

Wisdom and Proposal One – Sunday, October 13, 2024

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Today's first reading is about wisdom or prudence. The author says that he prayed and pleaded for wisdom. It was desired more than anything else. It was valued more than "scepter and throne, riches, and priceless gems. She is seen as more important than health and good looks and anything in comparison to her was seen as nothing or of little worth. "All gold in view of her is a little sand, and before her, silver is to be accounted mire ... In contrast to this, "...all good things come together in her company and countless riches in her hands."

As Bishop Barron indicates prudence is called the queen of the virtues because it is the capacity to be in control of one's innermost self and be able to live with a practical wisdom in dealing with the outside world. How we need this today, dealing with all of the challenges and struggles of ordinary life, its demands and stresses, our relationships, and that is going on in the world today.

No wonder the writer of the Book of Wisdom pleaded for this reality above all others. And this strong calling out and crying out for wisdom is repeated with great intensity with so many in many other books of the Bible, including the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, the Song of Songs, The Book of Job, and the Psalms. In the New Testament Jesus tells numerous parables of those who are foolish in comparison to His followers who are to be wise, filled with wisdom and acting accordingly. St. Paul highlights that Wisdom belongs to God when he refers to the Wisdom of God in comparison to the foolishness of this world, and in answer to the simple question of how we are to get wisdom, we are encouraged to ask for it in the Letter of James: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God Who gives to all generously" (James 1:5). Wisdom obviously comes from God, and it is one of the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit! Today's Psalm cries out to God with this all this in mind as we try to make good decisions as we live in the everyday world: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart... May the gracious care of the Lord God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!"

Wisdom is always needed in our lives from day-to-day and even in moment-to-moment decisions. However, it is especially needed when the problems are challenging and could have significant consequences. Bishop Barron when referring to prudence or wisdom states, "It is that sure touch, that moral instinct that renders one capable of making the right decision under pressure and in the face of complex circumstances. It is a sort of accumulated theoretical and practical wisdom, a know-how that is for the most part instinctual, in the bones." In other words, it becomes like an x-ray vision that is able to penetrate through deceptive appearances and then act accordingly.

We will need the x-ray vision of wisdom as we go to the polls to vote in New York State this year because of a huge attempt at a deception that is being laid before us and that we must make a decision about... Anyone voting in New York State will be asked to vote on what is called Proposal One. It is the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). It will amend the New York State Constitution. The New York State Constitution supersedes any and all state laws, statutes, and regulations. On the surface it will sound like something we should have no problems with. It will say that no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws of this state for any reason.

However, when it lists all the reasons why no one should be denied equal protection of the law... Among them are sex, gender identity and expression, and pregnancy outcomes and reproductive healthcare and autonomy... And then in addition to these and other reasons it adds the category of age, which means anyone of any age has a right to make these life-changing decisions whether they are a child or an adult... Once again, at first glance it seems like there would be no problem, but wisdom tells us otherwise!

Voting "Yes" for Proposal One, means that the New York State government could have more authority than parents in making medical and other important decisions for their children... And the question is, should children who are minors have the right to have chemicals put into them and to have irreversible surgical and non-surgical transgender procedures without parental notice or approval? Does that seem wise? Should schools not disclose to parents that their children may be struggling with their sexual identity or are becoming transgender?

“Best Practices” statements from the New York State Department of Education say they should. Referring to gender identity I quote: “Students may begin their transition at school without parent/guardian knowledge.”

And what about boys playing on girls only sports teams? ... Should we erase girls’ sports and allow biological males to compete against biological females in school sports without restrictions? Does that seem wise, fair, just?

This is the only ballot initiative in the country to include transgender rights for minors. If Proposal One passes, it will give courts the authority to uphold policies that allow children to change their gender identity as early as pre-kindergarten, without the knowledge or consent of their mothers, fathers, or legal guardians. This is unfathomable... Countries once supportive of these transgender treatments and procedures are going in the opposite direction due to the overwhelming lack of scientific evidence of the long-term effects of these treatments and the backlash of those who have experienced such negative consequences.

Without great care and labor-intensive counseling with those considering such treatments, the ability to protect individuals from long term negative mental and other psychological effects evaporates. It goes against any reasonable logic or prudence or wisdom, and it does not seem wise at all! And as far as minors go, we don’t need more scientific research to tell us that children need parents. It’s obvious. Nevertheless, Proposal One would deny that... Taking away its deceptive label, “The Equal Rights Amendment”, it should be much more truthfully called “The Parental Replacement Act”!

It seems foolish and inconceivable not to have age restrictions for such life-changing things! We have always understood and operated from the perspective that age restrictions make sense. We set minimum ages to drive, to smoke, drink or consent to sexual activity for the protection of vulnerable youth. Why would we remove restrictions based on age to children regarding gender treatments and surgeries, as well as abortion and the ‘right to die’ with no parental consent?

Beyond all this, Proposal One could legalize on demand late-term abortion or abortion without restrictions, including for minors, during the second and third trimester of pregnancy right up to the time of birth - also without parental consent. Currently, New York State has one of the most extreme abortion laws not only in our country, but in the world. Check it out... Proposal One would not only reinforce this, but would enshrine this as a constitutional right, meaning it would make it nearly impossible to pass even the most limited restrictions to protect women and children in the future, even if the minds of New Yorkers were to change regarding abortion.

This also could potentially undermine the religious liberty and freedom of individuals, charitable institutions, and churches who in good conscience do not believe in these made up so called “rights”, with the result that protections for these individuals, organizations, and churches could be eroded – meaning that a lot of people would no longer be able to be served by us...

We have information on this as you leave Mass today. It is provided by the Coalition to Protect Kids-NY. I hope you will take the information and share it with others at home, in your family, at work, in your neighborhood, and online with your social media contacts. Most people do not know what this truly entails, and if they did, I believe that a majority of people would oppose it... Please share this with all you can, and vote “No” on Proposal One.

Bishop Barron concludes his comments on prudence or wisdom by saying of prudence or wisdom, “When placed in the Christian context, therefore, it is a feel for how Jesus would react, how He would think, how He would move in a particular situation. It is tantamount to having one’s soul gathered around Christ as its center, so that all one’s actions are informed by Jesus and His way of being in the world. Christian prudence or wisdom comes from apprenticing to Christ – that is to say, moving with him watching at close quarters how He lives and moves and gestures.”

Based on that, how do you think Jesus would react, think, and feel in reference to Proposal One? ... I hope that you and I are apprenticed enough by Him to know!