

## Week 23 – Ordinary Time – September 5, 2010

I know this kid in Kansas City who got caught shoplifting. He should know better. He's from an outstanding family – wonderful parents and grandparents. It was hard to figure out why he decided to steal CDs of some of his favorite music. He was arrested. They called his parents. He was embarrassed. He disappointed all the role models he admired. But the criticism that probably stung the worst came from his younger brother, who said, quite simply, "You are so stupid." Well, he was.

Everybody makes some bad choices in life, but everybody can develop the wisdom to make good choices. Some people are clever, but they misuse their wisdom. They set their hearts on what they think will bring them happiness. But if obstacles block their way, like my young friend in the city, they look for ways to get around the rules in order to get what they want. In trying to get something they think will make them happy, they destroy their character. True happiness comes not just from the goal, but from the way we get there. Some people are smart enough to get what they want, but they don't always use the right kind of wisdom.

Today's first reading comes from the Book of Wisdom, one of the last books to be written for the Old Testament. Traditionally, people say that Solomon was the author, but probably not. Solomon was an excellent example of a wise man, but this book was probably written hundreds of years after he died. Still, because it collected a lot of the wisdom of the day, some people assumed only Solomon could have come up with it.

The section we hear today is from a prayer for wisdom. It presumes that God has a wisdom that we don't, and the only way we will get it is to ask God to share it. The author writes, "scarce do we guess the things on earth, and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;" so "when things are in heaven, who can search them out?" We can only know the right thing to do if God gives us that wisdom.

When Jesus went looking for disciples, he wanted people who knew how to plan for what they needed and to do without whatever they didn't, people who were willing to learn true wisdom from him. The problem is not that God doesn't share wisdom, but that people don't seek it. For us to be good disciples, we need to open our minds and hearts to the advice that God wants to give. We all want to do what God wants us to, but we do not always make the effort to learn what that is. With that wisdom comes true happiness.

As the school year gets underway in earnest, a lot of learning is going on right now. But there's a deeper learning every student needs to have, and it's a learning that those of us who are no longer in school still seek out every day. What is the right choice? Am I making this decision because I think it will make me happy, or because I think it will make God happy? What would God have me do? What is true wisdom here?