

DECEMBER 30, 2025 FATHER BRANDEN GORDON

“The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him.”

The child Jesus was filled with wisdom. These words from today's Gospel point to an even deeper truth. One that's stated explicitly in 1 Corinthians, chapter one, verse 24. That Jesus is not just "filled with wisdom," but that he is wisdom itself.

And this same wisdom was there with the Father, when he established the heavens, shaped the mountains, and assigned to the sea its limit. This very same wisdom became flesh, and dwelt among us, for a time, as a little child.

And this wisdom is offered to us as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The seven gifts of the Spirit empower us to cope with and overcome the evil and suffering that confront us in this fallen world. Wisdom is the greatest of the seven gifts, which is why it's listed first.

Wisdom is seeing people and things as God sees them. In other words, a wise person sees people and things from God's perspective. Knowledge has more to do with knowing facts. This is the focus of education. But wisdom, seeing people and things as God sees them, is even more important than just knowing facts.

There's a beautiful folk tale that illustrates the meaning of wisdom, and so I'll share it with you today.

Once upon a time, on a faraway tropical island, there was a chief who had four sons. He had imparted much knowledge on them: how to read and how to write, how to add and subtract, how to hunt and fish. But

now that his sons were getting a bit older, the chief knew that knowledge was not enough, that he also had to teach them wisdom.

So he sent each of his sons on a quest, to go and look at a pear tree that was in a land far to the north of their island. He sent his first son in the winter, his second in the spring, his third in the summer, and his fourth in the fall.

Once they all had completed this quest he called them together to describe what they had seen. The first son said that the tree was barren and lifeless, and that its branches were covered with snow. The second son disagreed, saying that it was covered with the most beautiful and fragrant blossoms that he had ever seen and smelled.

The third son said that he saw no blossoms at all, but rather a tree covered with verdant green leaves, that were rustling gently in the summer breeze. And that hanging amidst the leaves was a multitude of pears, which he imagined in a few weeks would be ripe for the picking.

As for the fourth son, he said that the tree was clothed not in green leaves, but rather in reddish orange leaves, which gave it a fiery appearance.

While watching his sons argue about the tree gave the chief no little amusement, after a few minutes however he interrupted their debate and he told them that they were all correct. He explained to them that each one of them had only seen the tree in one season of its life.

He then explained to them that just as you cannot judge a tree by its appearance in only one season, so you should not judge any person or situation until you know the entire picture. And even then, not harshly, but with mercy and kindness.

This is wisdom. To see people and things as God sees them. To see the big picture, rather than just one or other aspect, of a person, or of a situation.

Wisdom opens our eyes to the fingerprints that God has left all over creation. In the beauty of nature, in the extreme fine tuning of the physical laws, which continue to baffle scientists to this day. And in those transcendental concepts, which only angels and we humans can understand. Concepts like love and truth, justice and mercy, beauty and goodness.

For the truly wise, the totality of creation is one giant Bethlehem star that leads the mind on an interior journey to God.

Prayer is not so much about changing the world as it is about changing ourselves. And so, if you're ever unsure of what to ask for in prayer, if you're ever stuck, and just trying to find the words to say to God, then you could always ask for wisdom.

"For wisdom," as scripture says, "is more precious than gemstones, and no treasure can compare with it." Wisdom is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and those who cultivate it find true happiness.