

The reading from Paul's letter to the Romans we heard a few minutes ago shows us the Apostle in an outburst of enraptured praise to God. Here is St. Paul bursting with a sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of God. "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable His ways!" Citing the prophet Isaiah, Paul reminds us that no one has known the mind of God or been His counselor. Finally, Paul tops it all off with a very key point: that all things are created by God, sustained by God and are ultimately ordered to God. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." That includes us.

The wisdom and knowledge of God are indeed very rich and deep. So rich and deep in fact, that it may even seem audacious of us, to attempt to say any more about it. However, if we set before our minds at least something of what we mean when we speak of divine omniscience and divine wisdom it can indeed bring to light many other very important points in the Gospel concerning our faith and the life of the Church.

When we say that God is omniscient, that He knows all things, we mean, for one thing, that God has never learned anything and cannot learn anything new. We cannot inform God of anything. God never discovers anything. He is never taken by surprise. To suggest otherwise, to say that God is able to receive into His mind knowledge that He did not possess before, and had not possessed from eternity, is to suggest that He is imperfect and therefore less than God Almighty.

God knows all things instantly, effortlessly and from eternity. God never needs to ponder, or weigh matters in His mind. He never wonders, or seeks after information. God knows all matter and all matters, all causes, all relations, all things visible and invisible in heaven and earth, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven and hell, all persons, all thought and all thoughts, every mind, every heart, and every secret. He knows each and every one of us and all there is to know about us. He knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust.

When we speak of the wisdom of God, we invoke the concept of infinitude. God is infinitely wise. Like His knowledge, God's wisdom was not given to Him by another, it did not grow within Him over a span of time. It did not develop. The wisdom of God is as infinite and eternal as God Himself, and it is inseparable from His nature.

When the Holy Scriptures speak of the wisdom of God, there is always a strong moral connotation. God's wisdom is always pure, loving and good. So-called wisdom that is mere shrewdness is a thing that evil men know, and as such it is always treacherous and false.

God's wisdom also is manifested in His ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. God sees the end from the beginning and therefore never needs to guess or imagine. God in His wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward His perfect ends with flawless precision.

Not only are all of God's acts wise, pure and good, but they could not be done better, nor could a better way to do them even be imagined. God in His infinite wisdom works in a way that could never be improved upon by finite creatures. And given His knowledge, God couldn't learn how to do a thing better Himself as He went along. He already knows the best way to proceed.

“O, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable His ways!

Now, in the Gospel reading from Matthew for this morning we have a very well-known passage. Jesus asks his disciples who people are saying that he is. He asks them not because he doesn't already know, but to draw them out for their own good. And they offer the popular guesses: some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And then he asks the disciples who *they* say he is. Who we say Jesus is makes all the difference there could possibly be.

Peter, speaking on behalf of the twelve rightly declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Roman Catholic Church cites the passage after this as a proof text for the papacy. Jesus says, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”

From the beginning, God has been at work creating a people for Himself. God has ordered his creation toward a community of faithful

people that will enjoy His presence for eternity. It began with Abraham. In the book of the prophet Isaiah God says, “Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for when he was but one I called him and I blessed him and made him many”. Listen to what it says about Abraham in the eleventh chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Abraham had a vision of the people of God, built by God upon a certain foundation coming in the future.

The Church, the Body of Christ, is the community of the people of God that Abraham foresaw. It is what Jesus himself began, built, and continues to build and sustain. It is God Himself building a people for Himself, the work He has been doing from the beginning.

The Church did not begin because a few guys were sitting around a campfire one night and suddenly one of them came up with an idea to start a new religion. The Church started because Christ became incarnate, died for the sins of the world, was resurrected from the dead and ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And it is Christ Himself who has made it grow and who has sustained it down through the centuries.

God, in His wisdom, has a plan for His Church. If we believe in Him and obey Him and follow and do what He said, the Church will grow and flourish. If we don't, the Church will suffer.

The God whom Paul praises and glorifies in awe and amazement, whose knowledge and wisdom are infinitely great and deep and whose ways and judgments are inscrutable became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ. The God who, in his perfect wisdom, who sees the end from the beginning, whose works are always wise, pure and good, who with Abraham began creating for Himself a people, became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is He who said, "*I will build My Church.*"

The Church is here to proclaim to a dark and broken world what Peter said in answer to Jesus' question about His identity. The Church is here to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, that there is redemption in His name.

If someone were to ask you why you go to Mass, what would you say? You could come up with several possible answers, like the disciples did when Jesus asked them who people are saying He is. You could say, "because my spouse makes me go." Or you could say, "because that's what we've always done." Or, like Peter's right answer, your answer could be something like this: "I go to Mass because that is where I meet Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. That is where my Redeemer lives and that is where I receive His Body and Blood in which I have salvation."

Maybe you could even say it with some of that excitement, that sense of awe and wonder like we heard from Paul.

Jesus said to Peter, “upon this rock *I* will build *my* Church.” We are His people. It is He who made us and not we ourselves. That tells us not only who we are, but *whose* we are.

We are the Church that Jesus built and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Amen.