Marist as a Wisdom School

Today's first reading is from the Book of Proverbs. This book belongs to a collection of books in the Bible known as Wisdom Literature.

Wisdom refers to the knowledge, the good sense, and the insight that comes ultimately from God but is accessible to us in various ways. Wisdom comes to us through revelation—receiving the wisdom that God offers or teaches us. Wisdom comes to us from observing what the cosmos and earthly creatures have to teach us. And wisdom comes to us from understanding human nature and behavior that we gain from reflecting on experience. All wisdom, regardless of how it is obtained, is rooted in God, who is wisdom itself.

In ancient times, the more advanced nations had wisdom schools where students were taught how to live correctly or wisely. The Book of Proverbs is a collection of the kind of wise sayings that these students would discuss and learn.

We conclude our morning prayers at Marist by addressing Mary with an ancient title: "Mary, Seat of Wisdom." In Latin, it is rendered as *Sedes Sapientia*. This is related to another title for Mary: the Madonna of the Chair. In both titles, Mary is pictured as being seated on a throne as if to receive an honor. However, on her lap is the child Jesus she is presenting to the world so the world can honor him. From ancient times, Christ has been understood to be the incarnation of wisdom. St. Paul calls Jesus the Wisdom of God. Hence Mary is the throne or the Seat of Wisdom.

We speak about Marist as being a college preparatory school, and that it is. But that is not all that it is. Many excellent schools prepare their students for college.

I suggest that Marist School intends to be that and something else. Marist is a wisdom school. By forming our students into the image and likeness of Christ, who is the wisdom of God, Marist wants to form students who, in addition to being wise in the ways of the world, are especially wise in the ways of God.

This is why the highest honor accorded to a senior at graduation is called the *Sedes Sapientia* Award. The faculty votes on the student who excels in loyalty, scholarship, and service. You will recall that wisdom was the gift King Solomon asked to receive from God. Wisdom is that quality that joins knowledge with the courage to judge and act rightly. Of all the lessons taught here at Marist, that is the most important one.