



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, we believe that Jesus Christ is your Only Begotten Son and, through Him, we have eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ known, may we always abide in Your love and find our place with You in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

The reading from Wisdom takes up where last week's prophecy from Isaiah was professed. The theme is the same: The one to come (the Lord) will suffer and be put to death.

Again, the theme fits with the Gospel this week where Jesus predicts His own suffering and death, as well as His vindication (He will rise).

The Book of Wisdom takes on an added twist (as compared to Isaiah). In this reading, Wisdom has the wicked plot to put the "just one" to the test. While Isaiah and Wisdom share the same motif (suffering, death, and vindication), Wisdom wants to test out the prophecy. The wicked say, "Let us find out what will happen to him."

As Christians, we know the whole story. We understand that this prophetic motif was fulfilled and, in part, by those who plotted against Him. The rest of this prophecy (His vindication) was fulfilled by God alone.

Question

Have you ever tried to put God to the test?

Commentary

2nd Reading: James 3:16-4:3

In our first reading, it is the wicked who plot against the just one. Why is it that they would want to do such a thing?

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our reading from St. James gives us a clue. It reads, "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice."

The wicked are not born wicked. They are born to be as God had created them to be and nothing more or less.

Wickedness comes from the desire to be something that we are not.

Beginning with Satan himself — Adam and Eve too — who wanted "to be like God," wickedness and sinfulness are born out of jealousy. To the jealous, St. James warns, "You covet but do not possess."

The general theme for our 6 week reflection has been, "Who Am I?" If I acknowledge my true identity (who I am), I have no need to be jealous. I am as God created me to be — nothing more and nothing less — "without inconstancy or insincerity," as St. James writes.

Question

Are you satisfied with who you are? Or, would you rather be someone that you are not?

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Commentary

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

Jesus is more than satisfied with His identity. He knows who He is and, because of that, He knows where He is going. On his way to Jerusalem, we read, “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.”

When we know who we are, we know where we are going.

The Apostles do “not understand the saying” of Jesus because they neither understand their own identity nor where they are going. This is made evident when Jesus catches them “discussing among themselves on the way who is the greatest.”

“Jealousy and self-ambition,” as St. James writes, does indeed exist. These Apostles are vying for greatness, even as Jesus reveals His own humility. Once again, Jesus offers them a lesson, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” Jesus — who is God — has accepted his true identity to be “the servant of all.”

Question

When we know who we are then we know our purpose and mission. Do you know your mission?

This Week's Task

When was the last time you were on a retreat? When was the last time you had a spiritual day for yourself?

Disrupting your busy life with a spiritual walk in the park, or a few days of retreat at a monastery will help you discover and rediscover who you are as a Christian and where we are going.

Set a time in your calendar for a retreat or days of reflection in the next year. You need it!

Prayer

The group prays together the following:

Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow You.

Forgive me for choosing daily to be COMPLACENT.

Forgive me for the times I have tried to make carrying my cross more COMFORTABLE.

Forgive me for the times I have not followed you because it wasn't CONVENIENT.

Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow You.

Shake me of my complacency. Strip me of my comforts. May my love for You be a driving force to live with joyful surrender.

Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow you.

The prayer continues with Psalm 54

Psalm

Response: 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.

Conclude with an Our Father