

## AUGUST 19, 2018

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading 1 [PRV 9:1-6](#)

Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns; she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table. She has sent out her maidens; she calls from the heights out over the city: "Let whoever is simple turn in here; To the one who lacks understanding, she says, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding."

### Responsorial Psalm [PS 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7](#)

R. (9a) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

### Reading 2 [EPH 5:15-20](#)

### Gospel [JN 6:51-58](#)

## HOMILY:

It's 41 years this last Thursday that the most successful American Rock and Roll singer of all time died, "the King," Elvis Presley. Since he's a bit before my time, I admit no small amount of amazement at the level of the fanatical and obsessive devotion to this figure. With a bit of superiority, I've thought it all a bit "too much." Well, I think I understand better with this week's death of the "Queen of Soul," Aretha Franklin, 41 years to the day after "the King." I imagine it was because I was raised in Detroit, where one more or less absorbed her musical flair and genius. For my whole life, her artistry has been a source of amazement and above all joy. Hers is an astonishing blend of gospel and blues. The praise has been huge this week—I need add no more to that.

If you listen to her music enough, you'll discover that one of her favorite blues themes is the struggle with painful and failed human relationships, something to which we can all relate. We've all ended up in painful and even comically ridiculous relationships that make us feel like one of her favorite musical name: fools. No one has sung more about fools than Aretha. The fool is one that lacks understanding, the one who lacks wisdom. For example, "Chain of Fools" from 1968. The song is a lament on an unfaithful man, who "for five long years" she thought was her man. But she discovers he was playing her for a fool. And worst of all, she knows it, and lets it continue so attracted is she to him. Sound familiar? She's just another in his chain of fools. Classic blues, classic soul, classic Aretha.

This sublime meditation of our attraction to foolish behaviors and relationships touches a chord because we've all been there, without understanding in confusing times and have felt the fool. But the message of today's scriptures is that we need not remain the fool, for the remedy, wisdom, is possible. For the life of faith offers deliverance from the foolishness of life with a gift of wisdom, if we'll but accept our need for it and receive it.

In this vein, today's first reading, from the Old Testament book of Proverbs, begins "Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns; she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table." In this poetic image, the writer suggests that Wisdom, a personification of God, has built a house in which we ought to desire to live, a house with seven

columns, the biblically perfect number implying this “house of wisdom” is the perfect shelter from the oftentimes ludicrous storms of life. In this “house” Wisdom prepares a lavish banquet, a satisfying and pleasing feast to sate our anxious, searching souls. When we are given wisdom, this satisfying meal for our hearts and souls, we are at peace.

The reading continues, “[Wisdom] has sent out her maidens; she calls from the heights out over the city:” Here we are reminded that, in seeking wisdom and its understanding, it is not about finding wisdom, but rather wisdom finding us. Just as in ancient times maidens would be sent out to invite guests to a wedding banquet, so, as we seek divine understanding, Wisdom herself will seek us if we but stop and prayerfully listen. Next, the reading tells us that these messengers of Wisdom call out in invitation, “Let whoever is simple turn in here; To the one who lacks understanding, she says, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding.” In this quest for understanding of life, we are further told: 1) We must be “simple” to dine on wisdom. 2) We must come to eat food and drink of the type that Wisdom has prepared. 3) We must forsake our foolishness to advance in understanding. We must be simple—that is, we must be humble. Can we accept that we don’t know and must be taught, or are we proverbial “know-it-alls?” Are we ready to dine as wisdom would have us dine, or do we go our own way? Are we not tired of the confusion and anxiety of going our own way? Can we admit we are foolish, that is, not-understanding?

The point of all this: we don’t know everything (and certainly not much about God) until Wisdom come to us and show us (reveal to us) God and the ways of God. Our mission is to know we don’t know, prepare ourselves to receive wisdom, and then receive wisdom where Wisdom promised she could be found.

In the Fall, our parish will embark on a journey seeking understanding, seeking to prepare ourselves to receive Wisdom where God promised it could be found, in the eyes of Jesus and in the midst of the body where Wisdom promised to abide when we gather “two or three together in God’s name.” In this process, called **ALPHA** we will gather seeking wisdom and understanding, by together seeking a deeper understanding of Jesus and His presence offered to us in the scriptures and the sacraments of the Church. Can you be honest and brave enough to admit your lack of understanding and come into the house of Wisdom and feast on its mighty fare? Good news. No cooking required—just come and dine. We will meet on ten Wednesday nights beginning September 5 for about 90 minutes each time, to share a simple meal of ordinary food and then dine on the extraordinary food of our faith. Can you come and dine, or shall we settle for the confusion, fear and doubt that comes without understanding in life? If you have had a confusing or difficult time recently, maybe this is just the thing for you—**ALPHA**. Find registration forms at the entrances of the church or online.

With honesty and truth, without God’s gift of wisdom, before the vast mystery of life, we lack understanding. In the words of the “Queen of Soul,” we’re fools. But happy and even joyful fools, because we know we’re in the loving hands of Wisdom itself, our Lord, who is ready to share! We need wisdom and we can’t get it on our own! May we see our need and see the remedy: The Wisdom of God, the same wisdom here given at each Eucharist and in bounty. May the Wisdom of God come to us with its rich fare. Let’s be fed and let’s live.