



The Word...

"Who can know God's counsel, or who can conceive what the LORD intends? For the deliberations of mortals are timid, and unsure are our plans. For the corruptible body burdens the soul and the earthen shelter weighs down the mind that has many concerns.

And scarce do we guess the things on earth,
and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;
but when things are in heaven, who can search them out?"

(from Wis 9:13-18)

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart."
(from Ps 90)

Pondering the Word ...

"The deliberations of mortals are timid?!" Based on what I have been hearing recently, some mortals are anything but timid when it comes to God's counsel. It appears many think they have God all figured out, God in their back pockets. Don't they realize that to imagine we know as God knows is what got us into this mess in the first place?

I shudder and like Job, "put my hand over my mouth," (40:4) when I consider the awesome wonder of God. Each day, I just pray be granted wisdom of heart, and, as author James Finley has said, for the grace not to break the thread of oneness God desires for humanity.

There's an expression: *"If you want to see God smile, tell him your plans!"* Let us pray for the grace to number our days aright— which means to see and live in God's presence each moment, not weighed down by our "earthen shelter," so that when God does call us home, we'll be ready to search and marvel at the glories of heaven!

Living the Word...

Several of the readings this week touch on this topic of uncertainty and the importance of relying on faith in the face of difficult and confusing times. If you're like me, you might find yourself praying for God to just set things right, to put an end to the greed which is the source of so much violence and death. We want God to do it for us.

But God already did. God became human to show us how to live. Jesus reminds us that to come to God, we need a child-like trust in God and God's plan, and reliance on God's unconditional love and fidelity.

"Caesar with a toothache. Cleopatra with an ingrown nail. How quickly our vanity turns from pride to need, from masters of our own fate to children with scraped knees. For all our pride we are as frail as flowers. Forgive our presumption, Grandmother God, our strut and our swagger. Forgive us our need to pretend to be in charge of what we barely understand. Give us the humility to remember that we are only children, playing make believe in your garden."

(Steven Charleston, from Hope As Old As Fire: A Spiritual Diary .

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Sep 5: *“Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough.”* (1 Cor 5:1-18) Jesus uses the metaphor of yeast to compare God’s Kingdom as growing from something small as leaven in a batch of dough; and, as a warning: “beware of the yeast of the Pharisees.” Paul uses it as a warning to the Corinthians who, in their pridefulness, ignore the sinfulness in their midst so it won’t tarnish their inflated view of themselves. Perhaps they’re thinking: “If we ignore it, it will go away. It won’t impact the community; evil will not flourish.” **Reflection/Provision:** The leaven of lies, of unethical behavior left unchecked, of hate speech has infiltrated much of our public discourse, and yet, I am often unwilling to take a stand. I have grown apathetic, impotent in the face of such hypocrisy, hoping it will all just go away. I am unsure of how God is working, but I believe “all things work for good for those who love God” — for those who love Love, not those who use God as a weapon. If this reflection resonates with you — or makes you uncomfortable — spend time in prayer: How is the Spirit calling you in sincerity and truth to take a stand?

Tue, Sep 6: *“Brothers and sisters: How can any one of you with a case against another dare to bring it to the unjust for judgment instead of to the holy ones?”* (1 Cor 6: 1-11) Boy, is this ever pertinent! Paul chastises the people for going to civil authorities to settle grievances that occur within the Christian community. He is not saying that Christian community’s laws (including the Jewish law) should be used for the entire population! He recognizes the importance of civil law. **Reflection/Provision:** I tread cautiously here: the practice of judging within a community can lead to a code of silence which, as we have seen too often, leads to evil. There are times when grievances can be resolved justly within a community, but when crimes occur, the preservation of the group can easily supplant true justice. Let us pray today for all victims of abuse and secrecy that they receive justice.

Wed, Sep 7: *“But woe to you who are rich...woe to you who are filled now...Woe to you who laugh now...Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”* (Lk 6:20-26) Luke’s version of the beatitudes is to the point. No mincing of words or embellishing with expressions of spiritual values as Matthew does. And for those of us blessed with riches in this life, Luke’s words can make us squirm in our seats. **Reflection/Provision:** From the New American Bible: *“‘Blessed’ extols the fortunate condition of persons favored with the blessings of God; the woes... threaten God’s profound displeasure on those so blinded by their present fortunate situation that they do not recognize and appreciate the real values of God’s kingdom.”* It all has to do with what is called “holy indifference.” In Ignatius of Loyola’s *Principle and Foundation*, we hear the importance of accepting — not resigning ourselves to, but accepting — whatever state of life that God intends for us, understanding that all we have is from God, and we are to return it all to God for God’s greater glory. How indifferent are you?

Thu, Sep 8: *“...he shall be peace.* (Mi 5:4) Why does the peace of the long-awaited Messiah still elude us? Perhaps, like ancient Israel, we don’t understand what this peace really means. We look for God to flip a switch so the other guy sees things our way. We look for peace to be imposed from the outside. **Reflection/Provision:** The only way Jesus can be the Prince of Peace is if we allow him to change our hearts. Take a close look at people, situations, or topics that foster peace in you and those that disrupt your sense of peace. Consider both without judgment to see if you can uncover any patterns within yourself. Ask for the Spirit’s light.

Fri, Sep 9: *“The LORD withholds no good thing from those who walk in sincerity.”* (Ps 84) **Reflection/Provision:** What a comforting image! Even though I stumble and fall, if I walk my life’s path in sincerity, if my heart is true, the Lord will give me the good gifts God has in store for me. If you struggle with past sins or mistakes, God sees the sincere sorrow in your heart. Allow Divine forgiveness to embrace and comfort you. Keep walking.

Sat, Sep 10: *“That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built.”* (Lk 6: 43-49) **Reflection/Provision:** The image of rivers bursting over their banks engulfing entire towns is all too real for us and I’m afraid we will see more and more of these disasters going forward. Centuries-old foundations give way to Mother Nature’s fury. But unlike foundations of rock and steel which can fail, the foundation we lay in Christ will never fail. Make sure to shore it up with daily prayer.