

Introductory Note for Tb 4, 1-6. 20-21; 5, 1-22, p.124

(1) Believing that the hour of his death is at hand, Tobit gives final instructions to his son, Tobiah. (2) He admonishes his son to remember the Lord all his days, and refuse to sin or break his commandments. (3) In particular, he emphasizes the virtues of generosity in giving alms, love of the brothers, fair dealing with employees, and self-discipline. (4) He then tells

Tobiah about a great sum of money that he has deposited with Gabael at Rages and preparations are made for Tobiah to go to secure it. (5) Tobiah finds a certain Azariah (the angel Raphael in disguise) to go with him. (6) After Tobit satisfies himself of Azariah's trustworthiness and agrees on his expenses, the two set out for Rages, taking Tobiah's dog with them.

WEDNESDAY OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK OF THE YEAR

Reading I: A father's instruction

Tb 4, 1-6. 20-21; 5, 1-22

(See p. 96 for Introductory Note)

That same day Tobit remembered the money he had deposited with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he thought, "Now that I have asked for death, why should I not call my son Tobiah and let him know about this money before I die?" So he called his son Tobiah; and when he came, he said to him: "My son, when I die, give me a decent burial. Honor your mother, and do not abandon her as long as she lives. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her spirit in any way. Remember, my son, that she went through many trials for your sake while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her in the same grave with me.

"Through all your days, my son, keep the Lord in mind, and suppress every desire to sin or to break his commandments. Perform good works all the days of your life, and do not tread the paths of wrongdoing. For if you are steadfast in your service, your good works will bring success, not only to you, but also to all those who live uprightly.

"And now, son, I wish to inform you that I have deposited a great sum of money with Gabri's son Gabael at Rages in Media. Do not be discouraged, my child, because of our poverty. You will be a rich man if you fear God, avoid all sin, and do what is right before the Lord your God."

Tobiah went to look for someone acquainted with the roads who would travel with him to Media. . . .

Tobiah went back to tell his father Tobit what had happened. He said to him, "I have just found a man who is one of our own Israelite kinsmen!" Tobit said, "Call the man, so that I may find out what family and tribe he comes from, and whether he is trustworthy enough to travel with you, son." Tobiah went out to summon the man saying, "Young man, my father would like to see you."

When Raphael entered the house, Tobit greeted him first. Raphael said, "Hearty greetings to you!" Tobit replied: "What joy

is left for me any more? Here I am, a blind man who cannot see God's sunlight, but must remain in darkness, like the dead who no longer see the light! Though alive, I am among the dead. I can hear a man's voice, but I cannot see him." Raphael said, "Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage!" Tobit then said: "My son Tobiah wants to go to Media. Can you go with him to show him the way? I will of course pay you, brother." Raphael answered: "Yes, I can go with him, for I know all the routes. I have often traveled to Media and crossed all its plains and mountains; so I know every road well. . . .

"I will go with him; have no fear. In good health we shall leave you, and in good health we shall return to you, for the way is safe." Tobit said, "God bless you, brother." Then he called his son and said to him: "My son, prepare whatever you need for the journey, and set out with your kinsman. May God in heaven protect you on the way and bring you back to me safe and sound; and may his angel accompany you for safety, my son."

Before setting out on his journey, Tobiah kissed his father and mother. Tobit said to him, "Have a safe journey." But his mother began to weep. She said to Tobit: "Why have you decided to send my child away? Is he not the staff to which we cling, ever there with us in all that we do? I hope more money is not your chief concern! Rather let it be a ransom for our son! What the Lord has given us to live on is certainly enough for us." Tobit reassured her: "Have no such thought. Our son will leave in good health and come back to us in good health. Your own eyes will see the day when he returns to you safe and sound. So, no such thought; do not worry about them, my love. For a good angel will go with him, his journey will be successful, and he will return unharmed." Then she stopped weeping.

WEDNESDAY OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK OF THE YEAR

Reading II: The need for a truly modern spirituality

Bishops of the United States¹

As already noted (see p. 39), the Catholic Bishops of the United States published a collective pastoral on January 21, 1968, which dealt with the mystery of the Church in the light of Vatican II and of certain doctrinal problems of our day. In doing so, they actually set forth a doctrinal exposition of the life and development of the American Church. One

of the points they stressed was the need for a truly modern spirituality which will lead to a fervent zeal for the social apostolate. In this way, the true Christian will seek Christ not only in the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and Tradition, but also in the signs of the times, in the hearts of men, and in all human cultures.

There are few things more urgent in our present need than the development of a truly modern and deeply ecclesial spirituality. No little of the unrest in the world is due to the unrest in the hearts of men. So much of the turmoil in the lives of some Catholics since the Council is due to the absence of a mature and serious spiritual life. The invitation to a more intense following of Christ is not an invitation to quietism. It calls us to labor more arduously than ever before.

We must renew and reform the Church. We must enter into dialogue with each other, with other religions, with the world of unbelief. Yet all this must be done with a serenity and peace of heart which only Christ gives. If we see ourselves as the Body of Jesus, then we shall strive to be one with Christ in his consecration to the Father, one with him in his openness to the Spirit, one with him in his love for his brethren even unto death.

This life-giving union with Christ and his brothers should fire the Catholic with a fervent zeal for the social apostolate. Every Catholic should be eager to endure any hardship for the good of all his fellow-men, recalling the words of St. Paul: "If one of us suffers, all suffer together; if one of us is honored, all rejoice together."² A Catholic becomes responsible when he realizes that his own dignity and destiny are bound with the dignity and destiny of all men. A vocation to Catholic life is also a vocation of service to every member of the human family.

Therefore, indignity, injustice, and inhumanity at any time, in any place, toward any man should arouse in us a deep and

burning concern. This concern is not accidental to the devout life, something super-added to the faith as an evidence of its presence or an adornment of its practice. It is the faith at work, the faith alive in the works without which faith is dead. It is a concern active in us when fellow men are denied human or civil rights, when there are riots in our streets, when death and devastation are rained on other men's cities, when men hunger and thirst in other lands or in our own.

A Catholic must be one who truly believes that as one of us suffers, all suffer, as one of us is healed, all are healed, when one of us is denied justice, all are threatened. Every Catholic conscience must respond in word and deed to the moral imperative addressed by Christ to nations as well as to men: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."³

We seek Christ not only in the Scriptures but in the signs of the times; not only in the sacraments but in the hearts of men; not only in sacred Tradition, but in all human cultures, in the human condition itself.

Within recent years the Church . . . has addressed herself to social justice, world peace, the political order, the underdeveloped nations. By all this, many were moved to put their hopes in her. If Catholic performance does not match Catholic promise, then truly we shall have failed. If our deeds contradict our statements, then we shall have doubly sinned.

¹ *The Church in Our Day* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1968), pp. 22-24.

² 1 Cor 12, 26.

³ Mt 7, 12.