

## THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - B

On this Sunday the gospel reading teaches us about the danger of riches. There is a man who had kept all the commandments from his 'earliest days', but when Jesus asks him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor 'and you will have treasure in heaven,' and then to follow him, the man goes away sad because he is very wealthy. The first reading teaches there is no comparison between riches and the wisdom of God. The reading from Hebrews teaches that the word of God is alive and active it can penetrate our deepest thoughts.

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, 7.7-11, is from the section dealing with the nature of wisdom. The writer is thinking of Solomon and his respect for wisdom. He prayed and entreated God and the 'spirit of Wisdom' was given to him. The reading then goes on to say that Wisdom cannot be compared with sceptres and thrones, with riches, a precious stone or gold. She is to be reckoned better than health and beauty with a radiance of her own bringing her admirers incalculable wealth. It is wisdom not of this world but it leads us to a true understanding of ourselves and of our relationship with God.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 89.12-17, is a psalm on human frailty. The first verse speaks about 'the shortness of our life' in other words human weakness and awareness of human weakness leads to wisdom. We ask God to relent and not be angry with our weakness. The remainder of the psalm is a prayer for the whole of Israel and it should be our prayer too. With God's love we will have joy to balance our afflictions and in God's name we will achieve success. We need God's wisdom as a guide.

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.

Today's reading, 4.12-13, is preceded, by the writer quoting psalm 95, with an exhortation to his readers to listen to God's word, 'If only you would listen to him today! Do not harden your hearts' and rebel against the word of God. If they listen with faith they can have hope of 'entering a place of rest.' And our reading begins with these clear words, 'The word of God is alive and active' and was given through the prophets and then by the Son and now is living and active in believers. Like 'any two-edged sword' the word can penetrate into the heart of man, into the depths of his soul passing judgement on his secret thoughts. 'No created thing is hidden from him.' Notice the word has now become a person. The opening words of the reading are a statement every reader should keep in mind.