The Good Spouse
33rd Sunday In Ordinary Time 2017

Reflection By: Deacon Paul V. Hursh

Proverbs 31:30-31

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

As our children grow up and mature, one thing that weighs heavy on our minds is whom they would choose for a mate. For the parents here this morning, those whose children are already dating, and those who will be there soon, are certain to think about this a good deal. Perhaps our own marriage has been blessed and we want our children’s marriages to be blessed as well. Or perhaps there have been difficulties or even divorce and we want to spare our children, and our children’s children that heartache and trauma. In any case, today’s wisdom from Proverbs for the Ideal Wife will certainly resonate in our hearts.

A mother gave this advice, on what constitutes a good wife, to her son, King Lemuel. As good as the advice we have already heard, what precedes it and what was omitted in the interests of brevity, is also excellent. Many commentators have surmised that Lemuel is actually King Solomon - in which case the mother would be Bathsheba and his father King David. The Queen
Mother counsels her son not to fall into the trap of immorality; chasing after women that will sap a king's strength. (Proverbs 31:3) (If you recall immorality is something that got his father into trouble.) She also warns her son against the dangers of alcohol; a drunken king is never a good leader. (Proverbs 31: 4-7) Rather than being a womanizer and a drunkard, a good king is one who speaks for the rights of those without a voice. She counsels that he should issue decrees (enact laws) that are just, that defend and uphold the poor. (Proverbs 31-8-9) May the Lord grant us rulers like Solomon who heed this advice of a queen mother on ruling well. These attributes, by the way, are ones that a young woman would do well to look for when choosing a mate.

Then we come to the advice in today's readings, where we hear that a good wife is one in whom a man can trust his heart and whose value cannot be measured by monetary means …far beyond pearls. She is skilled in the gifts of domestic life, like spinning and weaving, but is also wise in the ways of the world beyond the home. As an omitted verse relates, she can pick out a piece of land to purchase and with her own earnings plants a vineyard. (Proverbs 31:16) It doesn't relate so much to physical beauty, which it remarks is fleeting, as much as her physical strength.

So how are we to pass on all this advice to our children so that they actually take it to heart? We have all experienced those times where we tried to give good advice to our children, only to be met with rolling eyes. This is where the hard part comes as parents. It is hard because, as we all know, the most effective instruction a parent can give is by modeling the behavior we wish to see in our children. So there we have it, the instructive part of this scripture is to see how we can be good parents. As difficult as it is, we are called to live virtuous lives of service to our families and communities. This begins with being a trusted spouse who is dedicated to the care of our families. It continues by looking after the needs of others less fortunate and speaking up for their rights. Finally, because we are a democracy, and not a monarchy, we need to choose leaders, who are as wise as King Solomon or the Queen Mother Bathsheba.

Remember, "Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the one who fears the LORD is to be praised." (Proverbs 31:30)