

Gifts of the Spirit and Symbols for People First Week of Advent Tuesday,
December 3, 2013 8:15 AM **Is 11:1-10; Lk 10:21-24** St. Francis Xavier, priest
(Animal symbols in the Old Testament almost always refer to different kinds of people.)

“Indeed, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it.”

For example, the first reading from **Isaiah, who is prophesying what the Messiah will be like**, and not only the Messiah but **the messianic people, endowed with these qualities of spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel**. Wisdom means seeing the whole picture. Understanding is being able to put things in one’s own words. Counsel is an objectivity to reality; it is an ability to share objectively with another person. It’s sometimes called “right judgment.” It’s really a help when someone is in trouble to have someone with the gift of counsel. One can see things objectively without all of the tumult of emotional coloring. **Knowledge** has to do with personal knowledge of God, not the knowledge that we learned at school, the knowledge that comes from books, the knowledge that comes from other people.

That’s **what Jesus is talking about here**. **“I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things”**—what? personal knowledge—**“from the wise and the learned”**—because they are always looking up things in books and they are always trying to discover things, in a sense, too often, so they have control. That’s what Francis Bacon said is the real motivation of modern science, and he is in many people’s idea the foundation of modern science. The methodology of modern science is to gain control over the world. But this is different. You cannot ever have control over God, but you can have access to God in a personal relationship, and that’s what he is talking about. **“You have revealed them to the childlike.”** You have revealed this knowledge to the childlike. And, of course, he is himself childlike because he is the child of God and he knows the Father in a personal way. And the Father knows him. He is not a man, an ordinary man. **He is actually the Son of God, always was the Son of God, always has known the Father.**

Now **he comes into humanity to share that knowledge with us**. **“And his delight will be the fear of the Lord.”** People, of course, are often ruled by fear, but it’s the wrong kind of fear. It’s fear of evil—it’s fear of evil. That’s a different kind of fear. This is fear of the Lord; it’s not fear of evil. It’s a delight; it’s delight that is the fear of the Lord. It’s the fear

that is better perhaps translated “awe” or “reverence” or “profound respect” or “deep appreciation” for the Lord. That’s his delight.

The result, of course, is a new world. When the messianic age dawns, which means not when the Messiah comes; the Messiah has come, **but the people of the Messiah have not yet taken the Spirit into themselves with power. That will come. And then this world will result.**

When you read about oxen and cobras, **those symbols in the Old Testament almost always refer to different kinds of people.** You have to think what kind of person is an ox? What kind of person is a cobra? Well, there are all these different people, and people don’t get along just the way oxen and cobras don’t get along, just as adders don’t get along with children. There is always something dangerous. That’s also a reference to Noah’s Ark, where all these animals got along. Well, of course, it’s not really about animals; it’s about all these different kinds of people. **They can get along when the Spirit of the Lord is within them.**

So **here a new world is coming in which all these different kinds of people will be for each other.** So the lion—think of what a lion is—a lion is typically the king. The lion is the king. Well, we’ve got kings: powerful people, great man, people of power, even women of power. Well, they will eat hay like the ox. The ox, of course, is the laborer, the peasant. And in this new world they will eat the same. They will share at the same table. And so on, **you can read this for yourself and really get pleasure out of understanding the prophet is so imbued with the hope for the future that he can actually describe it in this very poetic way.**

The Christian Church is called eventually to be this, but before it can be this, **it has to hold it in its hopefulness.** If it gives that up, it is no longer useful to God.