

## Reflection 2 God-given Human Insight

Scripture Ephesians 1:3-23

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.*

*15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (NRSV)*

For this week's reflection we turn to the apostle Paul. In this extensive list of spiritual blessings, it might be easy to overlook the blessings of wisdom, insight, and revelation. Also, we might have uncertain feelings about these gifts. Salvation history, both ancient and modern, is filled with examples of those who claimed divine directive with disastrous results. Also, to some, divine revelation may feel arrogant or an overwhelming responsibility. God-given gifts come with a price. However, in the context of discernment, God-given insight refers to using our human intellect and rational thought within the context of our faith in order to see a more complete picture.

“Discernment, by nature, requires deep listening to the voice of the Spirit—the One we are seeking. We are often tempted to be self-sufficient, proposing our agendas to God, rather than recognizing that mission is God's initiative. We hope to be attentive enough to the Spirit to be able to see and respond to God's movement and invitation already happening around us. Seeking first God's vision is not blind obedience, but eyes-wide-open searching for the One for whom our souls yearn, inviting expression in the details of daily living. We are not

asked to suspend our “thinking minds” but to take them with us into prayer. The invitation is to be humble enough to realize that sometimes our plans are too small, our logic too limited, to be able to grasp the dream of God with and for us.” (Personal and Communal Discernment Guide, 2018, <https://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Discernment-Workbook-62018.pdf>)

## Discussion

- In verse 18, St. Paul refers to the “eyes of the heart”. What does that phrase mean to you? How do you nurture the “eyes of your heart?”
- What experiences have you had with deep listening to the voice of the Spirit? What did that look like or feel like? OR what do you think it might look like or feel like?
- What might be some reasons that we are uncertain about divine insight, revelation, or wisdom given to individuals?
- How would you distinguish between God-given insight and using God’s name to advance a personal agenda?
- What are the essential practices that you or someone else might use to engage your “thinking mind” with the work of the Holy Spirit?
- How will you practice using God-given insight as you participate in the search process?