

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 7: I Preferred Her to Thrones

What We Found

The royal teacher kept his promise to hide nothing, and he began with his own birth: I also am mortal, like all men; my first sound was a cry, like that of all; there is for all mankind one entrance into life, and a common departure (7:1-6, abridged). Ancient kings usually introduced themselves with omens and divine ancestry; this king begins with a newborn's cry and swaddling cloths, and the humility has a purpose: if the wisest man alive came into the world the way everyone does, then wisdom is available to everyone. How did he get it? Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me (7:7). We found the night behind that verse: Gibeon, 1 Kings 3, where God said ask what I shall give you, and the young king asked for an understanding mind, and God, pleased, gave wisdom and added riches and honor he had not asked for.

Then he told us what he valued wisdom above: scepters and thrones, gold as a little sand, silver as clay, health and beauty, even light itself, because her radiance never ceases. And then the surprise: all good things came to me along with her (7:11). We found Jesus stating the same principle in one sentence: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (Matthew 6:33). Those who get wisdom, the chapter says, obtain friendship with God, and the closing verses list all that wisdom taught him about the created world, stars, seasons, animals, plants, because she is the fashioner of all things. Faith and honest science have one Author and cannot finally conflict (CCC 159).

Voices of the Church

St. Francis of Assisi • *The renunciation before the bishop of Assisi (c. 1206), as told by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure*

Brought before the bishop by his father over cloth sold from the family stock (restitution was the grievance), the young Francis stripped off the fine clothes his father's wealth had bought and laid them at his feet. As Celano records the declaration: until now I have called you father on earth; now, Our Father who art in heaven. Wisdom 7:8 performed in public: the better portion chosen in front of witnesses.

St. Thomas Aquinas • **The "straw" episode of December 1273, as Reginald of Piperno reported it and Bartholomew of Capua testified at the Naples canonization inquiry (1319)**

The greatest theological mind of the Middle Ages began every session of study with prayer, understanding received rather than achieved. Near the end of his life, after a profound experience in prayer, he stopped writing, saying that compared with what he had seen, all he had written seemed like straw.

St. Albert the Great • *Doctor of the Church, patron of the natural sciences (13th century)*

Aquinas's teacher wrote pioneering studies of plants, animals, minerals, and stars, and the Church named him patron of the natural sciences. We read his life's work as Wisdom 7:17-21 in a Dominican habit: in the study of creatures we seek the wisdom of the Creator, the syllabus of creation received as gift and studied as praise.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 7:22 through 8:1 with a pencil, the passage we open next session. Read it twice. Mark every word that describes what wisdom is like.
- **Pray Gibeon nightly.** Each night this week, pray one sentence before sleep: Lord, give your servant an understanding mind. Thirty seconds; see what a week of it does.
- **Put one good thing in its proper place. Choose something good that has become too important to you. Fast from it for a day this week, the comfort, the app, the mirror, the metric, as a practical reminder that wisdom and friendship with God are worth more.**
- **BRING TAKE-HOME 1 NEXT WEEK.** Find your Take-Home sheet from Session 1 with your sealed guess and bring it to the next session. Do not open or revise it. If you have lost it, write your original guess from memory on a card this week, before next session, and bring that instead.

Memory Verse

"Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me." (Wisdom 7:7)

Before next session: read Wisdom 7:22 through 8:1, and bring your sealed Take-Home 1 guess.

Catechism references: CCC 159, CCC 283.

Scripture We Opened

- Tonight's text: Wisdom 7:1-21
- The discovery: 1 Kings 3:5-14 (Gibeon; parallel 2 Chronicles 1:7-12)
- The discovery: Matthew 6:33 (seek first)
- Genesis 2:7 (the first-formed child of earth)
- Proverbs 3:13-15 and 8:10-11 (wisdom better than jewels)
- Job 28 (the mine that cannot find her)
- 1 Kings 4:29-34 (Solomon's natural knowledge)
- James 1:5 (ask God, who gives generously)
- Luke 2:7, 12 (swaddling cloths)
- Matthew 13:45-46 (the pearl of great price)
- Wisdom 2:24 and 6:23 (envy, the other party's crest)
- Wisdom 3:7 and 3:9 (the shining of the righteous; abiding in love, friendship's destination)
- Ecclesiastes 1:1 (the son-of-David persona convention)