copy. Jesus does not offer surrogates, but true life, love, richness!

General audience, June 13, 2018



Sunday Readings

Wisdom 7:7-11

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.

Hebrews 4:12-13

The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword.

Mark 10:17-30 or 10:17-27

[Jesus said,] "Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I give more credence to fads or feel-good philosophies than to the truth revealed by Jesus?
- Do I seek real wisdom by reading Scripture and pondering God's truths?

Timeless, Timely

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

A little-known work by St. Alphonsus Liguori, but arguably one of his greatest, is *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*. It has been a long time since I read it from cover to cover. In fact, I had forgotten about it until recently. I remembered it while reading Pope Francis' 2016 post-synod apostolic exhortation on marriage and the family, *The Joy of Love*, also known as *Amoris Laetitia*. Both works use a similar structure based on St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, following his statements about love and calling the reader to experience the love of God in a profound way.

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ was written in a very different time (the eighteenth century), by one man, and as a tool for pastoral ministry among the poor in the hill country outside of Naples, Italy. *Amoris Laetitia* is the product of worldwide consultation, two sessions of a synod, and Pope Francis' desire that the Church be more compassionate and inclusive. These obvious differences in no way keep the two works from complementing each other in ways that could prove helpful to the reader. Here are some examples:

The Practice focuses on the individual, loved by God and invited to respond in love to God. *The Joy of Love* focuses on community, God's love revealed through the gift of marriage and family. Marriages and families are only as good and holy as the individuals who make them up.

The Practice offers a program for



individual spiritual growth that can certainly benefit spouses and families. *The Practice* is foundational and practical in its approach, presenting the underpinnings of good conscience formation and faithful discipleship lived in response to God's love revealed through the paschal mystery. It discusses key practices like prayer and discernment that are helpful for making good moral choices in general and which can easily be applied to help married couples and families deal with the problems and pressures weighing on them today, as discussed in *Amoris Laetitia*.

The Joy of Love spends much time describing the joys and sorrows of human love. *The Practice* emphasizes divine love as the remedy for human

suffering sometimes brought about by the imperfections and failures of human love. *The Joy of Love* describes well the complexity of marriage and family life, and the temptations families experience because of cultures and societies that are "post-Christian." *The Practice* offers spiritual direction for those who are struggling with temptations and looking to be freed of them.

How necessary it is that contemporary Church documents be read in conjunction with the works of the great spiritual writers of our Tradition. The spiritual wisdom of the saints is timeless, always fresh, always timely. Saint Alphonsus has much to contribute to the Church of today, a spirituality that has been proven accessible, practical, and effective in helping people experience the love of the Redeemer. +

*The writings of
St. Alphonsus and
Pope Francis are
complementary.*


PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your gentle reminders of what is important in life. Help me to let go of anything that blocks the flow of love from my heart to the hearts of my sisters and brothers.

From Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 11–16

Monday, Weekday: Rom 1:1–7 / Lk 11:29–32

Tuesday, Weekday: Rom 1:16–25 / Lk 11:37–41

Wednesday, Weekday: Rom 2:1–11 / Lk 11:42–46

Thursday, Weekday: Rom 3:21–30 / Lk 11:47–54

Friday, St. Teresa of Jesus:

Rom 4:1–8 / Lk 12:1–7

Saturday, Weekday:

Rom 4:13, 16–18 / Lk 12:8–12

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