

Fr. Gerard's column 11/19/23

*When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls.*

In today's first reading the Book of Proverbs describes the perfect wife, the dedicated and wise woman. These verses are often chosen to be proclaimed at the funeral mass of a wife and mother. On such an occasion the choice of this passage is reflective of how such qualities were observable in the deceased by her loved ones. I always find the choice of these words to be a tender expression of family love, and it is therefore very consoling.

But who is this woman? Is she a specific person, or an idealized concept? I understand her to be the personification of someone who has manifested perfection in the pursuit of discipleship. Her perfection consists in the fact that she hasn't dedicated her life to superficial and self-centered activities. Specifically, she has learned that "charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting." Instead, she has put her talents to work in the way God intended her to, diligently and intelligently benefiting of everyone around her: her husband, her children, and her society. And as a result, she is happy, and so are those around her.

In biblical terms, this woman can stand for three things:

- A literal wife, who is a model for all Christian women, whether married, single, or consecrated.
- A symbol of a wise human soul, since we are all called to be joined to God as intimately as a spouse is joined to her husband.
- A symbol of wisdom itself, the great virtue that enables us to use our talents for the good of others and thereby attain spiritual maturity.

This worthy wife is given as an admonition to each of us, not just wives and mothers. Unlike the wise woman of this Proverb, who works hard all day putting her God-given talents at the service of those around her, we instead, tend to look for a comfortable path, doing some good, but thinking mostly about how to navigate through life's necessary duties while still achieving some amount of earthly pleasure.

Christ has given us a supernatural knowledge by which we come to know that the world will not last forever, that He will come again to judge the living and the dead, but we don't know when. The passing of a loved one is an opportunity to reflect upon the worthiness with which they inspired us. Their passing reminds us that "charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting," and we are therefore reminded to examine our own pursuit of discipleship perfection. We need to ask ourselves: How do I spend my time? How am I investing my God-given talents? What am I really striving for in life?

May the worthy wife and the anticipated return of the master impel us to adjust the way we live. Let us examine our talents and put them to work in the way God intended, diligently and intelligently benefiting everyone around us. And as a result, find happiness in this life and in the eternal life Christ has prepared for us.

**GRATITUDE AND THANKS** – As we look ahead to the celebration of Thanksgiving weekend, I want to thank all who engaged in giving so that others may be blessed. Thank you to all who contributed the Thanksgiving Blessing Bags and additional food donations that have helped to stock up the pantry. I thank Ann Hedgis, Sister Carol Radosti, and all the volunteers of our Parish Social Ministry program for coordinating and disbursing all of the food donations to those in need.

**THANKSGIVING MASS** – On Thursday at 9:00 a.m. we will celebrate our annual Thanksgiving Day Mass. You are invited to bring a sample of the food you have prepared for your Thanksgiving meal so it may be blessed at Mass. A special table will be placed near the sanctuary where you can place your food to be blessed. Make sure you label your food item so that it is not mistakenly picked up by someone else at the end of the mass.

I also offer my thanks in advance to our Music Director, John Buckel and all the members of our music ministry who are preparing for this special celebration.

Our offertory collection at the Thanksgiving Day Mass will once again be given to a Long Island based organization called Friar Suppliers for their mission in Haiti, which focuses on creating, building, and improving the living conditions of those in desperate need. Their efforts not only provide basic necessities but bring hope and faith through their evangelization programs. [www.friarsuppliers.org](http://www.friarsuppliers.org)

Peace,

