

(B25) SUNDAY 25 OF THE YEAR

(SEPTEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2021)

**Readings:** *Wisdom of Solomon 2:12, 17 – 20; Ps. 53 (54); James 3:16 – 4:3; Mark 9: 30 – 37.*

Today's reading from *The Letter of James* takes up a theme which is often found in the later books of the Old Testament – namely the nature and source of true wisdom.

In the verses which come before our reading (verses 13 – 15) the author writes: *Anyone who is wise or understanding among you should from a good life give evidence of deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom.*

For James, as for the Old Testament writers, Wisdom is not an abstract or purely intellectual quality. It is a gift from God – he writes at the beginning of the book: *If there is any one of you who needs wisdom, he must ask God, who gives to all unreservedly and ungrudgingly; it will be given to him (1: 5), and it shows its divine origin by its effects. By contrast: If at heart you have the bitterness of jealousy or selfish ambition...this is not the wisdom that comes from above, but earthly, human and devilish.*

Our reading begins by describing the qualities of this earthly 'wisdom' – *jealousy...ambition...disharmony*. By contrast the true *wisdom that comes from above...makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate.*

James seems to be describing the ideal Christian congregation. In such a fellowship this *wisdom from above* is seen: *it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it.* And – in words perhaps addressed to the leaders of such a congregation – *Peacemakers when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.*

It happens that both the Old Testament reading from *The Wisdom of Solomon* and the Gospel reading from *Mark* provide examples of 'wisdom' which is *earthly, human and devilish.*

The *godless* enemies of the *virtuous man* use cruel violence to test his *gentleness*.

The Twelve *had been arguing which of them was the greatest* – in clear contradiction of the teaching of Jesus about his own approaching death.

Pray for Christian congregations and their pastors, that we may all receive as a gift from God the true *wisdom from above.*