

32A 2017 SML
WIS 6:12-16

When you come face to face with one of those “mind blowing” life experiences, you come face to face with Wisdom personified.

The Old Testament is divided into three main sections, the five books of the Law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, known as the Pentateuch in Greek, the Torah in Hebrew, the Books of the Prophets, and the Other Writings. Contained in the Other Writings are the seven books of Wisdom Literature: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Sirach and Wisdom. The writers of these seven books learned from human experience in an attempt to understand and solve the problems of life:

1. the suffering of the innocent in Job
2. asking for God’s help in the Psalms
3. good verses evil in Proverbs
4. the search for happiness in Ecclesiastes
5. marriage in the Song of Songs
6. faith in Sirach
7. and God’s justice in Wisdom.

Those who cultivated Wisdom were sages: men of great letters, scribes, skilled in the affairs of government, counselors and rulers, instructors of the people, especially instructors of youth, guides of people in time of crisis, those who pursued unity, peace and good will.

Wisdom writers thought it would be easier to understand Wisdom if Wisdom was personified, so the Wisdom writers created the imaginary “Lady Wisdom,” as evidenced by this evening’s (morning’s) first reading:

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her.

Since the Wisdom writers created an imaginary “Lady Wisdom,” I can only think they never came face to face with one of those “mind blowing” life experiences, because it is in the midst of those life experiences you come face to face with Wisdom personified.

One of my best priest friends is Father Curt Delarm. Curt and I attended Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary together and as any friendship grows, you learn why and how a person is the way he is. Curt’s Dad took off on his Mom when Curt was a small boy, leaving his Mom to raise 5 children with no money

and no job skills. Curt's Mother is an alcoholic, cause or effect of her breakup with Curt's Dad, I do not know. Curt told me he never had it easy. He was no good at sports. He had to earn every point on every test he ever took. Carrying a lot of childhood baggage, I admired him and supported him for asking his Bishop for a leave of absence to address the baggage and get his head right through extensive psycho-therapy. In Curt's words, he "finally felt he had his act together," and in July of 1997, he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease. This merciless disease usually takes its victims within five years; Curt died from Lou Gehrig's after eight. Because Curt was totally helpless, he spent hours and hours each day praying and thinking. Curt was not good at sports. Curt was not the best student, but Curt could write his own "Tuesdays With Maurie." When I visited with Curt, I hung on every word that came from his mouth, because his take on life was filled with wisdom. Father Curt Delarm is Wisdom personified.

As I've preached before, my brother and his wife lost their three year old son in a fatal car accident that claimed the lives of two others. And our family came face to face with one of those "mind blowing" life experiences. You know someday you will bury your parents. Perhaps someday you will bury your spouse.

But you never, never expect to bury a child. The pain of burying a child cannot be put into words. There is no name for a parent who buries a child. When you bury your parents, you become an orphan. When you bury your spouse, you become a widow or a widower. But there is not name for a parent who buries a child because the pain is unspeakable.

While much of that sad, sad, week when my family buried Geoff is a blur, some of that week will remain very clear in my mind regarding my mother, who displayed her resolute faith most memorably on the night of the accident.

The Swifts were a puddle of tears, but as the doctor caring for Geoffrey came out to deliver his awful prognosis, my Mother had the presence of mind, the strength of character, the wisdom, to stand up, and literally stood in front of my brother Rob as if to take the doctors words for her son like a bullet, visibly wincing as she tried to shield Rob from its devastating blow.

The doctors declared my nephew, brain dead, that the impact of the accident was so severe, that every neuron was separated from every nerve in Geoff's brain, and there was absolutely no chance for his survival. Later that night, I watched my Mother get up and go to my brother Rob and then to my

brother Tim, and then to my sister Joanne, and then to my Father, and then to me, and she told each one of us what we needed to hear, and what she said to each of us was completely different because she knew what each of us needed to hear.

What equipped my Mother her presence of mind was the wisdom she had gained after 45 years of motherhood through sickness, unemployment, alcoholism and now the death of a grandson. My mother Nancy Swift is Wisdom Personified.

When you come face to face with one of those mind blowing life experiences, I have been blest to come face to face with Wisdom personified.