

## **Wisdom has built her house**

**Wisdom has built her house; she has set her table. “You that are simple, turn in here!” she says. “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”**

**This figure, Wisdom, is one of my favorites from the Old Testament. Wisdom is portrayed as an old woman, who was with God at the time of Creation as a sort of collaborator and playmate. In the poems of Proverbs like the one we heard today, Wisdom walks the streets of the city, calling all who wish to learn. She stands at the gates, beckoning travelers to come to her house. There, she has set a table where all who seek are welcome, and all who hunger for wisdom will be fed.**

**When this poetry originated, it was written for an audience of pilgrims. These were people who spent their lives on the road: traveling back and forth to Jerusalem for annual religious festivals; journeying along dangerous roads in order to sell and trade goods; travelling days and weeks to visit family members in far away places.**

**The maps from this time, and maps from other ancient times of pilgrimage, are unlike any maps we have today. They often look like somebody dipped a string of beads in ink, and then sort of**

**dropped it on a piece of paper. The inky, meandering line that results charted the pilgrim's journey without a corresponding grid system or addresses.**

**Instead, the stopping point for each night would be marked by a splotch, or perhaps a crude drawing of a house. The qualities of each proprietor would be listed - makes good bread; clean barn - and a tired and hungry person could expect to stop there for a night on the way. The thing about the map was, in order to get to the second place on the map, you had to ask at the first stopping-point. 'How do I get to the house that offers good bread?' 'Which road will take me to the next inn?' And each night, travelers would find directions for their next day's journey, often at a table full of other travelers.**

**And so the map would grow, as pilgrims would share the locations of good places to turn in, places to rest for the night.**

**Our maps today have come a long way from the inky, splotchy lines of those ancient pilgrims. I can easily spend (or waste) an hour exploring Google Maps online. Google Maps, which I'm sure many of you have used, is the paragon of the modern map, and can be explored through normal view; much like an atlas; or, with a click of a button, you can look through satellite view, which is its truly unique feature. Wearing pajamas at home, you can take a birds-eye view of New York City or the beach in Rio de Janeiro, zooming**

**in close enough to see individual people and what they are up to. I spent an hour the other day trying to locate the house where I lived in Havana, Cuba for four months as a study-abroad student in 2004.**

**Flying, in a sense, over the streets of Havana, in search of a specific address at two right-angled cross-streets, I was struck by the other places I found that I had forgotten from that year. There was a bakery, Pan de Paris, where I ate almost daily with friends; the university building where I learned about history and culture from my Cuban professors; and the seawall where I would often sit at night, watching and learning from the passers-by.**

**These were my places of wisdom, my blotchy spots on the inky string of my journey. These were the places where that the grid-map, the ultra-accurate satellite view, failed. What sort of a map would it take to mark out the houses of wisdom along our respective journeys? Where is it that you have found wisdom, where you have turned in, hungry, only to find the bread of understanding?**

**I think it's safe to say that, in our culture, we tend to value smartness over wisdom, and breadth of knowledge over depth of understanding. With resources like Wikipedia, we have become knowledge tourists, able to find any fact as quickly as we can activate our Blackberries. With this gain of information, however,**

**comes the loss of the history and wisdom attached to those facts – and we begin to forget that it is in long relationships and frequent contact that we gain deep knowledge, or wisdom.**

**These places are not always mystical huts in the woods, or great monasteries either. Wisdom often comes in the most humble of forms. My mom, for example, comes back every Christmas to the same set of movies. As we watch Christmas Vacation, A Christmas Story, and It's a Wonderful Life, I know that she finds meaning in these movies every time we revisit them, and I have come to, also.**

**Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. She calls from the highest places in the town, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed."**

**I try not to draw parallels between the Eucharistic table and our dinner tables at home too frequently, but in this case I think it's appropriate. A research study recently showed that kids who eat dinner frequently with their families tend to be stronger kids – better adjusted emotionally to handle the world around them. My guess is because our dinner tables – any time families gather together, really – are sources of deep wisdom for all of us. As we gather together, we share stories, we learn from one another, we pray for each other.**

**Both the dinner table and the Eucharistic table are sources of deep**

**wisdom, to which we return frequently. This week, so many changes are happening in our families: five-year-olds are going off to kindergarten for the first time; 18-year-olds are heading to college; schedules are impossibly tight. In times that forever seem to be changing, let's not forget to breathe, to turn in, and to sit together for awhile. May we seek out and hang onto those sources of deep wisdom which we already know.**

**Amen.**