

Fr. Simon Sez

“Who can know God’s counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?” Our first reading from the Book of Wisdom (9:13-18b) helps us realize how difficult it is to know God’s will in our lives. After my personal conversion to Christ, I began to seriously try to figure out how to come to know God’s will for me in my life. I asked a priest about this. He said that it has to be discerned and that it is unique to each individual. As far as I could remember, this is the first time I had even heard of the word “discernment,” even though I was about twenty-three years old at the time. It took me about four years to learn about discernment, how it works, and how to apply it in my life.

My first year in the seminary, I had a fundamental moral theology class. To my surprise, our professor required all of us to write a paper on discernment. Apparently, he considered this to be a very important topic. If it is so important, then why did I not hear of it until I was twenty-three years old? I received a good grade on my paper, so I decided to provide you with a copy of it as an insert to this week’s bulletin. It is an important enough topic for every Christian to learn about it and to implement it in their lives since discernment is essentially Christian decision making. Every Christian should learn about it starting at the age of reason. This is when are given the aptitude to know God’s counsel or to conceive what the Lord intends.

The process of discernment includes doing the prerequisites (the person to have the desire, ability, and determination to do only God’s will), knowing clearly what you want to decide, gather information, obtain counsel, reflect on the pros and cons of each possible alternative, bring this to prayer which includes imagining yourself taking that action or in that position to see if it seems to fit you, make a decision, live with the decision as you seek confirmation, act on the decision if you receive the confirmation or at least not the objection of legitimate authority and see if God blesses it. Yes, this is a human process but it is the way in which God communicates to the individual. As our first reading concluded, “Or who ever knew your counsel, except you had given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high? And thus, were the paths of those on earth made straight.”

SOUTH DAKOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

The Catholic Bishops of South Dakota issued a statement on August 22, 2022 (Memorial of the Queenship of Mary) in Opposition to Marijuana Legalization. To read the statement go to our diocese website sfcatholic.org, select Office of the Bishop and SD Catholic Conference, and scroll down to the bottom of the page or use the direct link below: <https://sdcatholicconference.org/bishops-statement-marijuana-legalization/>.



Counting the Cost: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



Wisdom 9:13–18

Psalms 90:3–6, 12–17

Philemon 1:9–10, 12–17

Luke 14:25–33

Like a king making ready for battle or a contractor about to build a tower, we have to count the cost as we set out to follow Jesus.

Our Lord today is telling us up front the sacrifice it will take. His words aren’t addressed to His chosen few, the Twelve, but rather to the “great crowds”—to anyone, to whoever wishes to be His disciple.

That only makes His call all the more stark and uncompromising. We are to “hate” our old lives, to renounce all the earthly things we rely upon, to choose Him above every person and possession. Again He tells us that the things we have—even our family ties and obligations—can become an excuse, an obstacle that keeps us from giving ourselves completely to Him (see Luke 9:23–26, 57–62).

Jesus brings us the saving wisdom we are promised in today’s First Reading. He is that saving Wisdom.

Weighed down by many earthly concerns, the burdens of our body and its needs, we could never see beyond the things of this world; we could never detect God’s heavenly design and intention. So in His mercy He sent us His Spirit, His Wisdom from on high, to make straight our path to Him.

Jesus Himself paid the price to free us from the sentence imposed on Adam, which we recall in today’s Psalm (see Genesis 2:7; 2:19). No more will the work of our hands be an affliction; no more are we destined to turn back to dust.

Like Onesimus in today’s Epistle, we have been redeemed. We have been given a new family and a new inheritance, made children of the Father, brothers and sisters in the Lord.

We are free now to come after Him, to serve Him—no longer slaves to the ties of our past lives. In Christ, all our yesterdays have passed. We live in what the Psalm today beautifully describes as the daybreak, ready to be filled with His kindness. For He has given us wisdom of heart and taught us to number our days aright.

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