

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2021—B Cycle



"Whoever welcomes a child in my name . . ."

Image courtesy of [Avel Chuklanov](#) on [unsplash](#)

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

A Prayer When I Struggle with Doubt

Lord, I believe in you.
I believe you are good.
I believe I am secure in you . . .
that I am hidden in you . . .
and no real harm can come to me
with you as my rock and my salvation.
I believe that you see me and you love me,
that I am treasured in your sight.

Help my unbelief.

Show me how to make *head* knowledge
become *heart* knowledge,
so my actions will reflect only those truths . . .
and not the lies the "enemy" throws at me.
Amen.

Source: [Crosswalk](#)

Scripture Readings

Wisdom 2: 12, 17-20 "If the just one be the son of God, God will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes."

Psalms 54: 3-8 "O God, by your name save me."

James 3: 16 to 4:3 "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice."

Mark 9: 30-37 “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be last of all and the servant of all.”

A Reading from the Book of Wisdom (2: 12, 17-20)

(The godless ones say to the righteous) “Let us set a trap for the righteous, for he annoys us and opposes our way of life; he reproaches us for our breaches of the law and accuses us of being false to our upbringing.

“Let us see the truth of what he says and find out what his end will be. If the righteous is a son of God, God will defend him and deliver him from his adversaries. Let us humble and torture him to prove his self-control and test his patience. When we have condemned him to a shameful death, we may test his words.”

Personal Reflection

The Book of Wisdom marked the first important effort to express the faith and wisdom of Israel in the Greek language. Also in a form adapted to Greek culture. Written in Egypt between 80 and 50 BC/BCE, the book’s author seems to be one of the many Jews scattered across the Greek-influenced world. Wisdom answers crucial questions of evil, pain, and death. It shows that God’s mercy extends to all beings without exception.

In the last centuries before Christ, Greek culture spread by Alexander the Great, penetrated into the countries of the Middle East. The Greeks had a new way of viewing nobility of spirit and the individual freedom. They promoted scientific research and highly esteemed the physical-spiritual beauty and the arts. Living in that environment, Jews had to be open to this new way of thinking.

For centuries Jews had linked their faith and lifestyle exclusively to their national culture. What went on beyond the borders of Israel held nothing of interest for them. That culture linked intimately to the word of Yahweh passed down to them since Moses and the return of the exiles (over 1,000 years). By the time the Book

of Wisdom appeared within a predominantly Greek world, Hebraic culture could no longer isolate itself. The key question for Jews became, “Can we accept that Yahweh’s revelation no longer fits *exclusively* within our limited molds.”

— *Who in my life does not approve of my faithfulness to God and my religious beliefs and practices? How do I deal with this opposition?*

— *Why and how do I keep faith, since I live in a largely non-Christian world? Why not just go with the flow of modern history?*

Responsorial Psalm 54 (3-8)

Cry for God’s help

The Lord upholds my life

By your name, O God, save me;
you, the Valiant, uphold my cause.

Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.

The Lord upholds my life

Strangers are against me—

the ruthless seek my life;

they have no regard for God.

See, God is my helper; the Lord upholds my life.

The Lord upholds my life

May their evil plots rebound on them;

in your faithfulness, destroy them!

Freely will I offer sacrifice to you,

and praise your name, O Yahweh, for it is good.

The Lord upholds my life

Personal Reflection

Psalm 54 picks up the theme of the first reading from Wisdom: “Strangers are against me—the ruthless seek my life; they have no regard for God.”

My ‘name’ expresses my individuality. Israel used the name, Yahweh, to worship the divine and hope for protection against the nation’s enemies. Christians use an even more specific name in calling upon God: Jesus. He gives us access to the Father and Holy Spirit. He guards us against everything hostile to our faith and peace (if we let him).

“See, God is my helper; the Lord upholds my life.”

— *What recent occurrence in my life reminded me that God is truly “my helper” and truly “upholds my life”?*

A Reading from the Letter of Saint James (3: 16 to 4: 3)

“Wherever there is jealousy and ambition, you will also find discord, and all that is evil. Instead, the wisdom that comes from above is pure and peace-loving. Persons with this wisdom show understanding and listen to advice; they are full of compassion and good works; they are impartial and sincere. Peacemakers, who sow peace, reap a harvest of justice.

“What causes these fights and quarrels among you? Is it not your cravings that make war within your own selves? When you long for something you cannot have, you kill for it. When you do not get what you desire, you squabble and fight. The fact is, you do not have what you want, because you do not pray for it. You pray for something, and you do not get it, because you pray with the wrong motive of indulging your pleasures.”

Personal Reflection

What is wisdom? James does not speak of theoretical wisdom but *practical* wisdom (spiritual “common sense”). The gift of wisdom exhibits in our daily lives through perseverance in prayer (intimate conversation with God) and purification of our heart. James tells us that prayer obtains for us mindset enabling us to respond to God’s plan. Our prayers may be in vain, if love for “the world” (all that is worst in humanity) plays a dominant role in our hearts.

“Wherever there is jealousy and ambition, you will also find discord and all that is evil. Instead, the wisdom that comes from above is pure and peace-loving.”

— *If there is an atmosphere of “discord” at home, at work, or among those with whom I socialize, what triggers that friction? Being honest, to what extent am I (by my speech, my attitude, behavior) the cause of discord in my self-life, within my family, at work, or among the other relationships in my life?*

— *How might this reading from James move me to change something in my own attitudes and behaviors?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (9: 30-37)



“Let the Children Come” by Lutheran artist [Lucas Cranach the Elder](#) (b. 1472)

“After leaving that place, they made their way through Galilee; but Jesus did not want people to know where he was, because he was teaching his disciples. He told them, ‘The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, but three days after he has been killed, he will rise.’

“The disciples, however, did not understand these words and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

“They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, Jesus asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’

“They did not answer, because they had been arguing about who was the greatest.

“Then he sat down, called the Twelve and said to them, ‘If someone wants to be first, let him be last of all and servant of all.’ Then he took a little child, placed him in their midst. Putting his arms around him he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes a child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but the One who sent me.’”

Personal Reflection

Time is now running out for Jesus. It’s time to prepare his closest disciples for the tremendous responsibility of continuing his work. But they cannot seem to understand all this talk about his “death” and “rising.” They could not imagine their greatest challenges before they happened in real time. The apostles chose not to accept what Jesus had just told them. Knowing this about his chosen ones must have left Jesus thinking, “So that’s it? I’m on my own?”

“Whoever welcomes a child such as this in my name. . . .” This sentence is important. The Church has always taught the surpassing dignity of the human person at *all* stages of existence. Our identification with Christ stands as the highest honor we can ever receive.

More than anyone else, Christian martyrs have taught us the superior value of the human person over any personal interest or collective bonds. We cannot separate the dignity of the human person from our relationship with Christ. The greatest gift of God to humans is not that we can *think* and *love*, but that we can say: “God, you are my Father.” Even before *we* ever make our act of faith, God has already said to us, “You are my (son/daughter).”

“Jesus told (his disciples), ‘The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, but three days after he has been killed, he will rise.’”

— *When setting out on a new venture (e.g., my first day in new position), do I want to know just how much it will demand of me? Or would I prefer to learn the challenges of my life as they arise? Why do I answer the way I do?*

“They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, Jesus asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ The apostles did not answer, because they had been arguing about who was the greatest.” Wow! Jesus just spilled his guts about what lay ahead for him. And what’s on the apostles’ mind? Their own stature in Jesus’ new society!!

— *When in my life have I been so off the mark that I didn’t pay attention to the reality right in front of me? What were the circumstances? When did I wake up and recognize how far I was from the reality in front of me?*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Video:

“[A Grateful Day](#)” with [Brother David Steindl-Rast](#) – [A Network of Grateful Living](#)
(A wonderful/ stunning reflection on the blessings of every day, even the most ordinary days, 5.5 min.)

Music:

Psalm 54 – “[The Lord Upholds My Life](#)” sung by [Francesca LaRosa](#)

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend’s Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .*

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God’s love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

In the light of this weekend’s Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week’s Scriptures

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Numbers 11: 25-29 “The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses.”

Psalm 19: 8, 10, 12-14 “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.”

James 5: 1-6 “Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending mysteries.”

Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48 “We saw someone driving out demons in your name. . . . He does not follow us.”

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer for Humility

Let me have too deep a sense of humor to be proud.

Let me know my absurdity before I act absurdly.

Let me realize that when I am humble I am most human,
most truthful, and most worthy
of your serious consideration.

— [Daniel A. Lord, SJ](#)

Source: [Jesuit Resource](#)

Questions?

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

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [*Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition*](#)

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Coming VERY soon!! *Inspector Javert: at the gates of Hell*

(a novel exploring "what happens next?" after we die)