

# *Gratitude Foundation*

---



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

**The Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B**

---

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret  
Executive Director

[www.gratitudefoundation.us](http://www.gratitudefoundation.us)  
[frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us](mailto:frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us)

3713 County 416 20th Road  
Gladstone, MI 49837

*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B

## Reading 1

### Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

The wicked say:

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us;  
he sets himself against our doings,  
reproaches us for transgressions of the law  
and charges us with violations of our training.

Let us see whether his words be true;  
let us find out what will happen to him.

For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him  
and deliver him from the hand of his foes.

With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test  
that we may have proof of his gentleness  
and try his patience.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death;  
for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8

R. (6b) **The Lord upholds my life.**

O God, by your name save me,  
and by your might defend my cause.

O God, hear my prayer;  
hearken to the words of my mouth.

R. **The Lord upholds my life.**

For the haughty men have risen up against me,  
the ruthless seek my life;  
they set not God before their eyes.

R. **The Lord upholds my life.**

Behold, God is my helper;  
the Lord sustains my life.

Freely will I offer you sacrifice;  
I will praise your name, O LORD, for its goodness.

R. **The Lord upholds my life.**

## Reading 2

### James 3:16—4:3

Beloved:

Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist,  
there is disorder and every foul practice.  
But the wisdom from above is first of all pure,  
then peaceable, gentle, compliant,  
full of mercy and good fruits,  
without inconstancy or insincerity.  
And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace  
for those who cultivate peace.

Where do the wars  
and where do the conflicts among you come from?  
Is it not from your passions  
that make war within your members?  
You covet but do not possess.  
You kill and envy but you cannot obtain;  
you fight and wage war.  
You do not possess because you do not ask.  
You ask but do not receive,  
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

## Alleluia

### Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

God has called us through the Gospel  
to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

# Gospel

## Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it.

He was teaching his disciples and telling them,  
“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men  
and they will kill him,  
and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”  
But they did not understand the saying,  
and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house,  
he began to ask them,  
“What were you arguing about on the way?”  
But they remained silent.  
They had been discussing among themselves on the way  
who was the greatest.  
Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them,  
“If anyone wishes to be first,  
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”  
Taking a child, he placed it in their midst,  
and putting his arms around it, he said to them,  
“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me;  
and whoever receives me,  
receives not me but the One who sent me.”

# Exegesis

## Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

During the Diaspora a large contingent of Jewish people settled in Alexandria and remained there after the Exile. It is from this community that the *Book of Wisdom*, also known as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, emerged approximately 100 years before the birth of Jesus. The author displays a deep knowledge of prior Old Testament writings. The author is writing in Greek and is immersed in an increasingly secular Hellenistic culture. The focus of the author is a growing polemic between the godly and the ungodly, between the wise and the wicked. The community of faith is facing increasing opposition and oppression at the hands of the secularists and apostate fellow Jews.

Our passage today is taken from a section that is entitled *The Wicked Reject Immortality and Justice Alike*. The wicked are those who believe the following: “For haphazard we were born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had not been: Because the breath of our nostrils is a smoke and reason is a spark at the beating of our hearts, and when this is quenched, our body will be ashes, and our spirit will be poured abroad like unresisting air.” (Wis 2:2-3).

The wise or godly are defined by the ungodly in the omitted verses 2:13-16 as follows: “He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the Lord. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; merely to see him is a hardship for us. He judges us abased; he holds aloof from our path as from things impure. He calls blessed the destiny of the just and boasts that God is his Father. (Wis 2:13-16).

The wicked or ungodly are set as a stark contrast against the wise and godly who believe that God is the giver and sustainer of life, and that life is eternal. The wise believe that it is not mere smoke that entered our nostrils but the life breath of God. They believe that “the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.” (Gen 2:7). Therefore, they do not believe that life was by chance or haphazard. The wise believe that reason is not from a random spark of the heart but is a gift from God, the Eternal Logos, the Divine Mind. It is out of God’s own choice that we live and move and have being. Life is pure gift. Because God is the source of life, life is eternal. “For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of His own nature He made Him.” (Wis 2:23).

Our pericope today captures the contempt of the wicked for the just or the wise. “Let us beset the just one because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings.” (Wis 2:12). Those immersed in sinful designs are not willing to embrace the changes that a godly way of life would necessitate. In subsequent verses the author explains the error of the wicked: “These were their thoughts, but they erred; for their wickedness blinded them, and they knew not the hidden counsels of God... But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.” (Wis 2:21-24).

In verse 24, the final verse of Chapter 2 the author reveals the devil as the underlying influence on the wicked and the ungodly. The author goes so far as to say that they are in the devil’s possession. The response of the wicked to the lives of the wise and godly people might be compared to exposure to bright light after being in a darkened state for a long period of time, it is painful to the eyes. The light of God, the light of goodness, justice and love convicts those living in darkness and sin. Truth and piety is obnoxious to the impious.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8

Psalm 54 is entitled *Confident Prayer in Great Peril*. Like our passage from the *Book of Wisdom* the psalmist bemoans the ungodly seeking to destroy the godly. Verses 1 and 2 reference the Ziphites surrendering David to Saul. “For the leader on stinged instruments. A *maskil* (hymn) of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, ‘David is hiding among us’”.

The prayer of the psalmist is for God to protect them against the ungodly who seek to destroy their lives. The prayer is for God to be present as helper and protector against evil forces that seek to destroy life. *The Book of Wisdom* (Wis 2:24) reminds us that it is through the devil that death entered the world. It is through the forces of evil that people are spiritually blinded to the Truth. Through the cunningness of the devil, through a myriad of deceit and treachery the devil distracts from and veils things of God. The path to life becomes dark and murky. We need the light of Christ to enlighten us and to fill us with wisdom to guide us on the way.

### James 3:16—4:3

Our passage today from *James* is the continuation of a section beginning with verse 3:13 that is titled *True Wisdom*. Verses 13-15 are as follows: “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom of this kind does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”

James contrasts earthly “wisdom” with true wisdom that comes from above, i.e. God. The earthly “wisdom” that flows from our fallen human nature is folly. Folly misleads the human heart and fuels the inner errant desires that are self-serving. St. Augustine called these wayward desires *concupiscence*. The opposing force enlightened by true wisdom, i.e. Divine Illumination, Augustine referred to as *caritas*. *Caritas* is love, authentic self-giving love. God is love. And so, God is the source.



## Exegesis (Continued)

### Mark 9:30-37

Our Gospel pericope today begins with what is entitled *The Second Prediction of the Passion*, (vs 30-32) and is concluded with a section titled *The Greatest in the Kingdom*. (vs 33-37). Placed together they provide a striking contrast between thinking as God thinks and thinking as human beings think, i.e., self-giving love versus self-serving love.

Jesus tells His apostles again that He will be handed over into the hands of men. The key word is *paradidotai* (“be handed over”). The passive voice leaves open the identity of the agent. On the historical level, of course, the agent is Judas, who is described in 3:19 as “the one who handed Him over.” On the theological level, however, the verb *paradidotai* evokes the idea of the divine plan unfolding (see Isa 53:6, 16). From 9:31 onward the verb becomes increasingly prominent (see 10:33; 13:9, 11, 142; 14:140, 11, 18, 21, 41, 42, 44; 15:1, 10, 15) with reference to the suffering of Jesus and His disciples. Its recurrence promotes the concept that God is the real agent behind the Passion and that everything proceeds according to God’s will.<sup>1</sup>

*He will rise after three days.* In each of the three accounts of the prediction of the Passion Jesus tells His apostles that He will rise from the dead. Every bible that I have seen entitled these pericopes as the *Prediction of the Passion*. The fact that they don’t mention the resurrection in the title is again indicative of human thinking versus thinking as God thinks. We naturally stop short in our thinking and fail to link eternal life with death. Death in our human thought process has a finality to it. In the eyes of God all are alive. In our eyes some appear to be dead.

Engulfed in human thinking the apostles are arguing about who is the greatest among them. They live in a culture where honor and societal status are held in high esteem. Again, this line of thinking comes natural to every human being. The proximity to Jesus talking about His Passion make the conversation even more shocking. It highlights the density and distortedness of our fallen human nature. We need the enlightenment of Christ and His teaching, and the power of God’s grace to overcome the murky waters of this life.

Jesus places an innocent child in their midst and invites them to welcome the child, and to do so will be to welcome Jesus, Himself. The child has nothing to give in return. The child had no social status in the ancient world. Perhaps the message goes even deeper. It is through the vulnerable and unstained heart of a child that we can welcome Christ. Jesus also said we must become childlike to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus wants us to connect with the inner child in each of us. He wants us to embrace our foundational roots, the ground of our being, the life breath of God. Then we will be able to think and know as God thinks and knows, through the prism of authentic love.

---

1. Donahue, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series, The Gospel of Mark; L.P.; MN.; page 283.

## Reflection

In recent weeks the Word of God has focused on the gift; the Primacy of Grace, the overwhelming gift of God's Love, pouring into our world through Christ and through His Church into our lives. The message turned then to the opening of the door of our hearts to receive that love. The gift is only a gift once it is received. Now the Word of God turns to our living in the "house" of God's divine life. The Word of God is now leading us deeply into the mystery of God's indwelling presence and what that means for us. The indwelling life of God is the ground of our being, the source of our existence, shared at the deepest level with every human being. The Holy Spirit, as we recite in our creed every Sunday, is the Lord and giver of life. God is the giver and sustainer of a life that is eternal, i.e. it has a beginning but has no end.

Moreover, the indwelling presence of God is the source of our desire for God. St. Augustine articulated well this natural desire for God when he wrote those famous words in the first chapter of his *Confessions*: "You created us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." The great saint went on to teach that it is the indwelling abiding presence of the Risen Lord that lives in the deepest part of our souls that is drawing us to the Father. It is part of Christ's act of redemption. It is love of the Son seeking union with the Father. This indwelling supernatural desire is pulling us toward ultimate love, beauty, truth and goodness.

St. James in our second reading this weekend reminds us of our need for "wisdom from above". It is the indwelling presence of God that will enlighten our hearts. St. Augustine referred to this as *Divine Illumination*. Jesus challenged St. Peter in last weekend's Gospel to think and know as God knows and not merely as human beings think and know. St. Paul refers to it as "putting on the heart and mind of Christ." All are saying the same thing, we need the indwelling enlightenment of God to guide our way through this murky world. We live in a world darkened by sin. Our inner passions are deeply affected by the stain of original sin. Our inner passions are at war, and we need God's grace to harness and guide those passions.

Jesus is calling each one of us to live life to the fullest, to live life with passion and exuberance. Jesus is calling us to be pure and undefiled as a little child, to be open, trusting and authentic. Then if we allow Jesus to open our hearts to the inner force of His passionate love our lives will be changed. All the disordered, negative, dark passions that St. James talks about are redirected toward the good. Imagine if all the negative energy in the world could be redirected toward acts of kindness and love! This is the goal of the Christian life. Together we can make a difference. And so, we pray, come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,





## Personal Witness

I had a wise elderly deacon in one of my parishes that used to always say, when talking about society in general, “we are like a people on a journey who have forgotten where we are going.” I certainly can confirm that as I see a listlessness in our culture. We certainly seem to have lost our moral compass as well. Our nation was built on a foundation of Judeo-Christian values. We seem to have lost our moorings and are drifting out of control. Moreover, on an even deeper level we seem to have forgotten where we have come from. Perhaps we are like a people on a journey who have forgotten where we are going and have forgotten or have never really known where we have come from.

The *Book of Wisdom* contrasts the wise and godly with the unwise and ungodly, i.e. those who hold the belief that life is the result of some random chance, and that life ends abruptly at biological death. The result of this flawed thinking is an absence of meaning and purpose. Such a life can have no inherent and enduring significance. It is a life that becomes inherently ego centric. The ego centric world breeds a sense of entitlement and narcissism. The journey of life is by its very nature quite literally a dead-end journey.

I once heard a story about a young couple who had just returned from the hospital with their second child, a girl that they named Ameilia. Their first child was a boy named Joey who was now 3 ½ years old. Within a couple of days Joey posed a rather strange request to his parents. He requested to be alone with his little sister for a few moments. The parents obliged his request, allowed him in her room alone, but out of curiosity turned on the baby monitor to listen in. Joey got really close to his little sister and whispered, “Amelia, tell me about God. I am starting to forget.”

My experience working with children over the years is that they are profoundly spiritual. They seem to have a direct line of communication with God. Their natural innocence, their unvarnished authenticity, their openness and vulnerability, result in an uncluttered channel of communication to the one who is the Truth. They remain close to their origin, still connected to the ground of their being.

Then life happens. The journey of life, with our God given freewill, allows us to stray farther and farther from God, our primordial foundation. I was once on that road drifting from God. The busyness of life, the focus on day-to-day living, engulfed in the materialistic concentration of my generation, led me further from God than I ever thought possible. It was not a conscious movement on my part, but more of a passive neglect of my spiritual life. A deep emptiness led me to turn back to God. I now deeply regret those years of drifting, but I am forever grateful for the grace of God, working through a few good disciples, that brought me back.

My prayer is that we can all help God’s children, especially those who are lost, to rediscover their roots and find the wisdom of God to lead and guide their lives. May God help us to be His good and worthy servants. Amen.

