

## THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - C

The gospel reading this week begins with Luke telling us we have nothing to worry about, nothing to fear. It is the conclusion to a similar passage found in Matthew's gospel about trusting in providence. Luke then goes on to warn against undue reliance on worldly possessions better to store up treasure in heaven which leads Luke to give three warnings about being ready for the return of the Son of Man. All this requires a certain wisdom to which we are directed in the first reading from the book of Wisdom. In the second reading we turn to the letter to the Hebrews with a similar kind of teaching which puts before us Abraham's faith which led him to trust in God.

The **First Reading** is from the book of Wisdom. The wisdom literature in the Bible comes after the historical books and comprises the books of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Wisdom literature flourished throughout the ancient East, it treats of the meaning of life and offers a recipe for successful living. Wisdom literature in Israel came from the same soil and was absorbed in the individual and his destiny but was viewed in the clearer light of the religion of Yahweh. Real wisdom is found in the fear of God since God alone is wise. Wisdom is an outpouring of the glory of the Almighty, an image of his perfection. Wisdom is sure to bring happiness and folly, ruin. This is the doctrine on which the teaching of wisdom is based. All this teaching was preparing for the revelation of Wisdom incarnate as Matthew says: "here is someone greater than Solomon."

The book of Wisdom itself may be divided as follows, the first section, ch.1-5, defines the function of wisdom in man's destiny; the second section, ch.6-9, treats of the origin and nature of wisdom; the last section, ch.10-19, celebrates the part played by Wisdom and by God in the history of the chosen people. The authorship is attributed to Solomon, the wisest king in Israel. The author was an Alexandrian Jew who wrote towards the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., he commends wisdom, born of God, obtained by prayer, the mainspring of all the virtues. This life is seen as a preparation for another in which the virtuous live with God and the wicked are punished. He sees Wisdom as an attribute of God.

The reading 18.6-9, comes from the third section of the book which deals with the part played by God (Wisdom) in the history of the Chosen People and our reading is speaking of the Exodus. 'That night' is the night of the Exodus when the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt, which had been foretold to their ancestors when God spoke to Jacob, 'I shall go down to Egypt with you and I myself shall bring you back again.' A more helpful translation continues, 'so that, well knowing in whom they had put their trust, they would be sure of his promises.' The reading continues saying the Israelites were waiting to be rescued from slavery and that their rescue was at the expense of the Egyptians as the reading proclaims, 'by the very vengeance you exacted on our adversaries, you glorified us by calling us to you' seen in the annihilation of the Egyptian first-born, the celebration of the first Passover, the Exodus from Egypt and finally the Israelites became the people of God. The reading lastly mentions the liturgy of the Israelites in carrying out God's holy law.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 32.1,12,18-20,22, is a hymn to Providence. The psalmist speaks of the joy and happiness that is found by those who hope in God's love for they are rescued from the two evils of famine and death. The soul thus waits for the Lord, its help and its shield, in whom the soul places all its hope.

The **Second Reading** is from the letter to the Hebrews. This wonderful letter to the Jewish Christians was for a time attributed to Paul's pen but now this is considered not to be the case although he is considered to have had some indirect influence on the letter's contents. It would seem from internal evidence that the letter was written about 67AD. The letter is addressed to Jewish people who have a good knowledge of the covenant God made with their people, and who became Christians. They left Jerusalem and with an uncertain faith, they yearn for the splendour of the ceremonies carried out in the Temple. They are tempted to revert to Judaism, but the writer is intent on preventing this by helping them to see their new life in Christ. They are on a new exodus to the Promised Land (heaven), with Christ, not Moses, as their leader whose one sacrifice on the Cross replaces the many sacrifices of the old priesthood. The letter is a good teaching letter for us showing the harmony between the Old and New Testaments.

The reading, 11.1-2,8-19, continues with the thought from the first reading but speaks of the earliest ancestor of the Israelite people, Abraham. He and his family are commended for their faith. They never saw in this life the fulfillment of the promises God made to them. They were searching for a homeland, not for one in the land they had left, not for one in their present land, here they were strangers and nomads but 'a better homeland, their heavenly homeland.' The reading concludes showing Abraham's faith in God was such that he believed God had power over death. The gospel reading too looks for faith.