

The Rector's Friday Reflection

February 13, 2026

It's considered a compliment to be called smart—as in, “The smartest person I know.” The word conjures up competence, know-how, and even brilliance.

But being called smart may not necessarily be a compliment, either. Smart alecks think they know everyone; the smart part of town is, by implication, better from other, lesser parts of town; words that smart are painful—and so on. In other words, being smart isn't necessarily all that it's cracked up to be.

Now, being wise? That's a different matter altogether.

It's the difference between learning and experience. Of the two, learning seems to be the thing our society values right now. Not learning for learning's sake, mind you, but learning as something to be commodified, be it in Silicon Valley or on Wall Street.

Well—who cares? After all, these smart people with their learning have created the modern world which you and I benefit from and enjoy. I don't want to live a world without smartphones! So at its best “being smart” is both commendable and desirable. But unless this is grounded in, or tempered by, wisdom, there's likely to be trouble—just think about the fears and misgivings concerning AI.

For although there's a surfeit of smarts these days, there's also a corresponding dearth of wisdom. What's worse, the truths which are grounded in wisdom's experience are so often dismissed—and even derided.

Like the cartoon I recently saw which shows a man sitting in front of a computer who calls out to his partner in the next room, "Honey, come look! I've found some information all the world's top scientists and doctors missed." For too many people, the voice of wisdom and rationality is now just something else to filter out amidst the white noise of life.

They do not know, neither do they understand; they go about in darkness; the prophet says. In other words, we're not as smart as we think. Probably because we refuse to believe that Jesus' way of the cross is the way of wisdom.

But it *is*. True, it's the wisdom that tells us we must lose it all for the sake of the Kingdom. Yet it's a kingdom in which spilled blood is exchanged for new life, where numbing ignorance is displaced by discerning wisdom, and where even hate and death have no power.

And if, even with open hearts and open souls, we fail or are partly destroyed in our efforts to build this kingdom of wisdom and peace in a world of stupidity and hatred, we will have failed as Christ failed: in a victory of love.