

TWENTYFIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIOINARY #119

READING I Proverbs 9:1-6

A reading from the Book of Proverbs

Wisdom has built her house,

she has set up her seven columns;

she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine,

yes, she has spread her table.

She has sent out her maidens; she calls

from the heights out over the city:

"Let whoever is simple turn in here";

to the one who lacks understanding, she says,

"Come, eat of my food,

and drink of the wine I have mixed!

Forsake foolishness that you may live;

advance in the way of understanding."

Wisdom is personified as a female and acts on her own volition. Accenting the verbs gives a sense of active preparation. This is a lavish feast.

Read the responsorial psalm. "Tasting" the Lord's goodness echoes Wisdom's invitation to satisfy the hunger for wise and righteous living.

For meditation and context:

I will bless the LORD at all times;

his praise shall be ever in my mouth.

Let my soul glory in the LORD;

the lowly will hear me and be glad.

Gloryify the LORD with me,

let us together extol his name.

I sought the LORD, and he answered me

and delivered me from all my fears.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7 (9a)

Look to him that you may be radiant

with joy,

and your faces may not blush with shame.

When the poor one called out, the

LORD heard,

and from all his distress he saved him.

READING I

Aimed at training individuals as future public servants—that is, as educated aids for (Judean) royal court officials—the book of Proverbs opens with nine chapters that explore the potential pitfalls and delights of such service. Proverbs 9 concludes the initial section of the book with a flurry of robust imagery that figuratively depicts personal-wisdom orchestrating a sumptuous, well-prepared banquet. The imagery blends elements from the life of learning undertaken by future public servants with the ultimate promise their study, dining at the

table of the king. The passage poses a multi-faceted allure for young, would-be scholars interested in public service. Wisdom herself is appealing. She knows how to party in a refined, orderly manner. She establishes a refined context (the seven columns) and presents the finest cuisine. She also offers much in the way of intangibles: understanding, elegance, decorum, and the means of ridding oneself of foolishness. In sum, she offers maturity. Wisdom also has attendants, servants of her own, who are well-mannered and obligate their mistress. They follow her direction to speak of how growth in refinement (maturity) comes about. Accordingly, it makes for a robust context in which to

READING II Ephesians 5:15-20

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Ephesians = ee-FEE-zhuhnz

Paul has an urgency to this text. He lays out instructions to maximize every opportunity.

debauchery = dih-BAW-chuh-ree

Notice the Trinitarian nature of the reading.

Display a joyful countenance to evoke the sense of "singing and playing."

The Bread of Life Discourse continues.

Reread the Gospel readings from the

last two or three Sundays to gain a better

context for this week's reading.

Jesus restates his claim multiple times;

he is very clear. Don't rush through his words.

They draw our attention to the Eucharist

that will be celebrated later during Mass.

The people discussed Jesus' claim

among themselves. Deliver the question

deliberately and with an upward inflection

to convey their confusion.

ponder the meaning and implications of today's passage from Ephesians and Christ's claims in the Gospel.

READING II

Last Sunday, Ephesians called for imitating God by loving and being loved by others. This Sunday a similar exhortation comes by way of a call to act cautiously. Living out Christian love involves avoiding foolishness and taking every opportunity to live wisely, in order to act in this manner, Christians must seek to understand the Lord's will. That is, living in Christian love entails

GOSPEL

When Jesus announces, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever," he confounds his audience by further specifying this banquet naturally overflow with love for others.

This, Ephesians imagines, pours forth from lives and his desires for our lives. We must apply our minds to the work of learning the Lord's mind. At the same time, Ephesians also points out that we must practice virtues. By acting with prudence and applying caution, our behaviors stand to align with and direct us toward our pursuit of the Lord. A life of excess, exemplified in the reading by drunkenness, leads away from the Lord. Instead, Ephesians calls for being filled with the Spirit. When our desire for nourishment is sated by the Spirit, we then naturally overflow with love for others.

Jesus said to the crowds: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John GOSPEL John 6:51-58

Jesus clarifies, though he doesn't answer their question of "how"; instead he focuses on "why";

Jesus said to them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink
his blood,
you do not have life within you.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.
For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him.
Just as the living Father sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me
will have life because of me.
This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Jesus describes the intimate connections between God the Father, Jesus himself, and us. You may need to slow down to ensure that all of these relationships are clearly articulated. These relationships are enduring.

imagery: "the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The demand of what Jesus' teaching means immediately catapults his audience into a squabble. Jesus avoids their questions and doubles down on his claim. His audience is to consume his flesh and blood, which are true food and true drink. The emphasis on wisdom in today's other readings invites focus on the word "true." What does the Lord mean when he calls his flesh and blood "true"? Appeal to the manna eaten by the ancestors in the wilderness illuminates his point. That food, although divinely

provided, did not spare the people from death. To consume something provided by God is not enough to attain eternal life. More is needed. Life eternal calls for consuming God. Jesus is speaking of ultimate things. The wisdom of the banquet of his body and blood, therefore, is not simply about human nourishment. His "true" food does not simply fill our mouths and stomachs for meaningful social interaction (as at Wisdom's meal in Proverbs). Nor is the Lord's body and blood solely spiritual food, though it does fill us with the Spirit to give thanks to the Lord (as in Ephesians). The banquet of Jesus' body and blood—the true food and true drink of God—draws us through death into resurrection and the fullness of eternal life. To be filled with his body and blood is to be filled with life eternal, to experience lasting nourishment within, to enjoy the promise of resurrection, and to remain in him. E.W.