

FIRST READING (Alternative for even numbered years) **Isaiah 40.12–23**

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 40.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?
Who has directed the spirit of the LORD,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?
Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
and who taught him the path of justice?
Who taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?
Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as dust on the scales;
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.
Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,
nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering.
All the nations are as nothing before him;
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.
To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?
An idol? –
A workman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold,
and casts for it silver chains.

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As a gift, one chooses mulberry wood –
wood that will not rot –
then seeks out a skilled artisan
to set up an image that will not topple.
Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood – from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth... ...as nothing.

For the Word of the LORD.

FIRST READING (Alternative for odd numbered years) **Wisdom 9.9–17**

A reading from the book of Wisdom, Chapter 9.

With you is wisdom, she who knows your works
and was present when you made the world;
she understands what is pleasing in your sight
and what is right according to your commandments.

Send her forth from the holy heavens,
and from the throne of your glory send her,
that she may labour at my side,
and that I may learn what is pleasing to you.

For she knows and understands all things,
and she will guide me wisely in my actions
and guard me with her glory.

Then my works will be acceptable,
and I shall judge your people justly,
and shall be worthy of the throne* of my father.

For who can learn the counsel of God?

Or who can discern what the Lord wills?

For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail;

for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful* mind.

We can hardly guess at what is on earth,
and what is at hand we find with labour;

but who has traced out what is in the heavens?

Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom

and sent your holy spirit from on high?

For the Word of the LORD.

SECOND READING **1 Corinthians 2.6-end**

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Among the mature we do speak wisdom,
though it is not a wisdom of this age
or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.
But we speak God's wisdom,
secret and hidden,
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 human heart conceived,
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.

For what human being knows what is truly human
except the human spirit that is within?
So also no one comprehends what is truly God's
except the Spirit of God.
Now we have received not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit that is from God,
so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.
And we speak of these things in words
not taught by human wisdom – but taught by the Spirit,
interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

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Those who are unspiritual – do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit,
for they are foolishness to them,
and they are unable to understand them
because they are spiritually discerned.

Those who are spiritual discern all things,
and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?"

But we... ..have the mind of Christ.

For the Word of the LORD.