

Homily  
Second Sunday of Advent  
Deacon Rich

Good morning! I'd like to share with you if I could, a long statement that came out of the second reading today from St Paul to the Philippians. "And this is my prayer," he says to the Philippians, "that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge, and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless at the day of Christ." My prayer is that you grow in wisdom.

He didn't say that my prayer is that you grow in holiness. He didn't say that at all. My prayer is that you grow in wisdom and discernment. What was he asking for? Why not pray for holiness? Now, he was addressing this to the Philippians, but the same thing applies to us. My brothers and sisters, think about this. If we grow in wisdom and discernment, what we would hope for, is that when we face decisions as we do every day, and we have the wisdom to figure out the right decision and the wrong decision. Sometimes that's easy. Do I get up at 8, or do I get up at 7:30? But we're not talking about those kinds of decisions.

As we face our trials on a daily basis, are we using wisdom and discernment to determine what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to do? And it's not that easy. We all of us have been there done that. But I would offer that St Paul really got it right. That we can all be holy – it is a process to become holy, and it's a process he's referring to. The decision-making process. How we decide.

Friday, this past Friday, we celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. What a glorious feast if you think about it. Oh, by the way, who are we talking about here? We're talking about Mary, her conception within her mother was without sin. The word immaculate in this case refers to sinlessness. And it wasn't Jesus' conception it was Mary's. Forever, that confuses people. Now that we've got that cleared up,

Mary, a teenager – and now I have to tell you folks, we cannot compare a 17 year old girl today with a 17 year old girl 2000 years ago in Judea. You cannot compare the cultures and the attitudes and the way people think.

But here's Mary, sitting in her room, maybe, no one knows, and this strange dude shows up. And he laid some lines on her that the priests use in the Temple, "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you." And she's starting to get the willies I would imagine. And then he lays the point on her "You will conceive and bear a son."

Now, she had a choice. She could have said, "No way in heck! Just get out of my room!" But instead, she used a level of wisdom, that from a modern perspective, might go way beyond what you would expect from a teenager. She listened through the message. She used wisdom. And she discerned what is the message here.

That's key, folks in our decision making. What will the outcome be? And she said "Yes" Just like you and I have opportunities to say yes or no. And you've heard me say this before, that was the second great decision.

The first one was Eve. She was already holy! She was in the presence of God. You can't be sinful and be in the presence of God. And He only asked her to do one thing. To be obedient. You want to know the sin of Eve? It's disobedience. Apple, who knows? It was disobedience. She had a choice.

We have choices to say yes or no. Paul is asking us to grow, not in holiness, but in wisdom and discernment So as we go about our day, I would ask that you pause whenever you have one of these kinds of decisions, and you ask yourself, is this really what I need to be doing, and what might the outcome be? Because in many of our decisions, we may be fat dumb and happy, while we've left chaos behind us. Family members who are upset. Friends who don't understand "Why did he say it that was?" So, let's be aware of what the outcome might be. And thank Paul that he peeled the onion and said the issue is not holiness, because if we make the right decisions we will get to holiness.