

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 2: The Plot Against the Righteous Man

What We Found

The ungodly of chapter 1, the ones who had made their covenant with death, finally spoke, and the author let them make their case at full strength. Their logic unfolded in four moves: despair (life is short, death is final, we are here by chance), then pleasure (crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither), then power (let our might be our law of right), and finally persecution (the righteous man is inconvenient to us; his very life is a judgment on ours). The chapter shows how a false view of life and death can distort the way we treat other people.

Then came the discovery none of us will forget. The plotters say: if the righteous man is God's son, God will help him and deliver him; let us test him with insult and torture; let us condemn him to a shameful death (2:18-20). We went hunting and found the echo at the foot of the cross: he trusts in God, let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, I am the Son of God (Matthew 27:43). Well before Calvary, as the Church has read this speech, the taunt was already on the page. The Fathers, from St. Cyprian to St. Augustine, read this chapter as a prophecy of the Passion. And the chapter closed by answering Session 1's open question: God created man for incorruption, in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world (2:23-24).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage • *To Quirinus (Testimonies)*, 2.14 (3rd century)

In his handbook of prophecies of Christ for new believers, St. Cyprian places the plot speech of Wisdom 2 among the Scriptures foretelling the Passion, alongside Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine • *The City of God*, Book 17.20 (5th century)

St. Augustine reads the wicked men's speech, let us condemn him to a shameful death, as the Passion of Christ openly foretold (City of God 17.20). As the Church reads it, these words were placed generations in advance in the mouths of the very enemies who would one day carry them out.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory of Nyssa • *Great Catechism*, ch. 8; compare *On the Making of Man* (4th century)

Man was created in the image of God and destined for divine life; mortality is not our original clothing but a garment added after the fall, and what was added can be removed. The image endures, and grace restores it. Note the precision: bodily immortality was a preternatural gift, never owed to human nature (CCC 376, 1008).

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 3:1-9 this week with a pencil. Mark every promise made to people the world counts as losers.
- **Pray the two texts together. Once this week, read Wisdom 2:12-20 and then Matthew 27:39-43, slowly, as one prayer. End at the foot of the cross and stay there a minute.**
- **Stand with someone inconvenient.** Find one concrete way to stand beside a person it costs something to defend: a mocked coworker, an ignored relative, someone whose goodness makes others uncomfortable.
- **Run the diagnostic.** Catch yourself once this week reasoning like the speech, life is short, so I might as well, and name the premise underneath it out loud.

Memory Verse

| *"God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity."* (**Wisdom 2:23**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 3:1-9.

Catechism references: CCC 601, CCC 413.

Scripture We Opened

- Tonight's text: Wisdom 2:1-24
- The discovery: Matthew 27:39-43 (the mockery at the cross)
- Isaiah 22:13 (the slogan, let us eat and drink, that Wisdom 2 echoes and Paul quotes)
- 1 Corinthians 15:32
- Exodus 22:22 and Deuteronomy 24:17 (covenant protection of the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner)
- Leviticus 19:32 (honor due the aged)
- Deuteronomy 24:14-15 (the poor and needy hired laborer)
- Isaiah 53 (the suffering servant, background to the righteous one)
- Psalm 22:7-8 (the mockery psalm)
- John 19:7 (he has made himself the Son of God)
- Romans 1:21 (futile thinking, darkened minds)
- Genesis 3 (the serpent; read together with Wisdom 2:24, which traces death's entry to the devil's envy)