

Giving Back the Sun: The Scholar-in-Residence in Parish Life

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This white paper is a proposal for enhancing parish life through the ministry of local, lay intellectual workers or Scholars-in-Residence. It is both a manifesto and an introduction to supporting individuals within a congregation who feel called to place their minds in the service of the parish.

It may seem counter-intuitive to consider intellect as a way of revitalizing parish life in this secular age, but a need of believers of all faiths is to nurture the intellect. “Thou shalt worship the Lord your God... with all your mind,” Matthew enjoins us.¹ Difficult questions arise in times that are not only more complicated, but saturated with information wrapped in a whirlwind of noise. The times demand thoughtful answers to difficult questions, and workers who will take up the task of analyzing and addressing problems that threaten to overwhelm us all. In 1920, A. G. Sertillange, OP, wrote the following in his book, *The Intellectual Life*:

Here I am... living in a time of human drama, witnessing upheavals such as perhaps the globe never before saw since the mountains rose and the seas were driven into their caverns. What have I to do for this panting, palpitating century? More than ever before thought is waiting for men [and women], and men [and women] for thought. The world is in danger for lack of life-giving maxims. We are in a train rushing ahead at top speed, no signals visible. The planet is going it knows not where, its law has failed it: who will give it back its sun?²

These words are as true today as they were then. Although Fr. Sertillange was writing for young men intent on entering the Priesthood to pursue careers as theological scholars, this is a call to action for both ordained and lay scholars. The calling of the intellectual is seldom seen in mainstream churches today, which is unfortunate. Already many churches are hives of educational activity, many novel and even radical opportunities exist to create positive change and renewal. Catholic scholar Fr. Marvin Sweeney, OP comments in his own response to Sertillange's longing for a restored sun:

¹Matt. 22:37. See also Luke 10:27.

²Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life*, Catholic University Press, pp. 14-15.

What, then, do we perceive when we consider our present age? What light must be shed upon our contemporary society? – for this is the work that Our Lord has entrusted to us. No one person can answer such a question fully; the redemptive mission of Christ belongs to the whole People of God. I wish, instead, to begin a conversation, and in that spirit to offer some remarks that, however partial, may be of use as you engage this challenge.³

Christian history is filled with examples of holy men and women who engaged their intellects as an act of worship. Almost from the outset, Christian thinkers and clergy assumed that God and his ways were partly intelligible to humanity. They believed that as the human intellect grew in strength, the mind of God would become clearer, and that this was an important part of what it meant to be Christian. The early Church Fathers labored vigorously to reformulate and reconcile Christian doctrine with the Greek philosophies that were the intellectual gold standard of their day. No less an authority than St. Augustine taught that the study of the natural world, apart from the realm of the spirit, was essential to understanding the things of God.

This was his famous doctrine of the Two Books: the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature. Augustine taught that as the author of both books, God intended humanity to become fluent in both realms of learning. He even made the rather extraordinary claim that because the Book of Nature was often easier to understand than Scripture, it could offer authoritative insights into the meaning of holy writ. These “books” were complementary, demanding our attention. The teachings of Jesus were always firmly grounded in the gritty realities of everyday life, and the grandeur of the natural world.

The Renewed Need for Intellectual Workers

For the better part of a century, church intellectual life has mostly confined itself to ecclesiastical matters. There have been some attempts over the years to speak to a larger audience on matters, but too often this dialogue is dismissed from serious public discussion. This is partly due to an emerging religious fundamentalism that has given Christianity and religion in general a reputation for intellectual weakness. But while this stems in part from the failure of Christian scholars to establish theology as an integral, legitimate part of the Academy during the previous century,⁴ the sovereign antidote to

³Fr. Michael Sweeney, OP, “The Vocation of the Catholic Scholar,” The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, <https://www.dspt.edu/the-vocation-of-the-catholic-scholar>

⁴See Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge* for an overview.

fundamentalist claims of a univocal scripture is the close, careful, scholarly reading and analysis of the text, which is a legitimate part of the academic community.

But the need for such voices has never been more urgent. A recent example is the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si*,⁵ published by Pope Francis I on the crisis of global warming. This remarkable document has prompted a tectonic shift in the debate both by pointing out technological roots of the crisis, and daring to make a powerful moral argument that has been missing from secular discourse. This deficiency is not an oversight; the scientific community by convention does not allow qualitative arguments of a moral or aesthetic character to influence the results derived from scientific dialogue, and yet the crisis of global warming—and many others—demands precisely this kind of thinking. *Laudato Si* has been endorsed by both the Dalai Lama and Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I. Because of these three religious leaders, global warming suddenly became a matter of religious concern for nearly half the world's population.

What religious intellectual leadership has accomplished on a global scale can also be done at the local level for matters both local and global. Besides the strong moral imperative to act for the greater good as a part of religious life, the Church also constitutes an untapped reservoir of idealism, a sense that the world can be, must be changed for the better. It is this moral platform and passion for improving the world that the Scholar-in-Residence program seeks to harness.

What is a Scholar-in-Residence?

The role of the intellectual worker is to use their intellectual gifts to strengthen both the parish and the larger community. Fr. Sweeney puts it this way:

I wish to propose that the challenge of our culture – its tendency to fragmentation and to relativism, its refusal of its own heritage – is rooted in an incapacity to assert the fundamental unity of life-in-the-world human experience, and that the work of restoring unity must become the pre-eminent concern of a follower of Christ.⁶

The concept of a parish Scholar-in-Residence is not new. Churches have, in the past appointed a well-known author or intellectual light as a Scholar-in-Residence in order to burnish that church's reputation.

⁵http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

⁶Fr. Michael Sweeney, *ibid.*

We take the broader position that the reputation of the church is enhanced by its ability to nurture intellectual activity from within its membership.

The intellectual calling can involve teaching or research, sharing what one learns. It may also be a call to learn, to embrace growth and acquire what one does not yet know. It is collective; leading a group effort to unravel some difficult issue or develop a pattern of living and healing. Most parishes already have volunteers for things like compiling a parish history, organizing the parish library, writing for the newsletter, leading field trips, or teaching classes. A Scholar-in-Residence can certainly do that, but we prefer a larger vision. This is about more than just the parish. A Scholar-in-Residence operating from a parish has the freedom to explore ideas and matters of faith and beliefs of their local faith community, but are of less interest to their academic counterparts.

The Scholar-in-Residence, then, is a way as life that demands dedication and discipline commensurate with the demands placed upon the worker. It is a calling to place one's intellectual talents and potential in the service of the parish, but also in the service of humanity. It demands integrity and fidelity to the truth. Good learning must be accountable. Scholars-in-Residence should share their work with the rest of the Parish, or at least describe to them what they are doing and what they have learned.

Ours is a world filled with information, but also much misinformation, disinformation, and efforts to overwhelm our senses by sheer volume of noise. It is a challenge for church leaders to navigate these treacherous waters in their efforts to meet the needs of their parishioners and the larger community. In such times the lay intellectual can become a valuable asset. Further, they can energize the parish and enhance community dialogue by raising awareness. They can augment the reputation of their parish. Best of all, they get to enjoy the fun of interacting with others who share common interests and passions.

The subjects open to the Scholar-in-Residence go beyond religious topics. A birding enthusiast may compile and maintain a map of nearby birds nests, or take part in a citizen science project that monitors air quality that help us better understand our created home. Another might teach art or music workshops. Still another might focus on disaster preparedness, health issues, or environmental concerns. A tailored study of the local job market and economy can prove useful in guiding parish activities or even local policy regarding homelessness and poverty. Other activities may need financial resources, and so a Scholar-in-Residence might apply their skills to fund raising or writing grant

proposals. The common denominator is that they have a unifying effect within the parish, and between the parish and the larger community. They can enhance public understanding in their areas of expertise, facilitate dialogue and change.

The healthy parish is a place of sanctuary, a space where one can find refuge from the rigors of the world before plunging back in as part of the Christian mission to make the world better. Intellectual activity is usually a part of parish life in most congregations, but the vitality and character of those activities depend on the kind of environment available to the curious, the creative, and the thoughtful. There are many ways a parish can create a healthy learning environment, but the most important is to affirm the legitimacy of the honest seeker and the curious mind. This can be difficult. Genuinely curious thinkers—as distinguished from the habitual contrarian or crank—ask a lot of questions. They can be among the most passionate in the parish. They can also be troublesome, unless those who lead them are thinkers also.

Questions and those who ask them are not the problem. It is better to run out of answers than questions. The path of the holy really begins at the point where we have run out of answers, but questions remain. The parish leadership that can help bring parishioners to that point will enrich both the intellectual and the spiritual life of their communities.

What Scholars-in-Residence Do: The Author's Story

In 2009 I was laid off and cast adrift into the most unforgiving job market in recent memory. As a way to keep myself sane, I offered to conduct a series of short seminars on Biblical topics at Christ Episcopal Church in Portola Valley, California where my spouse and I attended. Because I have a Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern Studies with an emphasis in Hebrew Bible, this was an easy sell. My spouse, a Ph.D. in Classics, soon got involved and until 2014 we taught seminars together on a variety of topics. Besides the obvious biblical subjects, we also taught seminars on “guerrilla economics” sharing what we learned during our sojourn in the economic wilderness.

Meanwhile, the job hunt extended into months, then years. Fortunately, when we began offering the seminars, I asked our Rector, Fr. Mitch Lindemann, if the Parish would be willing to grant us the title of “Scholar-in-Residence.” This not only added some gravitas to our activities, it gave me something to put on my resume as a current “position” so it would not appear to potential employers that I was completely inert. In fact, the seminars eventually led me to a job as an adjunct professor at Stanford

University.

With each new seminar we became better organized. We learned how to conduct them so that someone with little or no background could attend and not feel confused. The scholarly format precluded fundamentalist or literalist assumptions about the text. What happened as we began to probe more deeply into the biblical texts became an enthralling experience. A diverse community of learners formed around the seminars, most of them from outside the parish. Since we focused mainly on the Old Testament, we also had local clergy who wanted to make up for a lack Old Testament training in Seminary. Our seminars included a ten-month exploration of the book of Genesis, taken verse by verse, with lots of background and discussion. This proved so popular that we followed it with a fourteen-month study of Isaiah. The open-ended nature of these seminars allowed plenty of time to linger and puzzle over the text. We had a ball. What we discovered in the Scriptures began to find its way into other aspects of parish life. Insights gleaned from our studies informed decision making in the Vestry and sometimes turned up in Sunday sermons.

A new job accompanied a move to Oregon, where we attempted to replicate our success at our new parish, the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan in Corvallis. Our success after the better part of a year suggests that this model could work in other parishes on a wide variety of topics and activities.

The Calling

Who will be a Scholar-in-Residence? Most parishes have reservoirs of untapped talent and experience in the form of retirees or passionate hobbyists. A touch of gentle encouragement may be all that is needed to persuade some of them to share their expertise with their fellow parishioners, or perhaps even go in a new direction that would not have been practical in their working lives.

That calling can be as simple as intense curiosity. If this describes you, do not waver, fearing that you aren't "smart enough" or "know enough." Focused passion will take you a long way. If you are not confident in your intellectual gifts, but feel the desire to exercise your mind, consider that the greatest intellectual ventures have begun as collaborations and small groups gathering to learn and to explore ideas. Facilitate those gatherings. As an organizational patron, bring complementary minds together, and let them teach you. That is one way to start. Someone with a talent for moderating discussions can often do as much to advance learning as a local expert.

Another possible path is to embrace the idea that there are things you do not know, but desire to learn. Let the parish be a party to your commitment to learning and provide accountability for your efforts. Let your calling be to acquire those knowings you seek and, when you feel you have reached a moment of fullness (or an agreed-upon deadline), share your intellectual harvest with others. Are there others that share your curiosity? Invite them to your venture. Ask for their assistance and advice, if applicable.

Obviously, you can do this on your own, but bringing your learning into the parish life gives you a pool of potential co-learners who are likely to support your efforts. The church also offers a location to meet. It can help you identify other community resources. It is a place where you can present the results of your learning to a supportive and sympathetic audience. As you grow, so does the parish. Others can see what is possible and follow suit.

Practical Matters

While it is certainly possible to use volunteer Scholars-in-Residence, having some discretionary funding available for seminars and other special activities and events will go far in securing a scholar's commitment to making good presentations. Approach the vestry or parish treasurer about possible funds to support educational activities. If funding proves difficult, today there are many innovative ways to fund small and unusual projects via crowd-funding or even patronage. A few minutes on the Internet will give you a glimpse of what's possible, so long as there is the necessary accountability for funds collected and used.

Setting up and running learning events requires preparation. For the Scholar-in-Residence, that means thorough preparation of material, with allowance for discussion and questions. For the seminar itself, there are many ways to bring people together, but food is one of the most effective. A potluck supper or a pot of hot coffee or cold soft drinks plus some snacks are a must for small groups. If there are any funds at all to support gatherings, spending some of it on food is money well-spent. Also important is a warm, welcoming environment where people relax and engage socially. Your most important resources will be people. Work to cultivate interest and a desire for others to share and listen. One excellent way to develop interest is to invite participation from other churches or their members. Holding events that feature speakers and activities from a variety of groups is a very effective way to build the kind of diverse communities that yield the richest intellectual experiences. Working with other churches and organizations can also help marshal resources and reduce costs. Working with others can also “spread the word” about the event, plus any other programs you have. Use whatever local avenues you can to

let the community know what you are doing.

A note about the conferred title: a Scholar-in-Residence program is far more than a gambit for helping obscure Ph.D.s look busy. I must also emphasize that a Ph.D., or any college degree, is not required to be a Scholar-in-Residence. The reason for the title is a nod to our society's obsession with titles and degrees. There are occasions, for instance, when an amateur scholar may wish to attend a conference, but cannot due to lack an institutional affiliation. I know of one such who requested a letter from their local public library naming him a "Scholar-in-Residence" at said library. Armed with that letter, he was allowed to register and attend the conference.

The title need not even be "Scholar." Poet-in-Residence, Resident Naturalist, Artist, Musician, Historian, Research Associate; all of these and more are good choices. One need not "reside" at the church, obviously, but for those parishioners who are away from the congregation for some reason, but still wish to participate in parish life at a distance, consider "Scholar-at-Large." Use your imagination and have some fun with them. A temporary position can be an "internship." You get the idea.

A Word About Apologetics and Polemics

The cynic might dismiss our proposal, on the grounds that a lay Scholar-in-Residence will simply use their position to restate preconceived notions, pick fights, or as a platform for dogma over dialogue. They would extend the authoritarianism that has is unfortunately associated with Christian discourse in popular opinion. Will such a thing happen? Of course it will, but our hope is that this is the exception. The Scholar-in-Residence proposed here is bound by conventions, especially fealty to truth. Honest intellectual work is demanding. It challenges us and requires integrity. But this is no reason to turn away from a broader expansion of intellectual life. Even the most robust marketplace of ideas has its share of disruptive denizens. But the process of honest dialogue, carried out with integrity and good faith is a powerful tool for winnowing the intellectual wheat from the chaff. It has served many other intellectual communities over the centuries, and served them well.

Thankfully, dialogue between faiths is moving past the thrust-and-parry of tedious doctrinal disputations. One still sees inter-faith polemics in some sectors, but less frequently; outside those circles it tends to invoke amusement at best, disgust at worst. This is generally a positive trend. Castigating others, or manufacturing surplus fear and loathing at "the outsiders'" expense does not create a healthy spiritual environment, even if it does fill the pews. There are far more important things

to talk about, and far better ways to talk about them. Polemics are a waste of time. Avoid them.

If one goes “cherry picking” for references that superficially support a dogma while ignoring what does not, the results will inevitably be tinged with dishonesty or even intellectual fraud. There is too much of this already in many sectors of public discourse, both sacred and secular. When such pseudo-intellectual facades crumble, as they invariably do, it further erodes trust of people both in and outside the institution behind it. If our explorations challenge us to examine, reconsider, or alter what we think about something, that is good. Our working assumption is that our ideas and beliefs will require adjustment. Religion without growth is a dead end.

Apologetics, is different, but often confused with polemics to its detriment. Apologetics is the art of explaining and defending one's beliefs to someone outside that belief system. You don't have to “prove” anything to be a successful apologist, only give a good account of why one's faith and the doctrines it teaches moves one in the way it does.

Truly good apologists are rare, regardless of the subject. This is unfortunate, because good apologetics can produce unexpected benefits. Sometimes, in seeking to explain why we believe what we do, we uncover new insights into those beliefs. Constructive apologetics can be an interesting and stimulating exercise. John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, published in 1864, is an excellent example of good apologetics.

But apologetics has another role, an important one, which is to say what must be said. This does not mean setting out to create confrontation or division. It means that there are times when, firmly and cogently, uncomfortable truths must be spoken or troubling questions raised, even within the parish community. It does not supplant, but supports the role of the priest or rector, sometimes saying what special circumstances or convention prevent them from saying. This is the prophetic voice, which usually comes from outside the established administrative order. It can also include activism, putting competence in the service of those who are vulnerable and have no voice to speak for them. The lay intellectual is in a unique position to speak truth to power, and comfort to the powerless.

Conclusion

If the ultimate mission of Christianity is to bring humanity closer to God, we must consider that it was after Adam and Even ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that God declared that they had

become “as one of us.” Besides God's prodigal love, what other divine attribute is more defining than knowledge and intelligence?

The Christian tradition has long held that to increase understanding was vital to Christian life. It is especially important in today's intellectual climate that we sharpen our minds, learn as much as we can, and both use it to better ourselves and the world around us, and that we “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”⁷

Finally, I submit the following for your consideration, from our Muslim brothers and sisters:

“A person shall arrive [in Heaven] on the Day of Judgment and shall be in possession of good deeds in the measure of vastly accumulated clouds or towering mountains. Witnessing them, he shall ask: ‘Oh My Lord! How can these be for me when I have not performed them?’ God shall reply: ‘This is your knowledge that you had taught and conveyed to the people, and which was acted upon after you had died.’”⁸

To learn is to worship. To teach is to spread a powerful force for good. To learn is an analogue to the process of confession and repentance, in which we continually winnow out those things that mislead us and retain the ample grain, to the betterment of ourselves, our parishes, and the world around us.

⁷Ephesian 4:14

⁸*Biharul Anwar*, Volume 2, Page 18.

Appendix A: Suggested Projects for Scholars-in-Residence

If you are casting about for project ideas, here are a few possibilities:

Discover your parish library. Most churches have a room full of books that languish, unread. Usually, it is not for lack of interesting books, but because nobody knows what is in the collection. Every week or month, include some “interesting titles from the library” in the parish newsletter, with short descriptions of what the books are about. This can dovetail nicely with existing book groups or reading clubs. A parish might also thoughtfully expand its collection in a particular topic aligned with local interests to create a specialty library.

A study circle. This is a weekly time set aside for people with their own writing or study projects to gather and work quietly together. There's no need for presenting or critiquing, although you can do that if you like. The general idea is for everyone to commit to being at a certain time and place where they will work on something important to them that might otherwise get lost in the daily grind.

Artist groups. Many churches have regular meetings for local artists both in and outside the parish that lets them share their work or works in progress, in a supportive environment. For beginning artists this can be a wonderful way to overcome that initial fear, while they find their voice and develop their skills. It can also help artists find new venues for their work, and new ideas to inform their art.

Student Ministry. As part of a student ministry, set up a regular time when a scholar-in-residence meets with local university students just to give them a chance to discuss the “big ideas” and explore their own intellectual bent.

Free tutoring or literacy programs. This has been a standard activity in many parishes, and would suit itself well to a Scholar-in-Residence program.

Philosopher-in-Residence. In years past, some hospitals made volunteer “Philosophers-in-Residence” available to talk to patients and their families who wanted guidance in navigating the ethical and philosophical aspects associated with difficult medical decisions.

Ethics Forum. Create a discussion group or study circle for exploring ethical issues associated with local, national, and global issues and events.

Common Security Clubs. These are organizations made up of people who are struggling in a difficult economy. They are often, but not always unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged. These groups became popular after the crash of 2008 as places to share ideas, make others aware of resources, discuss job search strategies, find ways to economize, and provide mutual support. Hosting a CSC with a Scholar-in-Residence to help research local economic realities can be a big help for people in need.

Nature walks and groups. Most parishes have people who are active bird watchers, amateur astronomers, or enjoy some other hobby that explores the natural world. Invite these people to help us understand and appreciate the wonders of Creation, and our stewardship over it.

Citizen Science. This is a burgeoning new movement that recruits ordinary citizens to participate in projects managed by professional scientists. Usually it consists of taking regular measurement or counts of natural phenomena as a way of getting regular people involved in science. A parish Citizen Science group can be a boon to scientists looking for extra help in a study.

Makers. Do you have parishioners who like to tinker with technology? The “Maker movement” is a growing body of people who love to play with technology. A large portion of this movement investigates using technology in groundbreaking ways to address social, economic, and environmental problems, usually at the local level. Invite local “makers” to share with the parish what they do, and invite the public.

Experimental Garden. Set out a plot of land for a garden for trying new and different methods of cultivation, growing heritage crops, or trying alternative methods of pest control. Involve local gardeners and make your findings available to the public with a newsletter or seminar.

Using tools for scripture study. How many parishioners really know how to use a concordance? Do they know how cross-references work? Have they ever read the Bible with a commentary? A couple of workshops on basic scholarly tools can take personal bible study to a whole new level, even if you don't read Greek or Hebrew.

Holiday voices. Find parishioners who are willing to write or share their thoughts on some season of the Christian calendar such as Lent or Advent. Keep them short; no more than 300 words or so, then

publish them as a pamphlet or insert in the program, or devote an issue of the parish newsletter to them.

Activism. There are good things out there that demand doing. True Christian scholarship is grounded solidly in the world and its needs. Don't waste time passing pointless "resolutions." Study the nature of the problems, and get to work doing something about it. Repeat as needed.

Media. Podcasts are a great way to explore and share ideas. Setting one up takes a little technical know-how, but it's not beyond anyone with moderate computer skills. Once you get it going, the real challenge will be finding content; don't be afraid to experiment and reach out beyond the parish community. For the truly ambitious, take advantage of new FCC rules that make it easier to set up low-power community FM radio stations.

Appendix B: Some Selected Thoughts on Spirituality and the Life of the Mind

Selections from the Papal encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition Know yourself was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as “human beings”, that is as those who “know themselves”.

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*

“The best thing for being sad, replied Merlyn... is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting.”

T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*

Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.

John Adams

The church is not so much concerned with whether the thoughts of its members are orthodox or heterodox as it is that they shall have thoughts.

Hugh B. Brown

The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr.

* * *

He who leaves home in search of knowledge, walks in the path of God.

* * *

One hour's meditation on the work of the Creator is better than seventy years of prayer.

Muhammed

Knowledge is indispensable to Christian life and service. If we do not use the mind that God has given us, we condemn ourselves to spiritual superficiality and cut ourselves off from many of the riches of God's grace.

John Stott

Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.

Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get insight.

Proverbs 4:5-7

Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.

2 Chronicles 1:11-12

For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom gives life to them that have it.

Ecclesiastes 7:12

The road to wisdom? Well, it's plain

And simple to express:

Err

and err

and err again,

but less

and less

and less.

Piet Hein