

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #153

READING I Wisdom 11:22—12:2

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

You are telling God about the wonder of all his creation!

"But you . . ." conveys human amazement that God, so powerful, is willing to be so merciful.

God "overlooks" for a purpose—that we might repent!
Some ancient cultures believed God created both good *and* evil.

These rhetorical questions are meant to convey awe that God made and sustains all things in creation.

God not only loves creation, but God's "imperishable spirit" is *in* all things.

God does not shy from pointing out our shortcomings, but God's "rebuke" is a gift that leads to salvation.

Sustain eye contact through this final sentence. It is more a prayer than a declaration.

Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain
from a balance
or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth.
But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things;
and you overlook people's sins that they may repent.
For you love all things that are
and loathe nothing that you have made;
for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.
And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it;
or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?
But you spare all things, because they are yours,
O LORD and lover of souls,
for your imperishable spirit is in all things!
Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little,
warn them and remind them of the sins
they are committing,
that they may abandon their wickedness and believe
in you, O LORD!

READING I The Book of Wisdom was likely written in the first century before Christ to a Jewish audience living in Alexandria, Egypt. As the author, often referred to as Pseudo-Solomon, instructs them in their traditions and beliefs, he displays a profound knowledge of their Scriptures and skillfully presents them for his Hellenistic audience. Today's reading is taken from a lengthy section of the book in which Pseudo-Solomon speaks to God. As he addresses God, he is instructing his audience about the divine nature, the relationship of God with all of creation,

what his audience is to believe, and how they are to behave.

The reading begins by emphasizing God's grandeur; the universe itself is a mere grain in the balance or drop of the morning dew when compared to God. Immediately following this image of divine splendor and majesty is a tenderly personal view of God. The Lord shows mercy on all, loves everything that he has created, preserves and spares all things, simply because they belong to God. God's mercy on all creation, rather than being in opposition to divine grandeur, is actually a mani-

festation of it, as the author acclaims, "You have mercy on all, because you can do all things."

Woven into the beautiful portrait of God are signs of how God's people should live. They should repent of their sins, abandon wickedness and believe in the Lord God. They can expect God to rebuke them little by little. As God warns them and reminds them of their sins, they ought always to remember that God's mercy extends to all.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9, 10–11, 13, 14 (see 1)

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

I will extol you, O my God and King;
and I will bless your name forever
and ever.

Every day will I bless you;
and I will praise your name forever
and ever.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of
your Kingdom
and speak of your might.

The LORD is faithful in all his words
and holy in all his works.
The LORD lifts up all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.

READING II 2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2

A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

Brothers and sisters:

We always pray for you,
that our **God** may make you **worthy of his calling**
and powerfully bring to **fulfillment every good purpose**
and **every effort of faith,**
that the **name of our Lord Jesus** may be **glorified in you,**
and **you in him,**
in accord with the **grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.**

We ask you, brothers and sisters,
with regard to the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**
and our **assembling with him,**
not to be **shaken out of your minds suddenly,** or to be **alarmed**
either by a **“spirit,”** or by an **oral statement,**
or by a **letter allegedly from us**
to the effect that the **day of the Lord is at hand.**

Thessalonians = thes-uh-LOH-nee-uhnz

Pause after the salutation.

Give this the quality of an earnest prayer for
your own assembly.

Each phrase conveys a new idea; take your
time so you don't blur one into another.

Pause and take a breath before starting the
second sentence. This is the “business” at
hand that must now be addressed!

He's urging them not to be easily thrown off
by rumors and lies.

“The day of the Lord” is no small matter to
get wrong; correcting this misinformation is
essential.

READING II

At the beginning of his Second Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul offers a prayer of thanks to God for the community, grateful for the growth of their faith, and the increase of their love for one another. He adds another prayer in today's reading, telling the Thessalonians that he always prays for them, asking that God may make them worthy of their call. The God who called them to faith and communion in the beginning is the one who will bring their efforts to fulfillment. Paul reminds them that God's powerful action within them is not for their

sake alone, but so that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in them.

In the second part of the reading, Paul writes to correct their misunderstanding and apprehension about Jesus' coming (*parousia*). The Thessalonian Christians are being persecuted and afflicted with many trials. Such affliction was often seen as a sign of the end-times, and of God's final conquering of evil, referred to as the “Day of the Lord.” Paul had already written about the topic in his first letter to the community. In both letters, he writes to assuage their worry, alarm, and exaggerated focus

on Christ's future coming. Those who, unlike Paul, claim that the day of the Lord is at hand are creating fear, not hope. Paul's emphasis is on abiding faith, vibrant love, participation in Christ's death and Resurrection in the present, and being conformed to him. That is the best way to be prepared for Christ's future coming.

GOSPEL

The story of Zacchaeus and Jesus is replete with picturesque details, beginning with the depiction of Zacchaeus himself. As the chief tax collector, he would be despised by the crowds