

Homily for February 26, 2019
Tuesday 7th Week of Ordinary Time

Did you know that the ancient method of refining precious metals is still practiced today? Craftsmen still subject gold or silver to intense heat in a metal container called a crucible until it melts. Then the hot, molten metal is carefully stirred, and the impurities that rise to the top are skimmed off. The process was, and still is, dangerous, time consuming, and painstaking. But what emerges is beautiful, lustrous, and of great worth. In times of adversity, we may feel as if we're trapped in a fiery hot crucible.¹

At Mass yesterday I mentioned that Sirach was written during a time of intense persecution for the Jewish people, when the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanies wanted to Hellenise the Jewish people by eradicating Jewish religion and culture, thus seeing the triumph of the Greek language and ideas. The meaning of Hellenization.

Sirach in are reading for today therefore speaks of what he knows when he writes in verses 1 and 5:

***My child, when you come to serve the Lord,
prepare yourself for testing²***

***For gold is tested in the fire,
and those found acceptable, in the furnace of humiliation³***

In this life, one of the primary means God uses to sanctify us is through the trials that test us. They will either draw us closer to the Lord in trusting humility or they will embitter and harden our hearts leading us to push God away.

Sirach as one whose life was governed by wisdom, shares with us God's way of seeing and understanding trials.

At its heart, to share in God's way of understanding trials is to first accept that they are unavoidable in this life and so in verses two through four he Sirach councils

***Set your heart right and be steadfast,
Cling to him and do not depart
Accept whatever befalls you***

¹ <https://wau.org/meditations/>

² [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Sir 2:1). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

³ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Sir 2:5). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

What does it mean to set your heart right and be steadfast? Sirach tells us in verses 7-9:

*You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy;
⁸ You who fear the Lord, trust in him,
⁹ You who fear the Lord, hope for good things,⁴*

Those who fear the Lord are setting their heart right as they wait, trust and hope in God. There is an attitude of interior confidence in God that amidst all the trials and testing of life he is with us. This is what it means to fear him. So when our hearts are set on him we can cling to him and accept whatever befalls. This is so we may be people who are learning the way of steadfast patience and are recollected in our interior life.

Sirach says something so important to remember.

Do not be impetuous in times of calamity.

What wisdom is expressed here. I know in reflecting back on calamitous times in my own life that I have often reacted impetuously, that is in a hasty and emotional way. To grow in wisdom is to learn the way of interior peace that allows us to accept what befalls us with patience, Sirach's counsel in verse 4.

*Accept whatever befalls you,
and in times of humiliation be patient.⁵*

All of this leads Sirach to counsel us at verse 6:

*Trust in him, and he will help you;
make your ways straight, and hope in him.⁶*

This is the central theme of all the wisdom literature. When in trials take that next step along the path of your life, being guided by God, trusting and hoping in him.

What wisdom is found here, so worthy of our thoughtful meditation as we live through the crucible, that is life in this world, and come out as pure gold, holy and righteous in God's sight.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Sir 2:7-9). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Sir 2:4). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Sir 2:6). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.