

Take-Home for Session 8: Come to Me: Wisdom's Banquet

If You Come Forward to Serve: An Inductive Study of Sirach

What We Found

- Wisdom's autobiography: she came forth from the mouth of the Most High, was present to all creation before the ages, and at God's command pitched her tent in Jacob and ministered in Zion's sanctuary (24:3-12).
- Her banquet: come to me, you who desire me, and the holy paradox: those who eat me will hunger for more (24:19-21): an infinite good enlarges the appetite it feeds.
- The guesses opened, and the Gospel answered: in the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 14), John's verb, *eskenosen*, meaning pitched his tent. In Sirach's poetic presentation, Wisdom is the created wisdom God gave Israel, at home above all in the Torah (24:9, 23), and this figure points beyond itself and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the eternal and uncreated Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24): the sketch belongs to creation; the One it sketches is begotten, not made (Nicaea).
- Jesus outbids the banquet: I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger (John 6:35), and serves it concretely in his flesh and blood (John 6:51-56): the Eucharist is Wisdom's table, and reverence was always appetite in training.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Athanasius

The great defender of Nicaea taught that the Wisdom through whom God made all things is not a creature but the eternal Son himself, the Father's own radiance and Word. When Scripture's Wisdom poetry uses the language of creation, Athanasius read it of the Son's incarnate mission and of Wisdom's imprint in creatures, never of the Son's origin, for there was never a moment when the Father was without his Wisdom.

Discourses Against the Arians, Book II (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Ambrose of Milan

In his mystagogical instruction of the newly baptized, Ambrose read Wisdom's banquet (Wisdom has built her house, mixed her wine, set her table) of the sacraments of the altar, where Christ feeds his people with his own Body and Blood.

On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, mystagogical catecheses (paraphrased and synthesized)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas

The Church sings Aquinas' words at Benediction to this day: O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. The antiphon holds the banquet's two truths together, grace received now and glory still pledged: which is why, on earth, those who eat him hunger for more, until desire and satisfaction meet in heaven.

Live It This Week

- Attend one weekday Mass this week if you possibly can, and receive (or make a spiritual communion) with Sirach 24:19-21 prayed beforehand: Come to me, you who desire me.
- Spend fifteen minutes before the Blessed Sacrament (or in quiet if no chapel is near) simply repeating the memory verse and letting the hunger it names surface.
- Reread Sirach 24 once at home with John 1 open beside it, and mark every clause that now reads differently.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Those who eat me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more." (**Sirach 24:21**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 34:18-26 and 35:1-17.

Catechism References

CCC 240-241; CCC 1324; CCC 1336