

CHRISTMAS 2
Sirach 24:1-4;8-12
Eph 1:3-14
Jn1:1-18

If it is true that common sense is not that that common, I suspect wisdom is also in short supply. Wisdom is the focus of today's readings and in the Old Testament wisdom is said to be the Word of God. In our first reading, wisdom finds a resting place on earth among the people of Israel. Wisdom protects and guides God's people along the right path. We call this guidance, grace, and St Paul tells us that God lavishes this on us so we are able to discern what Jesus has revealed to us. Jesus is God's word and was born into God's new people, the Christian Church.

To understand this, let us use an image of God's dance in which love is the creative force of life. Love really does make the world go round! In this dance of life there are parts for all of us. We probably don't know what our contribution to this dance is initially so we have to learn what it is. We learn from the principal dancer who is our teacher. We might begin thinking we have two left feet, but that doesn't matter. There are parts for double left-footed dancers. Taking part is what matters.

The principal dancer weaves in and out among the dancers encouraging each one, drawing out the best from all of us. If we keep our eyes on him and listen to him we improve. With persistence we will master more complex steps and eventually be confident enough to invite others to join the dance, dancing alongside them and encouraging them to persevere. We teach them to listen to the music and respond to it no matter how much they might stumble. We might also encourage them to display their own skills and gifts and so enhance the overall beauty of the dance.

The success of this dance depends on the choreographer, principal dancer and the musician. Yet, without the cooperation of the dancers there would be chaos, so those who do work with them receive the favour of the leading trio. We are invited to be students, disciples of the principal dancer. We are to carry the music in our heads, hearts and lives. We must let the dance shape our whole life so that in the end, if we persevere, we will reflect the greatness of our teacher.

In the final scene of the film 'Billy Elliot,' Billy leaps on to the stage at Covent Garden as the Swan, filling not only the stage with his presence, but the whole auditorium. This was only possible because of years of blood, sweat and tears and his willingness to listen to and learn from his teachers.

In today's gospel reading, St John is also looking at those who have stayed on the edge of the dance. Among these there are some who dismiss the dancers as deluded fools. Some love it when the dancers stumble. Others think the principal dancer is a fraud and not as good as some other dancers. There are also those who think the principal dancer is ruining what was already a perfectly good dance, so they discourage people from joining in. Yet

despite all this, the principal dancer carries on encouraging his students, knowing what they are capable of and not pushing them beyond their limit.

I'm sure you have worked out this image by now. The choreographer is the God the Father, the principal dancer is God the Son and the musician is God the Holy Spirit. The Son faithfully interprets the will of his Father and not only responds to the Holy Spirit himself but teaches his dancers to do the same.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is, "Where are we?" Because you are here today you have joined the dance, but how are you doing? Are you still dancing with two left feet, or one and a half-left feet? Are you beginning to hear and respond to the rhythm? Are you consciously doing your best to invite others to join in? This is the dance of God whose Son is his Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, to show us his glory and bear witness to the truth. Are you prepared to persevere with the Lord of the Dance?

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