

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
2020—A Cycle Readings



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Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Exception: In the course of these reflections, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

[A Prayer for Wisdom and Direction](#)

Father in heaven, I know you love me.
You faithfully and caringly reach out,
even when I wander in the wrong direction.
Help me to be sensitive to your guidance.
Allow me to realize when I've gone off-track.
Please, don't let confusions, fears, and doubts
haunt me and harden my heart . . .
to stop seeking *your* plan and direction for my life.
Help me stay on the right course.
Give me wisdom to make right choices
and uphold the right values.
Amen.

Introduction to the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of this week's readings is our call to wisdom (seeing reality as it truly is). We live in a time of misplaced wisdom, tempted as we are to replace wise discourse with a divisive "me versus you" battle. We want others to "declare us *right*," no matter how *wrong* we are. This week's scriptures take us to the Book of Wisdom of

Solomon, and from there to Psalm 63, then First Thessalonians, climaxing with Jesus' parable of the "wise" and "foolish" bridesmaids. The inspired writers' plea throughout? Think before acting. Seek advice, even when we "*know for sure*" that we are right.

Readings:

Book of Wisdom of Solomon 6: 12-16 "Whoever watches for (wisdom) at dawn shall not be disappointed."

Early Judaism commonly attributed the "Wisdom Books" to David's son, King Solomon (990-931 BC/BCE), born of Bathsheba (get the whole sordid story in [II Samuel 11: 1-17](#)). The author pretends to be Solomon, putting his own call to wisdom on Solomon's lips.

Psalm 63: 2-8 "O God, you are my God whom I seek."

The psalmist (not David) seeks total immersion in Yahweh, including all our daily relationships and encounters—during the daytime and in the night, waking or sleeping.

First Thessalonians 4: 13-18 "We do not want you to be unaware . . . about those who have fallen asleep."

Some of Paul's early converts in Thessalonica mistakenly think the "second coming" of Christ will happen in their own lifetimes. Some even refuse to work and earn a living. Instead, they'll just wait for the "end times" to come. When Paul hears that some of them expect not to live to a ripe old age and die, he writes to correct their thinking. He assures them Jesus might not come when *they* expect. His message to them? Carry on with your daily lives, as normal. Let God decide when the "end times" will come.

Matthew 25: 1-13 "So stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour." Jesus offers his listeners a graphic parable about the wisdom of planning ahead and acting, rather than living a moment to moment lifestyle . . . depending on others to rescue them from their spiritual shortsightedness.

A Reading from the Book of Wisdom of Solomon (12: 2-4, 9-14)

"Wisdom is luminous and never tarnished; she willingly lets herself be seen by those who love her and known by those who look for her. She hastens to meet those who long for her. Seek her in the morning and you will not be disappointed; you will find her sitting at your door.

"To meditate on Wisdom is understanding fully grown. Whoever is on the watch for her will be free of anxiety. She goes in search of those who are worthy of her, graciously meets them on the way, and is present in their every thought."

Personal Reflection

“Whoever is on the watch for (wisdom) will be free of anxiety.”

— *What evidence of wisdom do I find in myself? In my family and other relationships? How do I display wisdom in my overall view of the world?*

— *Can I recall a particular time when I failed to act wisely? What was the situation? How did it turn out? What did I learn from that experience?*

Antiphon: Psalm 63 (2-8)

The psalmist longs for God.

Listen to “[Psalm 63](#)” sung by [Darryl Ducote](#) (on YouTube)

My soul is thirsting for you, my God.

O God, you are my God, it is you I seek;
for you, my body longs and my soul thirsts,
as a dry and weary land without water.

My soul is thirsting for you, my God.

Thus have I gazed upon you in the Sanctuary,
to see your power and your glory.
Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
lift up my hands and call on your name.

My soul is thirsting for you, my God.

As with the richest food, my soul will feast;
my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.
When I remember you on my bed,
I think of you all through the night,
for you have been my help;
I sing in the shadow of your wings.

My soul is thirsting for you, my God.

Personal Reflection

“Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live.”

— *In my daily life, how aware am I of Yahweh’s surrounding presence to and within me, whether at work, at ease, eating or sleeping? In church and in the “marketplace”?*

— *What obstacles do I face in seeking total immersion in God, as the psalmist prays? What do I need to do today to become more aware of God's loving, guiding presence to me, 24/7?*

From the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (4: 13-18)

“Brothers and sisters, we want you not to be mistaken about those who are already asleep, lest you grieve as do those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose; it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus. God will bring them together, with Jesus, and for his sake. By the same word of the Lord, we assert this: those of us who are to be alive at the Lord's coming, will not go ahead of those who are already asleep.

“When the command by the archangel's voice is given, the Lord himself will come down from heaven, while the divine trumpet call is sounding. Then, those who have died in the Lord, will rise first; as for us who are still alive, we will be brought along with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the celestial world. And we will be with the Lord forever. So then, comfort one another with these words.”

Personal Reflection

— *How do I imagine my own moment of death? Do I dread dying? Or look forward to it (but just not now, thank you)?*

(Comedian and filmmaker Woody Allen's famous quote on death is: "I'm not afraid of dying. I just want to be there when it happens.")

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (25: 1-13)

“This story throws light on what will happen in the kingdom of heaven:

“Ten bridesmaids went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were sensible. The careless bridesmaids took their lamps as they were and did not take extra oil. But those who were sensible, took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom delayed, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep.

“But at midnight, a cry rang out, ‘The bridegroom is here! Come out and meet him!’

“All the maidens woke up at once and trimmed their lamps. Then the foolish bridesmaids said to the sensible ones, ‘Give us some oil, because our lamps are going out.’

“The sensible ones answered, ‘There may not be enough for us and for you. You had better go to those who sell and buy some for yourselves.’

“When the bridegroom came, the foolish maidens were out buying oil, but those who were ready went with him into the wedding feast, and the doors were shut.

“Later, the other bridesmaids arrived and called out, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’

“But he answered, ‘Truly, I do not know you.’

“So stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

Personal Reflection

“So stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

This parable raises many questions for me to ponder.

— *Thinking back over my life, was there a moment when I regretted not planning better? Perhaps I made a shortsighted decision that didn't work out for me (and for others affected by my poor planning)? What did I learn from that situation? How prone am I to repeating faulty decisions?*

— *Were the “wise” bridesmaids selfish in denying help to those in need? How would I deal with this or a similar situation, if it occurred in my life? What point was Jesus making?*

— *Was it rude of the bridegroom not to grant them entry into the wedding banquet? How would I deal with this or a similar situation, if it occurred in my life? What point was Jesus making?*

Shelter-in-Place

Election Day has come and gone. At last! As in 2016, Roman Catholics differed on the morality of casting their votes for one or another presidential candidate and other state and local ballot items.

— *In casting my ballot, did I keep in mind that Jesus' only concerns are for justice, compassion, and the common good of all races, nationalities, genders, fiscal situations, religious beliefs, etc.?*

Our late pastor, Fr. Brian Joyce, left us this challenge: “What would Jesus want me to do?”

— *How sure am I that my voting decisions represented what Jesus wanted me to do?*

Write about your feelings and lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights have I gained from reflecting on this weekend's liturgical readings?

Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on this weekend's scriptures, what impresses me the most?*

We mustn't simply be grateful “recipients” of God's good gifts. We also need to “give back.”

— *How will this week's Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

For Inspirational Viewing / Reading

Videos:

“[The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom](#)” with [Susan Timoney](#), professor of pastoral studies, The Catholic University of America (2 min. on YouTube)

Music:

“[Wisdom: A Gift of the Holy Spirit](#),” by [Fr. Billy Swan](#)

Suggestion: If you have access to [Alexa](#) or another similar streaming device, here are some suggestions: “Alexa, play . . . Taizé . . . JohnMichael Talbot . . . the St. Louis Jesuits . . . Gregorian chant . . . or any other favorite spiritual songwriter/performer.

Books:

[Jerusalem, Jerusalem](#) by [James Carroll](#)

The history of Jerusalem and its impact on world history.

(I read this book in 2011, and gave it my highest rating. – AJG)

Preview of Next Session

33rd Week in Ordinary Time

Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31 “When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls.”

Psalms 128: 1-5 “Blessed are you who fear the Lord, who walk in (Yahweh’s) ways.”

First Thessalonians 5:1-6 “Let us not sleep as the rest do but let us walk in (the Lord’s) ways.”

Matthew 25: 14-30 “A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.”

Closing Prayer

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A Prayer for Godly Wisdom

Source: [Crosswalk](#) web site

Lord, thank you for the people you have placed in my life who speak holy truth, love, and words of wisdom.

Give me a heart of discernment to know when you are using someone to speak instruction into my heart and my circumstances and give me the strength and courage

to follow through with that advice, even when it's hard.
Fill me with peace in knowing that, even if I take a wrong turn,
your purpose will prevail.
I pray this in your Name.
Amen.

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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