

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

For who can learn the counsel of God?
Or who can discern what the Lord wills?
For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail;
for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.
We can hardly guess at what is on earth,
and what is at hand we find with labour;
but who has traced out what is in the heavens?
Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?
And thus the paths of those on earth were set right,
and people were taught what pleases you,
and were saved by wisdom.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to Philemon.

***pronounced* FIGH-LEE-MUHN**

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

I, Paul, do this as an old man,
and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.
I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus,
whose father I have become during my imprisonment.
I am sending him,
that is, my own heart,
back to you.
I wanted to keep him with me,
so that he might be of service to me in your place
during my imprisonment for the Gospel;
but I preferred to do nothing without your consent,
in order that your good deed might be voluntary
and not something forced.
Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while,
so that you might have him back forever,
no longer as a slave but more than a slave,
a beloved brother –
especially to me but how much more to you,
both in the flesh and in the Lord.
So if you consider me your partner,
welcome him as you would welcome me.

Onesimus = oh-**NESS**-e-muhs

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say **SLOWLY**:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – C 23

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus;
and he turned and said to them,
“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother,
spouse and children, brothers and sisters,
yes, and even life itself,
cannot be my disciple.
Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me
cannot be my disciple.
For which of you,
intending to build a tower,
does not first sit down and estimate the cost,
to see whether he has enough to complete it?
Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish,
all who see it will begin to ridicule him,
saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’
Or what king,
going out to wage war against another king,
will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand
to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?
If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away,
he sends a delegation
and asks for the terms of peace.
So therefore, whoever of you does not give up all their possessions
cannot be my disciple.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Wisdom 9:13-18b

This is part of the prayer that the Book of Wisdom puts on the lips of Solomon. The earliest version of Solomon's prayer is in 1 Kings 3:6-9, where he prays for "understanding." Then comes 2 Chronicles 1:9-10, where he prays for "wisdom" to help him in performing the duties of kingship.

The author of Wisdom expands on this point and enunciates the doctrine that the will of God can only be discerned by the help of wisdom and the Spirit of God—the parallelism suggesting that the two concepts are synonymous.

While verse 15 recalls Plato's *Phaedo*, the author does not teach a non-biblical dualism of body/soul. The body is a hindrance to the knowledge of God's will, not the seat of evil. It is its finite, not evil, character that is its drawback.

Only God's Spirit, or wisdom, enables us to transcend that finitude.

Responsorial Psalm: 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14-17

Verses 3-6, from the first part of the psalm, point up the contrast between God's eternity and human mortality. Compare this with the first part of the first reading.

Verses 12-14, 17 come from the second half of the psalm, which is a prayer for God's favor as a compensation for human beings' fleeting life, so that despite their transitoriness their work may prosper.

The prayer for wisdom in verse 12 recalls Solomon's prayer.

Reading II: Philemon 9-10, 12-17

The letter to Philemon is the only personal letter of Paul that has survived. Onesimus, a slave who had run away from his master, Philemon, a Christian of Colossae, had joined Paul where the latter was in prison (Rome is the traditional view; Ephesus is popular today because of the distances involved: Colossae-Ephesus rather than Colossae-Rome).

Under Paul's influence, Onesimus had become a Christian. In sending him back to his master, Paul commends him as "no longer a slave but a brother."

Paul did not thereby abolish slavery (that would have been impossible for the ancient world) but transformed the relationship between master and slave. Not until the nineteenth century did the Christian conscience come to realize that slavery as an institution is wrong.

Paul drew what consequences he could from his principle that in Christ there is neither slave nor free. Future generations will have to give their own implementation to that principle in the light of their concrete situation.

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

This Gospel consists of a string of sayings on the cost of discipleship, followed by two parables to illustrate the necessity of facing that cost (the tower-builder and the king going to war).

“Hate” (Lk 14:26) is harsh. It has been suggested that the original Aramaic meant simply “love less than.” But this in turn is probably too weak. The real meaning is that following Jesus means the surrender of the whole of one’s life.

Then, as we have already noted in an earlier passage, the disciple receives back from Christ those aspects of the old life that are now needed to provide the context in which the claims of discipleship have to be worked out.

The saying in verse 27 does not mean that all true disciples must be martyrs in the literal sense. Yet, martyrdom is discipleship carried to its ultimate conclusion. Hence the honor the Church has always paid to its martyrs.

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