



# Come and See!

Week of February 12, 2023

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## The Word ...

“Before man are life and death, good and evil,  
whichever he chooses shall be given him.”  
*(from Sir 15:15-20)*

“Open my eyes, that I may consider the wonders of your law....  
Give me discernment, that I may observe your law  
and keep it with all my heart.”  
*(from Ps 119)*

“We speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden...  
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.”  
*(from 1 Cor 2:6-10)*

## Pondering the Word ...

About midway through *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, just as we are hitting our stride to accompany Jesus in his ministry, there's this pesky prayer experience Ignatius calls, “The Three Classes of People.”\* I remember stumbling over it when I did the Exercises 20 years ago, and now, as I guide people through the Exercises, the peskiness is evident for many of them as well!

This prayer experience has us look closely at how we approach decisions. It ties in very well with the readings from today which talk about making choices and asking for wisdom to guide our discernment. Discernment is not just about big life choices—what is my vocation, do I marry, do I choose this career path? Indeed, Ignatius' guidance for discernment is very helpful for big decisions. But if we take to heart a quote attributed to Lao Tzu: “*Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny,*” we come to realize the small decisions we make each day matter just as much... maybe even more.

## Living the Word ...

\*(Note: if you are interested in learning about the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Discernment, go to <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/>. Also, the book written BY Ignatius about the Exercises is for a director, not an exercitant—you'll find it very dry and confusing! It is best to do the Exercises with a trained guide, using a book written specifically for the one doing the exercises.)

How do you go about making decisions? As we grow in wisdom, we realize not everything is cut and dry. We can't always rely on the words of the Law. Instead, we look to Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law. No, deciding which soup to buy at the grocery store doesn't require discernment, but perhaps how much money you spend on things beyond what you need does. Here's an easy question to ask when you are faced with a time for discernment: “What would love—God—have me do here?”

## Personal Reflections and Ideas...

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(Next week, we begin “Provisions for the Journey to Jerusalem” through the Lent and Easter seasons.)

**Mon, Feb 13:** *"If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master"* (Gn 4:1-15, 25). Cain has a choice to make. God even warns him. I find it interesting God tells Cain that sin's urge is toward him; it's not the other way around. **Reflection/Provision:** Let's think about this: some more wisdom from St. Ignatius' exercises explains how the counter-spirit—the demon in this story—works to break us down. One way is hitting our weak spots. What is Cain's weak spot? His ego, his pride, his wanting to be the best in God's eyes? I wonder how he would feel if his gifts were accepted along with Abel's. Would that have been enough for him? Pride is an issue for me, too. How about for you? I have to remind myself every so often to ask that question: "What would love have me do here?"

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**Tue, Feb 14:** *When the LORD saw how great was man's wickedness...the LORD said: "I will wipe out the men whom I created..." But Noah found favor with the LORD* (Gn 6:5-8, 7:1-5, 10). **Reflection/Provision:** During my prayer time this morning, after having read the headlines, I journaled: *"How are you doing these days, Lord? I know love never fails, but it must be discouraging to see how awful humanity can be—it's a broken record—kind of like what you felt around the Great Flood: just wipe 'em all out! I'd like to think I could be one you'd ask to build an ark, to keep things afloat. The ark, Noah—they are signs of hope. Let me be a sign of hope, even if it seems foolish in the eyes of the world."* On this Valentine's Day, when we celebrate love with shiny red hearts and pictures of little cherubs with bows and arrows, let us turn our attention instead to the hard work of loving one another—even our enemies—during these dark times of war, famine, and violence. Let's all strive to be an "ark," a sign of hope. Amen.

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**Wed, Feb 15:** *Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones* (Ps 116). **Reflection/Provision:** I finally decided to research what "precious" means in this psalm. It doesn't mean God is happy that one of the faithful has died and is now with him. That's a nice thought but not very comforting to those left behind. The Hebrew word does mean precious, but in the sense of costly or worthy. Scholars suggest this verse says God does not take the death of the faithful lightly. Take comfort that God values not the death but the lives of the faithful.

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**Thu, Feb 16:** *Peter said, "You are the Christ." ... He began to teach them the Son of Man must suffer greatly... Peter rebuke[d] him. He look[ed] at his disciples, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does"* (Mk 8:27-33). Peter's pronouncement is not happening in some rural area but in Caesarea Philippi with its temples dedicated to Roman deities. The contrast is purposeful. Peter's view, as is the view of Jews at the time, is of a mighty conqueror to overthrow the infidels, not as Isaiah's suffering servant. **Reflection/Provision:** I wonder if Jesus rebukes me: *"You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."* Is the story in Revelations just another human take on what we want a god to be, and not what God really is? Jesus told us clearly where we'd find him: in the hungry, the naked, the prisoner. Is the pride we spoke of Monday leading us astray? Pray about this.

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**Fri, Feb 17:** *"Come, let us build...a tower in the sky, and so make a name for ourselves"* (Gn 11:1-9). **Reflection/Provision:** In the documentary, *The Letter*, that I mentioned last week, Pope Francis uses the story of Babel, referring to it as "the tower of arrogance." He expands the story to say the workers on the tower were expendable. If one fell, the powers that be would just replace them. He compared it to the powers that be today striving to make a name for themselves, who have no thought of the poor or the menial workers who labor: "If one falls, there are plenty more where they came from." I reflect on the areas of my life that tacitly support those whose only goal is to make a name for themselves at the expense of the poor. Mind you, not all "big" business or government is bad. Do research and support ethical entities that strive to make life better for everyone.

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**Sat, Feb 18:** *"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, the disciples no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them* (Mk 9:2-13). **Reflection/Provision:** I wonder if the story of the transfiguration is another attempt to get the disciples—at least these three—to understand the kind of Messiah Jesus is. Of course, Peter wants to do what he thinks humans are supposed to do in the presence of the Divine: build an altar, put up a tent, commemorate the event, rather than remembering what God said to David hundreds of years before: *"I have been with you wherever you have gone."* They then see Jesus just as he is and descend the mountain, so Jesus can do what Jesus has been doing and continues to do today: being with us wherever we go. Let us give thanks and praise for this ever-present God. Let us listen to what he says to us today.