

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 8: Radiance of Eternal Light

What We Found

The envelopes opened tonight. First the text gave us its portrait at full height: twenty-one attributes, which commentators have long taken as a deliberate literary design, seven, the number of perfection, multiplied by three, the number of divine fullness. Then came five images straining language to the edge: a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror, an image of his goodness. Every image names something distinct from its source yet inseparable from it: the sun was never without its brightness, and the images are analogies for a begetting that is eternal, not a process in time.

Then we read our sealed guesses aloud, and went hunting. We found the vocabulary transferred, word for word, to one person: he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Hebrews 1:3). The Greek word for reflection there, *apaugasma*, appears exactly once in the New Testament and exactly once in the Greek Old Testament, Wisdom 7:26. One word, two verses, one face. Colossians calls him the image of the invisible God in whom all things hold together; John says all things were made through the Word; and Paul gives the name: Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). The answer the Church has carried from the Fathers through the liturgy honors every guess: the portrait was painted before dawn, and what Christian tradition has learned to see dawning in it is the Trinity. Its lines are fulfilled above all in the Son, whom the Church sings Wisdom 8:1 to every Advent, O Wisdom, come; and St. Irenaeus heard the Holy Spirit in it too, naming the Spirit Wisdom: two divine persons honored by one portrait, never two halves of a picture. Whoever guessed Jesus stood with St. Paul and the Creed; whoever guessed the Holy Spirit stood with St. Irenaeus; whoever guessed God's mind or an attribute saw truly, not yet fully. Nobody lost. Everyone was seeking, and she was meeting us in every thought.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Athanasius • Discourses Against the Arians, Discourse I (4th century)

The Son is to the Father what radiance is to light: was there ever a moment when the sun existed without its brightness? Then never was the Father without the Son. The vocabulary of Wisdom 7:26 and Hebrews 1:3 became the Church's weapon at Nicaea and its echo is in the Creed: Light from Light.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons • *Against Heresies* IV.20 (2nd century)

The Father created all things through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, whom Irenaeus names the Word and Wisdom. The early tradition heard trinitarian harmonies in these texts, not a single note.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort • *The Love of Eternal Wisdom* (18th century)

He wrote an entire book proposing Jesus Christ as Eternal Wisdom, incarnate to be loved, built on the Wisdom books, chapters 7 and 8 among its favorite pages: to know Jesus Christ, eternal Wisdom, is to know enough, and she is acquired the way this book said, by desiring, asking, and preferring her to everything.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 8:2 through 9:18 with a pencil. It ends in a prayer; read the prayer twice.
- **Pray the O Antiphon daily.** Once each day: O Wisdom, who orders all things mightily and sweetly, come and teach me the way of prudence.
- **Write the after.** On the back of your Take-Home 1, under your original guess, write a short paragraph: what I know now. Keep the sheet; it is the record of a real discovery you made.
- **Hear the Creed with new ears.** At Mass this Sunday, listen: God from God, Light from Light, through him all things were made. You now know one of the pages the Fathers kept reaching for.

Memory Verse

"For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness." (**Wisdom 7:26**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 8:2 through 9:18.

Catechism references: CCC 2500, CCC 241-242.

Scripture We Opened

- Tonight's text: Wisdom 7:22-8:1
- The discovery: Hebrews 1:1-3 (the radiance of God's glory)
- The discovery: Colossians 1:15-17 and John 1:1-3 (quick companion finds)
- The discovery: 1 Corinthians 1:24 (Christ the wisdom of God)
- Proverbs 8:22-31 (Wisdom beside God at creation)
- Sirach 24 and Sirach 51:23-27 (Wisdom's hymn; the sage's invitation; Sir 24:3 in the O Antiphon)
- Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11 (the glory filling tabernacle and temple)
- Genesis 1:26-27 (made in the image)
- Wisdom 6:16 (she meets them in every thought; honored at the reveal)
- Wisdom 3:7; 5:6; 6:12; 7:10
- Sirach 24:3 (coming forth from the mouth of the Most High; the O Antiphon's first half)
- Matthew 11:28-30 (Jesus speaking as Wisdom); Matthew 11:19 (wisdom justified by her deeds)
- John 15:15 (I have called you friends)
- John 1:5 (the darkness has not overcome it)