

## Reader's notes

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*'IN THE SCRIPTURES,  
BY THE SPIRIT,  
MAY WE SEE THE SAVIOURS FACE,  
HEAR HIS WORD AND  
HEED HIS CALLING,  
KNOW HIS LOVE AND  
GROW IN GRACE.'*

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## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year A

### Readings

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/?feature=sunday>

*The link to the readings is a temporary one, it will bring you to the correct readings **only** for the week leading up to the Sunday in question. (its a copyright thing)*

Notes: <https://www.tarsus.ie/page-72/page-85/>

### The Gospel

MT 5:17-37

Many laws of the Jews were meant to control shame, to prevent vengeance, to keep extended families from feuding and splitting. Jesus considers those standards and announces other standards for his followers

### First Reading,

Sirach 15:15-20

Sirach's book is essentially an apology for Judaism. Writing to defend the religious and cultural heritage of Judaism against the challenge of Greek culture that was extended around the eastern Mediterranean because of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Subject peoples and ethnic minorities are always concerned about the possible dying out of their cultures. Sirach sought to demonstrate to his fellow Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora, and also to well-meaning pagans, that true wisdom resides in Israel. He accomplishes his purpose by producing a synthesis of revealed religion and empirical wisdom.

What Sirach says today seems obvious to us modern readers. We're free and we're responsible. Not even God takes away our powers to choose good or evil. We decide and we take the consequences of our choices. But was that all clear to Sirach's original audience? Was he saying something they needed to hear but that we take for granted? Perhaps. Sirach was a learned Jew writing for Greeks and other sophisticated Jews. Not too many generations earlier, Jews had believed their fates were inextricable from that of the people as a whole, and that God's favour of the people depended on the virtue of their king. Sirach was familiar with Greek and Egyptian thought, too, where one could find ready supplies of fatalism and determinism. And even after Sirach there will be

religious thinkers who treat humans as pawns in a titanic struggle between Good and Evil, or who tell us we're predestined because anything else diminishes the sovereignty of God.

**Proclaiming It:** Sirach seems to ask his reader to be awed both by the majesty of God and by the freedom that we enjoy. Sirach is also standing up for his people's wisdom against smug exponents of rival wisdom. So your proclamation should sound confident and a little argumentative.

### Second Reading,

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Paul tries to give the Christians in Corinth the best reasons for believing in the superiority of their wisdom and way of life. The strongest claim he can make is that it all comes from God, for no one is wiser or stronger than God. But why does he have to say so to these people at this time?

- They lived in a cosmopolitan Greek seaport where many schools of philosophy competed for adherents.
- The Christians themselves tended to divide along lines of loyalty to one or other Christian teacher (Apollos, Cephas, *et alii*, of whom we heard in chapter 1). Paul wants them to set those divisions aside in favour of a higher unity.
- Some members had been using their God-given spiritual powers merely to gain prestige in the community (chapters 12-14) instead of using them to unify the community. Paul will correct this vigorously.
- Some challenged Paul's authority (for example, chapter 9).
- There were serious breaches of morality in the community (chapters 5, 6, etc.) and breaches of decorum (chapter 11).
- Some were even questioning a doctrine as fundamental as the resurrection of the dead (chapter 15).
- And Paul himself had just had a humiliating failure in an attempt to show off his human wisdom. See [Acts 17:16-33](#) for Paul's speech in Athens about the resurrection (it's a great speech, really) and the humiliating response of the sophisticated Athenians. (For another Pauline meditation about sharing in the emptiness of Christ crucified, see [Philippians 3:7-16.](#))

**Proclaiming It:** Doesn't Paul seem convinced in this passage? He is absolutely sure he has the greatest insights and most accurate understanding. His authority is the authority of God. Sound convinced yourself, and let your voice express the contrasts between divine wisdom and every other kind.

Next Readers Session: February 22<sup>nd</sup> 11 am