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Dear Oblates and Friends of Portsmouth,

Solomon has become a synonym for being the wisest man in the Bible, and because of his reputation the so-called *Wisdom Books* of the Old Testament are all ascribed to him: *Proverbs*, *Wisdom*, *Sirach*, *Ecclesiastes*. Despite their authorship being assigned to Solomon, they were all written many centuries after his demise in c.931 B.C., when Greek thought influenced much of the literature of its own period. At the outset of his reign, Solomon was acutely aware of his youth and inexperience, humbly praying in a vision or dream that God would grant him the ability to judge between right and wrong in the governance of his kingdom. So pleased was Yahweh with this attitude that he saw to it that the newly acclaimed king of the Jewish people should receive all that a king would normally desire: longevity, wealth, a stable and prosperous kingdom in addition to the greatest gift of all, the wisdom to be a righteous man, walking in the path of virtue and justice. The **Book of Ecclesiastes** begins and ends with the famous slogan, *Vanitas vanitatem, omnia est vanitas*; (Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.) Compared to the wisdom of the Almighty, man's degree of wisdom is as nothing, and centuries after the time of Solomon, Thomas Aquinas, the greatest mind of the Middle Ages, came to much the same conclusion, when despite having devoted his life to theology and incorporating the collective thought of the greatest pagan and Christian philosophers into his **Summa Theologica**, he realized that all was just so much straw compared to what can be truly known of God and His ways. Far from discouraging the pursuit of Truth and learning, however, Thomas insisted that God so transcends our order that He can never be comprehended, that his ways must remain mysterious, and that we must fall back on faith to grasp the unintelligible. Our God is a hidden God, but we can see his hand in the order which He has imposed on His creation. In the

Book of Ecclesiastes we can find the oft-quoted passage which sums up this order:

***For everything there is a season, and time for every matter under heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up;  
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.***

We are part of this order which God has imposed on his creation, and when we fulfill what each one of us uniquely fitted for, we are in harmony with what He intends for us. The true wisdom is not in the amount of knowledge we can accumulate in our lifespan, but rather in the degree to which we can grasp what our role on earth is and then realize it with His help. The world and what it contains is only vain when it is divorced from its creator. We only come to the realization of its *vanity*, its emptiness, when we pursue it for its own sake, and not as a means to realizing our own individual destinies. On one occasion when this question came up, Jesus epitomized our aim in life when He taught: ***Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all things shall be added to you.*** This is the wisdom that Solomon grasped from the start, and the result was that he was given all that a might king would want. We, in our humbler state, are asked to pursue the same goal: to seek God and the Truth embodied in His Son, who is the Word of God, and our reward will be beyond anything the world can give. In this sense, we are far more privileged than Solomon, for in the words of the author of THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, Solomon built a temple to house the Covenant, the tablets of the Law which Moses inscribed. We are, each one of us, a temple in which God] Himself comes to dwell every time we partake of the Sacrament.

Among the Books of the Old Testament are the group linked together as the ***Wisdom*** literature, attributed for literary purposes to the king of Israel most famed for his reputation for being the wisest ruler of his age. In fact, this section of the Old Testament was written centuries after Solomon's death in about 931 B.C. after a long, peaceable and prosperous reign. He is best remembered for building the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem that his father David had wanted to construct but was dissuaded by Yahweh, the state of the kingdom not yet ready for such a grandiose enterprise. Solomon is the word in

Hebrew meaning *peaceable*, and this is part of the secret for the high renown he shares with David his father, whose name in Hebrew stands for *hero* or *commander*, again a name which characterizes him, in his role as founder of the kingdom and consolidating it by a series of wars that left his treasury unable to finance any of the projects undertaken by Solomon: the city walls, the royal palace and the Temple, which gave him the prestige to assume leadership over the neighboring kingdoms, confirmed in his marital policy which brought him the closest of alliances in his acquisition of 700 wives and 300 concubines, a harem on a grand scale even in ancient times. These, however, inevitably led to his toleration and embrace of the pagan gods that had never sullied the reign of David, breaking the covenant with Yahweh and leading to the punishment of Solomon for idolatry through the division of his kingdom following his death. David's kingdom continued the solemn promise that it would last *forever* in his successors, fulfilled in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus, his descendant, the true Son of David and the promised Messiah.



### **MONASTERY NOTES**

To celebrate the centenary of Portsmouth's most gifted artist, a retrospective exhibit of Alfonso Ossorio '34 with a variety of art objects, has been mounted in the McGuire Art Center, to coincide with the Fall Alumni Reunion in September. Many of the works were given to Portsmouth by the Ossorio Foundation in Southampton ten years ago, as one of the three institutions which helped in his artistic formation, the others being Harvard and the Rhode Island School of Design.

Three original Durer woodcut prints have recently been donated to the school as well as a large quantity of scholarly books, and coin and stamp

collections. A suitable memorial will be set up to honor the generosity of the donors.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Annual Auto Show held on the school grounds was observed on Father's Day, under ideal conditions and attracting the largest crowd thus far. Dom Damian gave the Blessing after the solemn erection of the flag from a fire engine while the national anthem was sung.

Conor Bohan, alumnus of the Class of '86, delivered the commencement address speaking on his role in the formation of HELP, the Haitian Education and Leadership Program, of which he is the Founder and Chairman. This year's Class was the largest in the history of the school, and was outstanding in every way, academically, athletically and socially, in the widest sense of that word.

Among the artifacts obtain in a recently family gift to the monastery was a Calvary painting of the Coptic School and dating back at least three centuries. It has been placed in the Linenfold Room, where most of the art work is from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, consisting largely of illuminated manuscripts and calligraphy.

Dom Abbot Matthew Stark has been appointed interim Superior by Dom Richard Yeo, Abbot President, pending a replacement of Dom Caedmon Holmes, who will be absent from the monastery for an indefinite period.

Dom Gregory Havill and Mr. Peter O'Connor led a group of students on the annual trip to Rome to study Sacred Art for a two week period in the early part of June.

Dom Julian and Dom Christopher remain in stable condition at their respective nursing care centers in Newport and Middletown, receiving frequent visitors.

## LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR AUGUST

- 4 Cure d'Ars: St. John Vianney, Priest  
6 TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS  
7 SUNDAY XIX OF THE YEAR  
8 St. Dominic, Religious  
9 St. Edith Stein, Martyr  
10 St. Lawrence, Martyr  
11 St. Clare of Assisi, Religious  
14 SUNDAY XX OF THE YEAR  
15 ASSUMPTION OF BLESSED VIRGIN  
20 St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Religious  
21 SUNDAY XXI OF THE YEAR  
23 St. Rose of Lima  
24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle  
25 St. Louis of France, King  
27 St. Monica, Mother of Augustine  
28 SUNDAY XXII OF THE YEAR  
29 Passion of John the Baptist  
30 St. Margaret Clitherow, Anne Linne,  
Margaret Ward, Martyrs



Raphael: *The Madonna of the Chair*  
For feast of the Assumption



Solomon as a Teacher conducting a class on the Book of Proverbs.