

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - Wisdom 18:6-9

The Book of Wisdom, also known as the Wisdom of Solomon, is listed in the Muratorian Fragment [the oldest (second century) listing of writings approved as Scripture for use in the Church of Rome] as a New Testament book. The book is not in the Hebrew canon and it is certain that Greek was the original language. It was certainly written after the completion of the Septuagint (middle of the 2nd century B.C.) and earlier than the New Testament. It is thought to date from the middle of the first century B.C. which would make it the last of the Old Testament books to be written. Believed to have been composed in Alexandria, Egypt, the author certainly isn't Solomon and his identity remains unknown. All efforts to identify the author have been futile and the most that can be said is that he was a devout, Greek speaking Jew, acquainted to some extent with Greek philosophy and culture.

The book divides into two parts: The first part (1:1 through 11:1) appears to be a public address which sings the praises of Wisdom. The second part (11:2 through the end) is a midrash (a Jewish method of searching the Scriptures with a view to discovering the deeper meaning held to underlie the most minute details contained in the sacred text) in homily form about God's fidelity to His people in the exodus. Today's reading concerns the tenth plague and the exodus by which God punished the Egyptians and glorified Israel.

⁶ That night [of the Passover] was known beforehand to our fathers, that, with sure knowledge of the oaths in which they put their faith, they might have courage.

The patriarchs [Abram (Genesis 15:13-34), Jacob (Genesis 46:3-4), etc.] to whom God swore He would deliver their descendants.

⁷ Your people awaited the salvation of the just and the destruction of their foes. ⁸ For when you punished our adversaries, in this you glorified us whom you had summoned.

Chosen – from all the peoples of the earth.

⁹ For in secret the holy children of the good were offering sacrifice

The Passover.

and putting into effect with one accord the divine institution,

The Passover meal created a family which celebrated with a religious unity.

That your holy ones should share alike the same good things and dangers, having previously sung the praises of the fathers.

Gospel - Luke 12:32-48

Jesus, having told the disciples of the external problems they will encounter such as that of the Pharisees, whose leaven is hypocrisy, now tells them of internal problems caused by selfish Church officials.

[Jesus said to His disciples:] ³² “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

To His struggling, opposed, and small group of disciples Jesus promises what is all-important: the kingdom; the powers of which are operative in their group.

³³ Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Don't worry about material goods, share. Matthew 6:21 gives this in a negative form: “do not lay up treasures on earth.” Saint Luke's account is more positive and demanding.

³⁵ “Gird your loins and light your lamps ³⁶ and be like servants

One who gives service to the Christian community.

who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks.

This role reversal is significant and underscores God's absolute gratuity. The servant who is faithful during the time of fulfillment before the parousia will share in the banquet in the end times.

³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. ³⁸ And should he come in the second or third watch

The times for the changing of the watch were midnight and sunrise.

and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” ⁴¹ Then Peter said,

Peter is the spokesman for the group. Notice that Jesus ignores the question, implying that it was out of place.

“Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?”⁴² And the Lord replied, “Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute (the) food allowance at the proper time?”

More seems to be involved than mere foodstuffs. Could this be a reference to communal meals such as the Eucharist?

⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk,

Echos of verse 19 sound: The Church official has taken on some of the characteristics of the fool.

⁴⁶ then that servant’s master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ That servant who knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; ⁴⁸ and the servant who was ignorant of his master’s will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.

The punishments for unfaithful and negligent Church officials are stark. Community officials must be faithful and not create internal problems for the Church.

“Indeed, the more superior is a rational nature, so much the worse is its ruin; and the more unbelievable is its sin, so much more the damnable it is. The angel, therefore, fell irreparably, because more is demanded of him to whom more is given . . . Adam, the first man, was of such an excellent nature, because that nature was not yet weakened, that his sin was much greater by far than are the sins of other men. Therefore his punishment too, which was the immediate consequence of his sin, seemed much more severe. It had been in Adam’s power not to die; but now he was immediately bound by the necessity of dying, and he was immediately sent away from the place of such great happiness; and he was immediately barred from access to the tree of life. But when this was done, the human race was still in his loins. . . . Thus all the sons of Adam were infected through him with the contagion of sin and were subjected to the state of death.”
[Saint Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 428-430), *The Unfinished Work Against Julian’s Second Reply*, 6,22]

Praying with ScriptureModified *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading)*Read*

1. Read the passage out loud (if possible), slowly, simply to become familiar with it.

Reflect

2. Read the passage again, silently.

Ask the Lord to let you read and “hear” it as if this was the first time; what does it mean? How would you tell/explain this story in your own words?

(Not more than 5 or 6 sentences.)

Spontaneous

3. Pick one person from the passage: _____.

Prayer

Imagine that you are in this person’s “shoes.”

(Note: If the passage does not specifically name persons in its text, simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling. Does it call to mind a previous, or presently occurring, incident or relationship in your life?)

A. How does it feel to be in this situation?

B. Does it remind you of something or someone in your life?

C. Is there anything you would say or do differently?

D. Have a “heart to Heart” talk with Jesus sharing your honest feelings about anything that has come to mind in reference to your reflecting on this passage. It might be something that is weighing heavily on your heart, or something that moves you to a deep sense of gratitude and joyful praise.

Choose one word or phrase from this passage that has a special meaning for you _____.

Resting in God

4. Read the passage again. Close your eyes. Think of your favorite picture of Jesus and LISTEN to HIM.

(Spend this time in simple silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might “whisper” in your heart.)

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