

# TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #126

READING I Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

### A reading from the Book of Sirach

My **child**, conduct your affairs with **humility**,  
and you will be **loved more** than a giver of gifts.  
**Humble** yourself the **more**, the **greater** you are,  
and you will find **favor** with **God**.  
What is **too sublime** for you, **seek not**,  
into **things** beyond your **strength search not**.  
The **mind** of a **sage** appreciates **proverbs**,  
and an **attentive ear** is the **joy** of the **wise**.  
**Water** quenches a **flaming fire**,  
and **alms atone** for **sins**.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11 (see 11b)

**R. God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.**

The just rejoice and exult before God;  
they are glad and rejoice.

Sing to God, chant praise to his name;  
whose name is the LORD.

The father of orphans and the defender  
of widows

is God in his holy dwelling.  
God gives a home to the forsaken;  
he leads forth prisoners to prosperity.

A bountiful rain you showered down, O God,  
upon your inheritance;  
you restored the land when it languished;  
your flock settled in it;  
in your goodness, O God, you provided it  
for the needy.

Sirach = SEER-ak

The salutation should set your tone!

These first two sentences give commands:  
"conduct . . . humble yourself"! The goal is  
to persuade.

Maintain a slow pace and serene tone  
throughout. After each pair of lines, pause  
and breathe to renew your energy and then  
share the new idea.

Pause and sustain eye contact before  
announcing, "The word of the Lord."

For meditation and context:

#### TO KEEP IN MIND

A *didactic* text makes a point or  
teaches something. Help your  
assembly to follow the argument  
and understand what's being  
taught.

#### READING I

The Book of Sirach opens  
with a statement that  
underlies all of the instruction, advice, and  
proverbs in the book: "All wisdom comes  
from the Lord." Whether it is a contrast  
between wise and foolish behavior or practical  
suggestions such as how to choose  
friends, all wisdom comes from the Lord.  
Today's reading is presented as counsel  
given by a teacher to an adult student,  
addressed as "my child." The teacher is  
Jesus Ben Sira, who lived in the late third  
and early second century bc. Ben Sira himself  
sought wisdom through prayer and

study, and imparted it to his students both  
verbally and in writing.

Throughout his instruction, Ben Sira  
advises his students to cultivate virtues,  
developing life-long habits essential to living  
wisely. The virtue promoted in today's  
reading is humility. Sirach encourages  
humility first because a humble person will  
be loved more than a giver of gifts, a  
motive that appears more self-centered  
than virtuous. More important than the  
love given by human persons is the favor  
found with God.

Rather than seeking things too sub-  
lime or beyond one's strength, the humble  
person listens to the wisdom transmitted  
through proverbs, and finds joy in wise  
teaching. (Perhaps Sirach is encouraging  
his students to be attentive to his own  
instruction!) Wisdom is more than intellec-  
tual pursuit, but must be manifest in one's  
way of life. The final verse today states  
that giving of alms will serve as atonement  
for sin. Both humility and almsgiving draw  
the wise person into right relationship with  
the Lord.

Pause after the salutation, then, as if with a shake of the head, speak of those things that are *not* part of our experience in Christ. Your tone says, "Yes these were fearful things, but they don't exist any longer!" God's voice was so terrifying that the people wanted to shut it out!

Your tone should communicate the very different climate of the new covenant.

Name each segment of the citizenry of the new Jerusalem with pride and delight. Each is more assurance of the safety and goodness of this Holy City.

Slow your pace at the end of the first sentence to draw attention to the watching eyes of the Pharisees.

Don't assume a judgmental tone here.

To hold their attention, Jesus' tone would need to avoid harshness and remain upbeat. The lesson will be clearer if the tone is not judgmental.

**READING II** The reading from Hebrews depicts two vivid and varied scenes embracing the past and present, earth and heaven, human and divine, with dramatic sights and sounds, and emotions ranging from dread to festivity. The first part of the reading reminds the audience of an event long past that took place on Mount Sinai, the place where God made covenant with Israel. There God's presence was experienced in the vision of fire, in darkness and storm, and in the sound of a trumpet blast and a voice so fearful that the audience begged not to hear any fur-

## READING II Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24a

### A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

**Brothers and sisters:**

You have **not** approached that which could be touched and a **blazing fire** and **gloomy darkness** and **storm** and a **trumpet blast** and a **voice speaking words** such that **those who heard begged that no message** be further addressed to them.

**No**, you have **approached Mount Zion** and the **city of the living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and countless **angels** in **festal gathering**, and the **assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven**, and **God the judge of all**, and the **spirits of the just made perfect**, and **Jesus**, the **mediator of a new covenant**, and the **sprinkled blood** that speaks more **eloquently** than that of **Abel**.

## GOSPEL Luke 14:1, 7–14

### A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

On a **sabbath** Jesus went to **dine** at the home of one of the leading **Pharisees**, and the **people there were observing him carefully**.

He told a **parable** to those who had been **invited**, **noticing** how they were choosing the **places of honor** at the **table**.

"When you are **invited** by someone to a **wedding banquet**, do not **recline** at table in the **place of honor**."

ther message. The people did not approach the awesome God of Mount Sinai, and they pleaded with Moses, "Let not God speak to us, or we shall die" (Exodus 20:19).

But now, says the author of Hebrews, you have approached another mountain, Mount Zion, which is both an earthly and a heavenly dwelling of the living God. The fear and inability to approach the awesome God of Sinai is transformed into a festal gathering and approachability of Mount Zion. Moses was the mediator at Sinai, and now Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. Some of the faithful, "the firstborn

enrolled in heaven," along with "the spirits of the just" have already transcended the earthly Zion in Jerusalem to the heavenly, eternal Zion. Accompanying these faithful people are countless angels, heavenly beings who were thought to be hovering over Mount Zion.

One of the ways that the Letter to the Hebrews portrays Jesus is as the great high priest. Jesus has offered his own blood in an offering much more eloquent and effective than the offering of Abel. The people are all able to draw near in joy and confi-