



The Danger of Dysrationality

Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A
July 9, 2017 – Church of the Holy Angels

1. In an article titled, “8 Ways Smart People Act Stupid” author Travis Bradberry writes about people who are book smart, intelligent people but who do really dumb things
 - he quotes the philosopher Voltaire who says, “Common sense is not so common”
 - after decades of research scientists are finally beginning to understand why this happens
 - why rational thinking and intelligence don’t go hand in hand
 - they discovered that smart people are more likely to make mental mistakes when problem solving
 - there are blind spots in the use of logic giving them an overabundance of confidence in their reasoning abilities
 - they’re use to being right and having quick answers that they don’t think things through or realize it when they’re incorrect
 - it’s called a “bias blind spot”
 - people who are great at spotting other people’s mistakes and terrible at recognizing their own
 - we see it reflected in politicians making terrible judgments and saying dumb things,
 - we see billionaires risking their reputations and fortunes by indiscretions
 - and we’ve seen it in church leaders who are intelligent but lack true vision
 - one scientist calls it “dysrationality”
 - when smart people do dumb things, or don’t make an obvious good choice
 - it’s not a bad thing to be smart
 - in fact, it helps you live longer, helps you be effective in leadership, helps you thrive
 - but only when the brain is paired with the heart
 - when decisions are made with perception and fact, wisdom and knowledge
 - and that’s something we can’t always do on our own, we need a higher power, we need the wisdom that comes from God
2. In today’s Gospel we hear Jesus in prayer with the Father
 - he says, “for although you have hidden these things from the clever and the learned, you have revealed them to little ones.”
 - in other words – sometimes God reveals himself in simple ways, ways that are perceived, felt, intuited
3. Throughout his life, Jesus was utterly dependent on divine providence
 - he emphasized this dependence to his disciples before he sent them out to preach in his name

- it wasn't just about prayer – it was about attentiveness to the divine presence at work in the world, and in our lives
 - giving us more than intelligence, giving us wisdom and understanding
 - a person completely dependent on God becomes sensitive to the subtle rhythms of divine action in the world
4. Jesus recognized a similar sensitivity among the poor and simple of his day
 - they knew dependence on God's providence
 - and it sharpened their awareness of God's action in the world
 - these "little ones" recognized Jesus before anyone else did so
 - and Jesus became the source of grace, and strength, and peace they relied on their entire lives
 5. The wise and the learned thought they knew it all
 - Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, were smart people, intelligent
 - they knew the law, the teachings, they could recite the Scriptures
 - but something in their education caused them to lose sight of their dependence on God
 - they thought they had every answer they needed to make their way through life
 - like a climatologist, they could describe a desert but they might not survive in one
 - what was hidden from the wise and the learned, was revealed to the little ones because the eyes of faith, the grace of God gave them and the utter dependence on God for everything
 6. The first part of today's reading also appears in Luke's Gospel
 - but the second part is unique to Matthew
 - the statement is a paradox
 - the yoke symbolizes burden and servitude
 - but Jesus promises a "yoke of rest"
 - Matthew understands that a life dependent on God is a life of true freedom
 - Jesus offers the same yoke he bears, the saving mission he receives from the Father
 - like most yokes, it has two collars – for two oxen to carry the load
 - as the disciples discovered, to take up Jesus' yoke means to give up self-control, individualism and self-importance
 - to realize that in our yokes, Jesus does the heavy lifting
 - Jesus needs our feet to move with his
 - to become children of God, dependent on the Father
 - when we do so, we are more than smart, we are filled with the wisdom of God