

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF
SIRACH

If you desire, you will keep the commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter of choice.

He has placed before you fire and water:
stretch out your hand for whichever you wish.

Life and death are in front of people,
and whichever one chooses will be given to him.

For great is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power and sees everything;

his eyes are on those who fear him,
and he knows a person's every deed.

He has not commanded anyone to be ungodly,
and he has not given anyone permission to sin.

The word of the Lord

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

Blessed are those who walk in the law of the LORD!

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD!

Blessed are those who keep his decrees!

With all their hearts they seek him.

Blessed are those who walk in the law of the LORD!

You have laid down your precepts
to be carefully kept.

May my ways be firm
in keeping your statutes.

Blessed are those who walk in the law of the LORD!

Deal bountifully with your servant,
that I may live and keep your word.

Open my eyes, that I may see
the wonders of your law.

Blessed are those who walk in the law of the LORD!

LORD, teach me the way of your statutes,
and I will keep them to the end.

Grant me insight that I may keep your law,
and observe it wholeheartedly.

Blessed are those who walk in the law of the LORD!

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THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE FIRST LETTER
OF ST PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and Sisters:

Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,

nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him' —these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

The word of the Lord

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO MATTHEW

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

‘You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgement.”

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.”

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

‘It was also said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

THE REFLECTION

Like many families a divorce had occurred. I didn't find out about it until I was over 40, so bitter were the children of that divorce they would never speak of it. I just thought my grandfather had died years ago.

Jesus is, I think, angry about divorce in his time. The Old Testament allowed divorce if a man finds fault with his wife. This did allow men to divorce and marry another but a divorced woman had no support or settlement. It was very unfair.

The Catholic tradition allows separation and divorce, but remarriage which is a barrier to receiving communion. Instead annulling a first marriage allows remarriage and reception of the sacraments. An annulment can be a factual error—a Catholic is not married without a Christian ceremony or a fault existing before the marriage took place—like unknown addiction or alcoholism.

A common reason is a flawed consent, if something was missing or something was held back such as mental capacity or admitting that the permanence of marriage was not taken seriously. Many are freed by an annulment to marry again and receive the sacraments.

Mark, Luke and Paul think Jesus said divorce should not happen. There is a lot more to this question and even a Pope struggled to be clear. Pope Francis thought the Argentinian bishops got it right saying a personal discernment under the guidance of a pastor to act in a way consistent with the way of mercy and integration, which may lead to reception of the sacraments.

This is a wide-ranging and often difficult area and I would be willing to talk with anyone if they think it would help.