

Take-Home for Session 12: Simon the High Priest and the Song of Thanksgiving

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

What We Found

- Ben Sira's Temple liturgy: Simon the high priest coming forth from the sanctuary like the morning star and the sun, the trumpets, the people on their faces, and the raised-hands blessing of the Lord (50:1-21): creation itself gathered to its point in worship.
- Simon was the silhouette; Christ is the portrait: the High Priest who is one, sinless, and permanent, who entered heaven itself with his own blood once for all, and who will appear a second time to those eagerly waiting (Hebrews 4, 7, 9): at every Mass we stand in Ben Sira's crowd (CCC 1090, 1544-1545).
- The fear of the Lord, planted as wisdom's beginning in 1:14 and root in 1:20, resolves as a song of thanksgiving (51:1-12) and an open school door (51:23): reverence became gratitude, and the commissioning is ours.
- The canon question, answered with receipts: the Greek scriptural tradition of the early Church in which the deuterocanon was received and handed on, the early Church's wide use (the resonances of James 1:19 with Sirach 5:11 and Hebrews 11 with Sirach 44, and the nickname Ecclesiasticus), the witness of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) in communion with Rome, reaffirmed at Florence and defined at Trent, and the decisive point: the same Spirit-guided Church discernment that certifies the New Testament's 27 books certifies the Old Testament's 46. God inspired the authors; the Church received, preserved, and discerned: and she has read Ben Sira to her children since the early centuries.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Ignatius of Antioch

Writing on his road to martyrdom around AD 107, Ignatius urged the churches: be careful to observe one Eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup for union with his blood, one altar, as there is one bishop with the priests and deacons. The gathered, ordered, altar-centered worship Ben Sira loved continues, transfigured, in the Church's one Eucharist.

Letter to the Philadelphians, 4 (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom

In his treatise on the priesthood, Chrysostom trembled at what Simon's successors under grace now handle: when you see the Lord sacrificed and lying on the altar, and the priest bending over the sacrifice and praying, do you still think you are among men and standing on earth? The priest at the altar, he taught, stands amid realities Simon's trumpets only foreshadowed.

On the Priesthood, Book III, 4 (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. John Vianney

The patron of parish priests taught his village that the priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus: when

you see a priest, he said, think of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the priest continues the work of redemption on earth, above all at the altar. The raised-hands blessing Israel knew from Aaron and Simon (Numbers 6:24-26 with Leviticus 9:22; Sirach 50:20) finds its fulfillment in Christ and echoes in the priest's blessing at every Mass.

From his catechetical instructions, as given in the Office of Readings for his memorial, August 4 (paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- At Mass this week, watch for Sirach 50: the priest coming forth, the congregation's posture, the raised-hands blessing: and receive the blessing the way 50:21 describes: deliberately, on the inside if not on your knees.
- Pray Sirach 51:1-12 once this week as your own thanksgiving psalm, inserting your own rescues by name where Ben Sira names his.
- Answer the commissioning concretely: invite the person you named to whatever you do next: this study handed on, a Bible study, or simply Mass and brunch. Lodge in my school is now your line.

Scripture Memory Verse

"I will give thanks to you, O Lord and King, and will praise you as God my Savior. I give thanks to your name."
(Sirach 51:1)

Before Next Session

The study is complete. Keep the take-home sheets together: they are now a small handbook of everything we found. And keep the school open: draw near to me, you who are untaught (51:23).

Catechism References

CCC 1544-1545, 1548; CCC 1090; CCC 120