

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

An exhortatory reading. Don't be afraid to sound nasty and vengeful; that's what this text demands. If you proclaim with a flat, indifferent tone, you make it almost impossible for your assembly to understand the reading.

Keep your energy up throughout, but vary your tone, pace, and volume.

Lower your volume to convey collusion. You might suggest wicked delight at your plans.

This is sarcasm; you don't really believe God will deliver him.

Heighten your anger.

Proclaim "gentleness" and "patience" with a mocking tone.

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

Use inflection (the high or low pitch of your voice) to convey attitude and feeling. High pitch expresses intensity and excitement; low pitch expresses sadness, contrition, or solemnity.

READING I In this reading the author portrays the wicked. They do not tolerate the just person, who is for them a constant reproach. They test and humiliate him to see if God, whom he invokes, will rescue him. If God does not, the wicked believe they are vindicated in their course of action. The ironic expressions of the wicked are echoed in the insults of the leaders and officials against Jesus on the Cross. In the just person, here referred to as "Son of God," we glimpse God's parental care of every just person. In the Book of Wisdom the foolish and bad

LECTIONARY #134

READING I Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

The wicked say:

Let us beset the just one, because he is **obnoxious** to us;
he sets himself **against** our doings,
reproaches us for transgressions of the law
and charges us with **violations** of our training.

Let us see whether his words be **true**;
let us find out what will **happen** to him.

For if the just one be the son of God, God will **defend** him
and **deliver** him from the hand of his foes.

With **revilement** and **torture** let us put the just one to the **test**
that we may have **proof** of his **gentleness**
and **try** his **patience**.

Let us **condemn** him to a **shameful** death;
for according to his **own** words, **God** will take **care** of him.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6-8 (6b)

R. The Lord upholds my life.

O God, by your name save me,
and by your might defend my cause.
O God, hear my prayer;
hearken to the words of my mouth.

For the haughty have risen up against me,
the ruthless seek my life;
they set not God before their eyes.

Behold, God is my helper;
the LORD sustains my life.
Freely will I offer you sacrifice;
I will praise your name, O LORD,
for its goodness.

people typically refuse to acknowledge God's action in the world, even as they test the claims of the just and seek pleasure for its own sake. The sarcastic note in their speech is obvious, for they do not believe the just person has any grounds for trust in God's protection.

READING II James contrasts the qualities of the wise person with the defects of earthbound wisdom. He addresses the discord among Christians that make the common life difficult, and enumerates the principal causes: the pas-

sions of greed and envy, and later he will add the disordered love of worldly things, pride, and arrogance, that breeds bad talk (vv. 4-12).

In the verse following the today's reading, James calls the unwise "adulterers," not referring to interpersonal adultery but to the disordered love of worldly goods that issues in infidelity to God. Christian wisdom is reflected in the community; it means living in sync with God's plan. Group conflict, the result of envy and selfishness, disrupts wisdom, and wisdom shows itself as pure, peaceful, gentle, tolerant, merciful,

A didactic reading. Sincerely urge your assembly to forsake selfishness and seek peace.

Take your time; this line sets up the whole reading, contrasting jealousy and selfishness with wisdom and peace.

List these slowly and give each its emphasis.

Pick up your pace.

Heighten each line.

Pause at the end of this line.

Here is the solution to this conflict; proclaim gently and with love.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Pause in order to break up separate thoughts, set apart significant statements, or indicate major shifts. Never pause in the middle of a single thought. Your primary guide for pauses is punctuation.

READING II James 3:16—4:3

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

Beloved:

Where **jealousy** and selfish **ambition** exist,
 there is **disorder** and every **foul** practice.
 But the **wisdom** from above is first of all **pure**,
 then **peaceable, gentle, compliant**,
full of mercy and **good** fruits,
 without **inconstancy** or **insincerity**.
 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in **peace**
 for those who **cultivate** peace.

Where do the wars
 and **where** do the **conflicts** among you **come** from?
 Is it not from your **passions**
 that make **war** within your members?
 You **covet** but do not **possess**.
 You **kill** and **envy** but you cannot **obtain**;
 you **fight** and wage **war**.
 You do not **possess** because you do not **ask**.
 You **ask** but do not **receive**,
 because you ask **wrongly**, to spend it on your **passions**.

constant, and sincere in the quest for truth. Such qualities characterize the believer's life and the healthy community.

GOSPEL

Jesus seeks solitude to instruct the disciples about what awaits them in Jerusalem. Here he teaches the disciples about the Christian community's exercise of authority: not as one who lords over others, but as one who serves. Jesus, the Son of Man, came to serve, not to be served (expressed also in 10:45). Once again the disciples fail to

understand the prediction of Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

Like the prediction in the previous chapter, this one is followed by teaching about discipleship. The first part concerns humility and the true meaning of greatness. The disciples' failure to comprehend reflects one of Mark's themes as he unfolds their portrait. The nucleus of this section is the saying about the one who is first being last and the importance of becoming a servant of all. That saying advocates a reversal of values: all that society regards as honorable is called into question, and the disci-

ple, in imitation of Jesus, will adopt the role of the lowest community member.

Mark illustrates the inversion of roles with the saying about the child. Children in the ancient world were not as highly valued as they are in contemporary Western society; they had a lowly status. Jesus presents the child as an example of what the disciples are to strive for: as servants, they are to be attentive even to the least esteemed of society, the children; thus they serve Jesus and, by implication, God himself.

This instruction was necessary, even if perhaps unpalatable, because it demanded