



Come and See!

Week of September 7, 2025, 23 OT

The Word...

"Who can know God's counsel, or who can conceive what the LORD intends? ...
Scarce do we guess the things on earth,
and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;
but when things are in heaven, who can search them out?"
(*Wis 9:13-18*).

"If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children,
brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.
Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple"
(*Lk 14:25-33*).

Pondering the Word...

"Our minds are constantly trying to bring God down to our level, rather than letting God lift us to levels on which we were not previously capable" (Christian Wiman, from *My Bright Abyss*).

I am puzzled by those who say or act like they have God or God's will all figured out. It seems to me the claim to know as God knows is original sin. It's not from the tree of life that humans are excluded, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gn 2: 9, 16-17). Think about that. There's a big difference between belief and knowledge, and the more we treat our beliefs as knowledge, the more we risk letting our worship become idolatry, praying at the altar of human constructs rather than at the foot of God's throne.

The tree of "I'm right and you're wrong, of "I'm good, and you're evil" bears the foul fruit of anger, hatred, prejudice, violence, and war. The evidence is all too clear to us today. It is from the tree of life which God invites **"everyone-no exceptions"** to partake, that will allow us to bloom beyond ourselves into oneness.

Living the Word...

The reading from Wisdom today is a great passage to begin this week. Many of the readings we will encounter are in fact counter to what humans think we know, whether it was the people of Jesus' time or us today. Take "hating" your family, for example. Some scholars attribute it to "Hebrew hyperbole" which Jesus uses occasionally to get his point across. The Aramaic translation I use says "separate" — a little less dramatic, I guess. And of course, given what we pondered today, who am I to say I or anyone else knows? *I* surely don't!

The interpretation that works for me is that of "holy indifference" presented in "The Principle and Foundation" of St. Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises (<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-the-principle-and-foundation-calls-us-to/>). It calls us to hold all things, people, and situations in balance, regardless of whether we deem them positive or negative, insofar as they serve the purpose for which we are called: to love, honor, and serve our Creator. He doesn't say we should leave our homes or families (although he did just that), but to ensure that, as we go about our day-to-days, nothing we have or do becomes more important than fulfilling God's will for us. "Holy indifference" is not a one-and-done. It is a moment-to-moment awareness that becomes second-nature (or really, brings us back to our first-nature—the image of God within!). Give this some thought today: How "in balance" is your life? Is God the fulcrum?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Sep 8: “You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth one who is to be ruler in Israel...he shall be peace” (Mi 5:1-4). In keeping with “this is counter to what we humans thought would happen,” the one who rises up and brings peace will be from humble beginnings. I am reminded of the quote, attributed to Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” **Provision: Be an instrument of change. Be peace.** Many feel impotent right now to affect any change. The “powers that be” are running roughshod despite the outcry of committed citizens all over the world. But, in the words of the reading from Romans today, we must hold onto the faith that “all things work for good for those who love God.” Don’t give up. Don’t stop crying out against cruelty and violence. Gather in community with those committed to peace.

Tue, Sep 9: “See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy according to the tradition of men, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ” (Col 2:6-15). I must admit, I don’t seek out opportunities to talk with people who hold different political views from mine, mostly because, up until this point, I’m not so sure I could contain my anger. And that, of course, would directly violate what I believe is living according to Christ’s teachings! But through prayer and reflection, I think I might be ready. I’d like to, in the words of St. Francis’ prayer, understand (rather than be understood) how people reconcile Christ’s teachings with what, in my view, are empty, seductive philosophies of the elemental powers of the world. **Provision: Seek to understand.** Understanding doesn’t mean agreeing. It surely doesn’t mean converting. If you, like me, avoid conversations with people who think differently (I’m trying to avoid the use of “sides” knowing we are to be as one), see if you can engage someone with whom you can have a civil, non-defensive conversation. Seek to understand. Just listen and hopefully, they will listen to you.

Wed, Sep 10: “How blissful the destitute... those who are hungry... those weeping... when men hate you” (Lk 6:20-26, literal Greek translation). “HUH?” Talk about something so counter to human standards! **Provision: (As Jesus would say), “What is your opinion?” What do these words mean to you?** We might gloss over the Beatitudes or prefer Matthew’s version to Luke’s clear, jarring language, but these words are great fodder for prayer. Do we believe them? What do they mean for our lives? Consider the idea of “holy indifference” we talked about on Sunday. How might it relate to today’s reading?

Thurs, Sep 11: “To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Lk 6:27-28). “HUH?” Round two. These days, it appears the “empty, seductive philosophy” of revenge has taken hold. **Provision: “To you who hear: Stop judging. Stop condemning. Forgive.”** Man, this is tough stuff. But Jesus presents the logical argument: everyone will love and do good and lend to those who will return the favor. His followers—at least those who are willing to hear—must go above and beyond. This presents a huge challenge for me. Does it for you?

Fri, Sep 12: “Let me remove that splinter in your eye, [but] you do not notice the beam in your own?” (Lk 6: 39-42). I can’t read this passage without paying homage (Oh-maj!) to my dear friend, Fr. Bob Hamm, S.J. He doesn’t preach from the ambo anymore (although time spent with him in conversation is sacred and holy!), but I remember him preaching this Gospel. He would place a large log or a 2x4 board on the ambo and proceed to share stories of his own “beams!” He invited us to consider our “beams” and suggested we all carry a stick in our pockets to remind us of Jesus’ words! **Provision: What are your “beams?”** So often, the faults we see in others are just a reflection of our own: e.g., I am intolerant of intolerant people! As he has done all week, Jesus challenges us to look closely and clearly at ourselves, but don’t beat yourself up. Just be aware

Sat, Sep 13: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command?” (Lk 6:39-42). “Excuse me, Lord. Look at all the things you’ve been commanding this week! ‘Hate’ those I love but love those who hate me! Refrain from judgment and condemnation when I see evil ‘according to the tradition of men’ taking hold! Being blissful as I weep for children gunned down in churches and bombed in Ukraine, starved and sentenced to death by our cruelty in Gaza and Africa. It’s really hard, Lord.” **Provision: “All things work for good for those who love God” (Rom 8:28).** Have I “dug deeply?” Is God the foundation on which I have built my life? Pray to have the strength to do what Jesus commands us to do. Pray when it is really hard to pray.