

# TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY # 143

### READING I Wisdom 7:7-11

#### A reading from the Book of Wisdom

I prayed, and prudence was given me;  
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

I preferred her to scepter and throne,

and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,

nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;

because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,

and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.

Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,

and I chose to have her rather than the light,

because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.

Yet all good things together came to me in her company,  
and countless riches at her hands.

The wise person is humble, admitting that  
wisdom is a gift.  
"Scepter and throne" mean nothing;  
Speak dismissively.

Use a tender tone when talking of one's love  
of wisdom; it is honored above all else.

For meditation and context:

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17 (14)

#### R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Teach us to number our days aright,  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.

Return, O Lord! How long?

Have pity on your servants!

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,  
that we may shout for joy and gladness all

our days.

Make us glad, for the days when you

afflicted us,  
for the years when we saw evil.

### READING I

The wisdom that comes  
from the Spirit is, first and  
foremost, a gift. To accept it we must pray.

By repeatedly mentioning that he prayed  
and pleaded for wisdom, the author of the  
Book of Wisdom indicates that receiving  
the Spirit's gift of wisdom calls for a habit  
of intercessory prayer. Asking once is not  
enough. Just as repeating any behavior  
makes us better at it and more inclined to  
do it, repeating our requests for wisdom  
makes us more receptive to it and enhances  
our ability to embrace it. In addition to  
becoming more receptive of wisdom by

repeatedly praying for it, such repetition  
makes us more *appreciative* of this gift. The  
author of Wisdom shows us this truth by  
stating that, once wisdom came to him, he  
preferred it above all other things. Power,  
wealth, health, light, and even sleep became  
pale in comparison to wisdom for him. But  
preferring wisdom to the things that others  
might consider valuable does not leave  
the author of Wisdom destitute. Quite the  
opposite. All good things come to him on  
account of keeping company with wisdom.  
Thus, wisdom is a gift that ushers in other

### READING II

gifts and should therefore be prioritized  
above those things that are passing.

Words, while invisible,  
are powerful. They point  
beyond themselves to truths and realities  
outside the material universe. With words  
we can take on a new status, enter into  
new states of being, or disclose who we  
are and what we are about. To profess mar-  
riage vows, for example, transforms us into  
married persons. Through them we take on  
a new status within the community of the  
baptized. At the same time, when threats,

READING II Hebrews 4:12-13

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

Indeed the word of God is living and effective,

sharper than any two-edged sword,

penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,

and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

No creature is concealed from him,

but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him

to whom we must render an account.

For those who proclaim God's Word during

Mass, this short pericope is especially

meaningful. The author is teaching us the

performative power of the Word of God.

We have a great privilege and responsibility.

Notice all of the parallel constructions:

living/effective, soul/spirit, joints/marrow,

reflections/thoughts. Keep them together.

Give some excitement to the opening scene:

ran, knelt, asked. The man is breathless

and excited to ask Jesus for his wisdom.

He is unnamed, he could be any of us.

Emphasize "not" once and then subdue it

when it is repeated. The words that follow

"not" will stand out.

Let the tenderness of Jesus "looking" and

"loving" come through in your proclamation.

Be familiar enough with this line to deliver

it looking out at the assembly.

Pause after "come." Notice that even his

followers will have difficulty understanding

Jesus' teaching.

decorum, or confidentiality call for restrained speech, words permit us to conceal and protect others or ourselves. Such protective use of words governs the seal of confession. So, when Hebrews announces that God's word is living and powerful, we get a sense of what is meant simply by looking to everyday uses of words in our lives. Still, when the word belongs to God, the scope of its power is greater and more precise. As Hebrews notes, God's word penetrates to the depths of our being—"between soul and spirit, joints and marrow"—to the core of our heart, to our innermost thoughts.

GOSPEL

conveys God's wisdom to us.

awe before the power of God's word, which

above all other gifts, Hebrews places us in

of wisdom and learn to appreciate wisdom

wisdom invites us to invoke God for the gift

account for ourselves to God. If the Book of

unavoidable reality: we must render an

nerable, unable to hide, and faced with an

When God speaks, we are made totally vul-

an avid follower of it. As Jesus recites vari-

ous commandments governing murder,

adultery, theft, perjury, fraud, and parental

honor, the man confidently professes to

have followed God's commands on all these

matters from his youth. In his profession,

the man tacitly claims to be a good, loyal

son, which was itself a matter of legal con-

cern (see Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy

21:18-21). Thus, we sense from the man's

fervent behavior—*running* up to Jesus,

*kneeling* down before him, *honoring* him

with the title "Good Teacher"—and his

habit of legal obedience that this man will

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

GOSPEL Mark 10:17-30

[As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up,

knelt down before him, and asked him,

"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good?

No one is good but God alone.

You know the commandments: You shall not kill,

you shall not commit adultery;

you shall not steal;

you shall not bear false witness;

you shall not defraud;

honor your father and your mother."

He replied and said to him,

"Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him,

"You are lacking in one thing.

Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor

and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

At that statement his face fell,

and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,

"How hard it is for those who have wealth

to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were amazed at his words.

So Jesus again said to them in reply,

"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle

than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves,

"Then who can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said,

"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God.

All things are possible for God."

Peter began to say to him,

"We have given up everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,

there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters

or mother or father or children or lands

for my sake and for the sake of the gospel

who will not receive a hundred times more now in this

present age:

houses and brothers and sisters

and mothers and children and lands,

with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

[Shorter: Mark 10:17-27 (see brackets)]

In the context of the Bible's wisdom claims that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, the man and Jesus' disciples are flummoxed. If not the rich, then who? Echoing the first readings' reminder that wisdom is, first of all, a gift, Jesus reminds his disciples that salvation law. Moreover, such wisdom was not acquired through his commitment to the incommensurate with wealth. In fact, as the first reading suggests, wisdom gives rise to wealth. So, the man's many possessions may well have indicated his vast wisdom. And, with such wisdom, he would have already made significant advances on the path to eternal life. Thus, when the Lord

stop at nothing to obtain eternal life. His investment makes him admirable. He is more than a student of God's will. He does it. So, based on his behavior and his testimony, we anticipate that whatever Jesus might demand of him, he will do it. But something else happens. When Jesus looks at the man, loves him, and invites him to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and then follow Jesus on his journey, the man becomes somber (*stugnazo* in Greek) and departs in sorrow (*lupoe* in Greek). He abandons his quest for eternal life on account of having many possessions.

Peter "began," as if interrupted. Read his defensive response hurriedly and then return to Jesus' calm teaching voice.

They ask each other, yet Jesus responds.