

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Feb 12th 2014

Under the surface, today's readings have a lot to say about the gifts or blessings that can potentially come from within. Yes, the first reading focuses largely on material gifts and wealth, and the second reading deals with negative attitudes and actions that can come from within. But underneath it all, there are gifts to be discovered and shared.

While the first reading spends more time talking about the gifts that the queen of Sheba brought to Solomon and his wealth as indicated by the food he served and the palace in which he lived, there is an underlying source for the recognition and material "blessings" – wisdom. I don't want to give the indication that I think we believe in the 21st century that those with great riches are automatically good people who have been shown favor by God, any more than we still believe that sickness or disease are God's way of punishing those who sin.

What I am suggesting, though, is despite the fact that her outward gestures included lavish gift-giving, the queen of Sheba recognized something deeper within Solomon. This was not merely political or economic commerce, but rather gifts flowing from recognition and admiration for the inner gift of wisdom which Solomon possessed and shared.

The gospel, on the other hand, is a cautionary tale against allowing things that defile to come from within – the opposite of gifts and blessings. The gospel lists evil thoughts, theft, murder, greed, and deceit, among others. It doesn't say that these have to come out of us, however; it says that they can come out of us. I think this is the key because it indicates that latent within us are also the blessings of compassion, respect, generosity, and honesty, among many others.

Whether blessings and gifts (or conversely, harm and defilement) come from within us is a choice and a challenge that we must address ourselves, in our own lives. It is about our own self-awareness. One of the things that I most appreciate about the Enneagram personality type system is that every one of the nine personality types is neutral at its base, with both positive and negative ways of growing into and living out your personality type. What is most important is for people to pay attention to the ways that they are living in the world and ask if they are living in a healthy or unhealthy way.

I find both challenge and excitement in knowing that what I share from inside with the world outside is my own responsibility. I think if we seek to share gifts and blessings with the world, even if we aren't showered with great wealth and prestige, we will certainly be recognized as children of God, sharing out of our gratitude the inner gifts God has given us.

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