

July, 26 2020 Your Wish Is My Command Homily: Many of us are likely familiar with the enchanting tale of, “Aladdin and His Magic Lamp”. Over the course of generations the story, often adapted for the screen, has been appealing to so many readers and moviegoers. In simple terms, the story is of a young man who comes into possession of a dusty old lamp. One day he inadvertently rubs the lamp and a ghost-like figure, a genie, appears. Relieved that he has been freed from the lamp, the genie grants three wishes to Aladdin. His words are unforgettable: “Your wish is my command”. Aladdin’s three wishes are 1) to be made into a prince, 2) to be saved from drowning, and 3) for the genie to be freed and turned into a human being.

In Sacred scripture, Solomon, the son of King David and his wife Bathsheba, is considered the ideal king and benevolent ruler. Today’s first reading (I Kings 3:5, 7-12) gives us Solomon’s beautiful prayer to God, who appears to him in a dream. God graciously wishes to grant a favor to the young and inexperienced king. “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” (I Kings 3:5) The king does not answer immediately, but ultimately makes the perfect request. He wishes not for personal gain. Nor does he desire a long life or for the Lord to avenge himself on the king’s enemies. He asks only for an understanding, and a listening heart, so that he may be able to distinguish right from wrong. In other words, he wishes for the divine gift of wisdom. The Lord was pleased that Solomon made this request. (I Kings 3:10) To share in God’s wisdom is worth more than any earthly treasure. To govern well for the welfare of the people entrusted to his care requires wisdom. Our modern leaders would be wise to take note of Solomon’s prayer. There are few wise leaders today.

No less than Jesus himself praised Solomon’s wisdom. His words are worth noting. “The queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here.”

Just imagine the Lord asking the same question of us. “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” (I Kings 3:5) What gift above all would you want from God? Obviously, we need guidance. It is on our knees that the question must be addressed to the Almighty. All too often we make the wrong request, and suffer the consequences later in life. The recent cautionary tale of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell serves as an example. Although they both were privileged and enjoyed enormous power and influence their lives took a decidedly ghastly turn. Epstein took his own life in a jail cell and his one-time associate Maxwell, who was recently arrested, will likely end her life in misery. Wealth, power and wisdom do not necessarily go hand in hand.

The saint seldom fails to make the right response to God’s generous offer. St. Thomas Aquinas was once praying before the Blessed Sacrament when God appeared to him. God said, “Thomas, you have written well of me. What would you like as a reward?” Thomas’s reply was unforgettable. “I’ll have nothing except you, O lord”.

Bishop Robert Barron, a contemporary scholar and evangelist, has revealed his interest in the story of Aladdin. If he were ever offered three wishes how would he respond? His answer is praiseworthy. “I’d want faith, hope and charity.”

For us who are Christians, wisdom is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is more precious than gold or silver.

In the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, He implores His disciple to approach the Heavenly Father as beggars. "Ask and it will be given to you". We can be certain of our Lord's just and merciful reply so long as we realize that he gives us only what we need and not so much which we desire.

At the end of the day, let us pray that the words spoken about a revered king may apply to each one of us. "I give you a heart so wise and understanding, that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you." (I Kings 3:12)

Amen!