

**Year B 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Oct. 14, 2012**  
**Gn 2:18-24; Ps 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-12**

This Sunday the readings speak about wisdom, which we can consider a virtue (*virtus* in Latin means “strength”) or a gift (it is one of the “seven gifts of the Spirit” given to the Messiah in Is 11:1-9, when creation will return to paradise conditions, with innocence and no violence: even lions will be vegetarians!). The Book of Wisdom is attributed to David’s son Solomon, and what he prays for is not material prosperity but wisdom. Wisdom gives us the mind of God, since wisdom was with God when he created, Prv 8:22-31; see also Wis 9:1-2. For us, Christ is the wisdom of God, 1 Cor 1:21-25, the Word of God who created the world and became flesh, Jn 1:1-14. It is this word which is sharp and penetrates us to reveal the truth about God and about ourselves, about who we really are, and thus judges us, as it is really our conscience which passes an unavoidable judgment. This is what the second reading from Hebrews is saying.

And so we come to the gospel reading, an encounter between Jesus and a rich man which is found with some interesting variations in the three “synoptic” gospels (Matthew, where he is young, Mt 19:22; Luke, where he is a “ruler” who does not go away when Jesus asks him to follow him, but only becomes very sad and stays to listen as Jesus, looking him in the face, utters his harsh words about the danger of riches, Lk 18:18-25; and our reading today, from Mark).

In Mark, we have a pious Jew who, like scribes and other religiously-conscientious persons, asked Jesus for his opinion on points of the Law (like the scribe in Mk 12:28-34 who asks about which is the “first” commandment (for Jesus, there are two, not just love of God, but also love of neighbor; or the lawyer in Lk 10:25-37, who is told the “parable of the Good Samaritan” and has his question as to “who is my neighbor” turned upside down into “who *became* a neighbor to the injured man”). This pious Jew seems to flatter Jesus, who corrects him and tells him that he already knows the commandments. But here Jesus very interestingly “sneaks in” a “commandment” which is not in the Decalogue; Jesus includes a prohibition against *wage theft* (translated “do not defraud,” but in Greek it is a word found in Dt 24:14, prohibiting the withholding of wages from a poor worker, and also in Jas 5:4, regarding wages unpaid to “field mowers” which cry out to heaven). Why did Jesus add this “commandment” to the pious but rich man? Jesus then looked at him lovingly, read his soul so attached to his many possessions, and answered his question: if the man sought life, he should cast off his monetary

idols (Col 3:5 classifies greed as idolatry) and follow Jesus. Sadly, it is the only instance recorded of a refusal of Jesus' call.