



SCIENCE + FAITH + WISDOM

SAGI:
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Experiment

CHRONICLE OF THE SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT INSTITUTE



Thematic Issue (Seeking Wisdom)

SAGI: The Greatest Experiment

Seeking Wisdom at the Crossroads of Science, Faith & Truth

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Words of Wisdom: *Wisdom is a gift from God. Here we contemplate wisdom in pursuits of virtuous science, inspirational faith and unwavering truth, to help humanity to do good works for the glory of God.*

WISDOM AS A GIFT FROM GOD

Wisdom is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit given to baptized people alongside understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (1,2). The seven gifts complement the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (2). Whereas the gifts are described as permanent *dispositions* in us to do good works, the fruits are the *effects* of living a good life. These dispositions to do good are called virtues. Thus, wisdom, the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, is moreover an intellectual and moral virtue. For the wise person works towards understanding the first principles (metaphysics) of life, reflecting on and exercising the vocations to love of God and neighbor.

Wisdom not only captivates the human imagination, imparting creative genius, but it also instills spirituality – a sense of seeing more clearly the sacraments or signs of God in life. In fact, Wisdom proper has been personified as the literal breath of the power of God (Wisdom 7: 24-25). Within the Old Testament of the Bible, there are seven “wisdom books”: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, and Sirach. Within these passages we see wisdom described, and we learn some means to gain wisdom as well as promulgate it.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding. (Proverbs 3:13)

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. (Psalm 37:30)

The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor. (Proverbs 15:33)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:10)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2)

By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom. (Proverbs 13:10)

I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. (Ecclesiastes 7:25)

Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance. (Proverbs 1:5)

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. (Proverbs 19:20)

For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. (Proverbs 8:11-12)

This also comes from the Lord of hosts; He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. (Isaiah 28:29)

Complementarily, in the New Testament, we find explicit mentioning of wisdom in the Letters of Saint Paul and the Gospels of the Evangelists. These verses further describe how wisdom comes from the triune God, as requested from the Father, bequeathed through the Holy Spirit, and perfectly manifest in the Person Jesus Christ, who is the "Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6):

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him. (Ephesians 1:17)

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)

And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

For I [Jesus Christ] will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. (Luke 21:15)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Colossians 1:9)

The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17)

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:5-6)

Everyone then who hears these words of mine [Jesus Christ] and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7:24)

Beyond the scriptures, a Doctor of the Church and student of St. Albert the Great, namely St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote extensively on wisdom in his *Summa Theologiae*, describing how wisdom is practical in that it directs human action according to Divine standards. Because human standards are imperfect and often fail, it is essential to pray for wisdom to seek out God.

With enduring wisdom, St. Thomas offers this prayer for students:

***Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, true source of light and fountain of wisdom!
Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness
which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance.
Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory,
method and ease in learning, the lucidity to comprehend,
and abundant grace in expressing myself.
Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress,
and bring it to successful completion.
This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man,
living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever.***

Therefore, we ought to seek wisdom in our day to day lives. We should pray to exercise the gift of wisdom daily in all that we say and do. For wisdom reflects the Divine Life. In this lens, a reflection from the Worldwide Call to Prayer from Cardinal Raymond Burke (<https://novena.cardinalburke.com>) expounds upon wisdom as the most perfect of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

***Embodying all the other gifts, as charity embraces all the other virtues,
Wisdom is the most perfect of the gifts.
Of wisdom it is written "all good things came to me with her,
and innumerable riches through her hands."
It is the gift of Wisdom that strengthens our faith, fortifies hope,
perfects charity and promotes the practice of virtue in the highest degree.
Wisdom enlightens the mind to discern and relish things divine,
in the appreciation of which earthly joys lose their savor,
whilst the Cross of Christ yields a divine sweetness
according to the words of the Savior:
"Take up thy cross and follow me,
for my yoke is sweet and my burden light."***

VIRTUOUS SCIENCE IS EMPOWERED BY WISDOM

The Saint Albert the Great Institute seeks to help scientists recognize and exercise the gift of wisdom in their daily work and public communications. Oftentimes we are presented with complex situations that require the patient discernment that wisdom offers to know the best course of action to take. Scientists should seek wisdom with the intention and persistence to do *virtuous* science, discerning what is not only physiologically good for human life on earth but also spiritually good for cultivating a deeper relationship with God in preparation for the afterlife. Reflecting on the historical achievements within modern life sciences, including developments in technology and medicine, we should always consider their objective impacts on human life as well as the subjective influences that brought them about, including the personal motivations, intentions and expectations of those behind the advancements.

Many individuals throughout history have contributed to humanity's treasure of virtuous science. The mystery of God empowering humanity's natural wisdom to the supernatural gift of wisdom proper can be pondered for people over history who have significantly impacted the world through their scientific work. For some of these individuals, faith in God may have been the driving force cultivating supernatural wisdom to advance human science. Others were likely driven by natural wisdom and a selfless vocation to help humankind. Some individuals to reflect upon include: Aristotle (384-322 BC), Archimedes (c287-c212 BC), Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Andre-Marie

Ampere (1775-1836), Michael Faraday (1791-1867), Louis Braille (1809-1852), Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), Thomas Edison (1847-1931), Giuseppe Mercuri (1850-1914), Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), Marie Curie (1867-1934), Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Georges Lemaître (1894-1966), Stanley Jaki (1924-2009), and Jerome Lejeune (1926-1994). Regardless of their personal motivations, God allowed these scientists, and many others, to bring about good works that build up the economy of salvation, or Divine Economy. For the pursuit of wisdom, especially supernatural wisdom, can only lead to thoughts and actions reflecting truth, goodness, and beauty (3).

Accordingly, we ought to view scientific endeavors as sacrificial works to make manifest the glory of God. The advance of scientific works should not be motivated by financial reward but rather by the opportunity to provide patients with unmet needs medicine to thrive. We must recall that helping those in dire need is a vocation from God to benefit humanity – to love one's neighbor.

For example, recent drug discovery has been focused on life-threatening or debilitating diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular and metabolic disorders, endocrine, neurological and ophthalmic diseases, and pathogenic infections. We now know that many of these systems represent complex pathologies which involve multiple biological mechanisms. A single medicine that modulates only one mechanism may be insufficient to fully treat the illness. This is the challenge of today and it requires multidisciplinary effort and innovative technology to advance novel and superior medicines. There is an opportunity to seek wisdom from initial conceptualization of these studies to clinical trials, ensuring ultimately that the treatment or therapy is safe and specifically effective.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND INVITATION TO SAGI TORCHBEARERS

We hope that this inaugural article for the thematic series on "Seeking Wisdom" motivates future contributions reflecting upon the gift of wisdom that the world presently needs. Wisdom is principally a gift from God that we may earnestly exercise in our thoughts and actions. A subtle comment or deed may be the change that brings peace to troubled hearts and minds. Our temporal acts have eternal consequences. In this spirit of wisdom, we wish to close this article with the following quotations from St. Augustine and St. Albert the Great:

***To wisdom belongs the intellectual apprehension of eternal things;
to knowledge, the rational knowledge of temporal things.***
(Saint Augustine)

***The greater and more persistent your confidence in God,
the more abundantly you will receive all that you ask.***
(Saint Albert the Great)

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. USCCB Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Grace of Baptism, pp. 321-324 (CCC 1262-1274).
2. USCCB Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Gifts and the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, pp. 450-451 (CCC 1830-1832).
3. USCCB Catechism of the Catholic Church, God, "He Who Is," Is Truth and Love, pp. 58-59 (CCC 214-221).