

# The Wisdom of Solomon

## IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

### Welcome

*“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”*

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Wisdom of Solomon using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



#### Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



#### Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



#### Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,\* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,<sup>†</sup> taking the form of a servant,<sup>‡</sup> being born in the likeness of men.<sup>§</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>¶</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,<sup>||</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>|||</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.  
14 Do all thi tioning,<sup>15</sup> that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

**2:7 emptied himself:** The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

**2:8 death on a cross:** The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

**2:9 exalted him:** By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

**2:10 every knee should bow:** An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

**2:11 confess:** I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

*A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel*

## **Prepare**

Read the Introduction to the Wisdom of Solomon, paying particular attention to the the *Occasion and Purpose* of the book, its *Content and Themes*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of the Wisdom of Solomon to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

## **Pray**

Use the following questions to guide your reading of the Wisdom of Solomon, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.*

## **Read and Reflect**

Read and reflect on the Wisdom of Solomon as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

### *For understanding*

1. **1:1—5:23.** Through what literary device is immortality, the theme of Wis 1–5, explored? What belief about life is a recurring motif in Scripture?
2. **1:4.** Personified as an indwelling tutor from God, with what is wisdom closely linked? In biblical teaching, what does wisdom do? What does the soul-body language suggest that the author finds about the compatibility between the Greek view of man and Israel's view? What NT view does this body-and-soul anthropology anticipate? What kind of person is enslaved to sin? Who in the NT warns about slavery to sin? According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, why does the soul that is immersed in God not delight in things that deceptively seem good?
3. **1:7.** Where is the Spirit of God diffused, and where does wisdom permeate? What does the biblical teaching on divine omnipresence mean? What similar statement does Paul make about Jesus Christ?
4. **1:12.** As a subject of a theological debate in the book, what do the wicked mistakenly suppose about death and what happens after? What do they do as a consequence? Being ignorant of the Lord's designs, of what are they unaware about bodily death and even an early death? For Wisdom's author, what is physical death far less dreadful than? What does he mean by this? How did spiritual death enter human history, and to whom does it come?
5. **1:15.** With what does the author imply that God rewards the righteous? Why is righteousness the antidote to sinfulness and mortality? If the Book of Wisdom neither affirms nor denies the immortality of the soul on philosophical grounds, on what fundamentally Jewish doctrine does its belief in a blessed immortality depend?

### *For application*

1. **1:2.** How might a person who claims to be seeking the Lord actually be putting him to the test in the process? How can a seeker trust the one he is still seeking?
2. **1:6.** What is blasphemy? Given the definition of blasphemy in the *Catechism* and noting its grave (i.e., mortal) sinfulness (CCC 2148), what would it take to make a person truly guilty of it? Would an expression of mere impatience with God qualify?
3. **1:12–13.** How have you dealt with the death of someone deeply loved? How did it affect your attitude toward God? What have you thought regarding your own death?
4. **1:14.** Since substances toxic to humans do exist in the environment, what do you think the author means by saying that there is no “destructive poison” in created things? How can even poisonous substances be beneficial?

## Chapter 2

### *For understanding*

1. **2:1–20.** How are the twisted thoughts and motives of the wicked revealed? By what five ideologies do they live? According to 2:12 and 3:10 who do the wicked appear to be?
2. **2:12–20.** To what does hatred of the righteous, provoked by their opposition to evil-doing, lead? With what are these verses commonly read in connection? In particular, what do vv. 18–20, which detail how the righteous man is made to suffer in order to test his claim to be God's son, closely parallel?
3. **2:23.** What is the incorruption that wisdom offers? What is the point being made about spiritual death and separation from God, and what about physical death? How is the original divine intention finally realized? According to St. Ambrose, how can the soul once controlled by unrighteousness receive virtue and grace?
4. **Word Study: Envy (2:24).** How many times does the Greek word *phthonos* appear in the Bible, and where? Since classical times, how has envy been defined? In the Book of Wisdom, to what is envy directly opposed, and as what is it exposed? How was envy also at work in the condemnation of Jesus, the new Adam? How is envy unlike jealousy? How does the moral teaching of the Church categorize envy?

### *For application*

1. **2:2–4.** What do you think is the meaning and value of your life? Do you believe you were born by chance rather than by divine plan? What legacy would you like to leave behind?

2. **2:11.** How is the utilitarian philosophy of this verse reflected in our society? How do the laws of our country favor the strong over the weak? What should be the Christian response to them, and on what grounds?
3. **2:12–16.** Which doctrines of Christianity do its critics most often deplore? How do they justify their criticisms? How do they put their opposition to Christian ways into effect?
4. **2:24.** Read the word study on envy at this verse. Since the devil is superior in nature to human beings, what about us could have made him envious? Why is his malice so relentless?

## Chapter 3

### *For understanding*

1. **3:1.** What are the “souls of the righteous”? What doctrine does the Book of Wisdom neither explicitly affirm nor deny? What does it mean to say that the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God? What will the righteous experience in heaven? According to St. Augustine, what lesson should those traveling to such a home learn from the saints?
2. **3:5.** How does Wisdom view the trials and ordeals of life? Consequently, how should one view the suffering of the righteous?
3. **3:12.** In what sense are the wives and children of evildoers considered evil? Of what else may the author be accusing the wicked? What are we to note about the barren woman in v. 13 and the eunuch in v. 14? What might this suggest are the primary targets of criticism in v. 12?
4. **3:16.** Why will the children of adulterers not come to maturity? Beyond this, what may the author also have in mind about them? On this reading, what will fail to endure or afford consolation on the Day of Judgment?

### *For application*

1. **3:4.** What hope of immortality do you have? What is the ultimate goal of that hope?
2. **3:5.** Review the note for this verse. If you have or care for children, how do you discipline them, and for what purpose? Upon reflection, what has the Lord’s discipline in the spiritual life been like for you, and what have you learned from it?
3. **3:11.** How successful is a person likely to be who undertakes a skilled profession without acquiring the necessary training? How successful is a person likely to be in the spiritual life who believes that spiritual direction is unnecessary? What kind of training can spiritual direction provide?
4. **3:12.** Read the note for this verse. What does virtue do for a person’s character? How does one acquire a virtue? What virtue would you most like to acquire?

## Chapter 4

### *For understanding*

1. **4:1.** How were both childlessness and having children experienced in biblical times? Here, however, what is more highly esteemed than natural offspring? What is virtue? Which virtues does the author of Wisdom commend?
2. **4:7–19.** What view about an early death does Wisdom contest? How, on the contrary, should a life pleasing to God be measured?
3. **4:10–15.** Why does the author support his claim in 4:7–9 by alluding to Enoch, the patriarch in Genesis? How does he view Enoch’s translation into heaven? For what purpose does the author of Wisdom often take this approach of referring to persons and stories of the OT? Why does he do this without citing their names?
4. **4:20—5:23.** At the final Judgment, whom will the faithful departed face, and what will they receive from the Lord? By contrast, what will happen to the wicked?

### *For application*

1. **4:1–2.** Who is the most virtuous person you have known? What about this person’s life inspires you? What aspect of his life would you most like to imitate?
2. **4:8–9.** How do you feel about growing old? What do you most anticipate? What do you most fear? How true do you think it is that wisdom and understanding come with old age?
3. **4:11.** What is your opinion about the death of the young, even of infants? How comforting would most people find the sentiment in this verse when a child dies? Comforting or not, how true do you think the statement is?
4. **4:12.** According to St. James (Jas 1:14–15), what leads people into sin? Why do people find wickedness fascinating and virtue boring? What fascinates you?

## Chapter 5

### *For understanding*

1. **5:5.** Of whom are the expressions “sons of God” and “saints” sometimes used? According to some scholars, whom does Wisdom envision the righteous dead joining? What does this *not* mean, however?
2. **5:7.** What do the three terms (translated “journeyed”, “untrodden”, and “wilderness”) also describe in Israel’s history? What typological connection is implied?
3. **5:16.** What does “a glorious crown” represent, as in the NT? From where does the image of a “crown” or “diadem” in the Lord’s “hand” come, and what does it symbolize?
4. **5:17.** On what is the image of God arming himself with his attributes based? In Ephesians, what exhortation does Paul draw from both Isaiah and Wisdom?

### *For application*

1. **5:5.** Can you think of a notorious sinner who converted on his deathbed or received the Sacrament of Confession there? What questions does that raise for you? What does it tell you about the mercy of God?
2. **5:8–12.** At death, what can you take with you? On what will you be judged? According to these verses, if you have lived a successful life but wanted nothing to do with God, what will remain to you? In such a case, what will have been the point of having lived?
3. **5:15–16.** What characteristics of eternal life are mentioned in these verses? For example, of what would care and protection for someone in heaven consist? How does this description of eternal life compare with your understanding of it?

## Chapter 6

### *For understanding*

1. **6:1.** How does the Latin Vulgate begin this chapter? What does the biblical idiom “the ends of the earth” mean? What empire do some scholars believe is in view here, and why?
2. **6:4.** What indicates that God’s kingship over the world is a prominent theme in the OT? How do political rulers participate in God’s government of the world? How is the theme of the “kingdom of God” deepened and expanded in the NT? What law is presumably meant in this verse?
3. **6:12.** How is wisdom personified here? How is her depiction as a woman based on the biblical terms for “wisdom”? How does the imagery in Wis 6–9 draw from and develop Prov 1–9?
4. **6:17.** What two virtues does the desire for wisdom presuppose?

### *For application*

1. **6:3.** Scripture enjoins citizens to respect governing authorities (Rom 13:1–2; 1 Pet 2:13–14; CCC 2238–40). If governing authority is given from the Lord, what allegiance do you owe when authorities misuse it, for example, when they impose restrictions on Christian morality or require you to support immoral behavior?
2. **6:4.** In what ways are you a servant of God’s kingdom? Whether you have much or little authority over others, how have you used the authority you have? Have you ever sought the Lord for help in using authority? If so, in what ways?
3. **6:16.** Read the note for this verse. Upon reflection, have you ever seen God taking the initiative in your life, even before you were aware of his action? For example, when you felt an impulse to pray, what prompted that impulse? What name do we give this initiative of God?
4. **6:23.** In addition to envy, what other vices oppose the gaining of wisdom? For example, how might sloth or greed impede growth in wisdom?

## Chapter 7

### *For understanding*

1. **7:7–21.** As recollections based on Solomon’s prayer for wisdom in 1 Kings 3:5–14, what do these verses illustrate?
2. **7:17.** What knowledge did Solomon, taught by divine wisdom, have? What does the author seem to hint about Solomon’s understanding of philosophical and scientific matters? What is one implication of this verse regarding divine revelation and human reason?

3. **7:20.** What did Jewish tradition hold about Solomon? To what might his understanding of the potency of “roots” point? At least by NT times, what power was the Messiah expected to wield?
4. **7:22—8:1.** What do these verses comprise? How does it build on earlier texts of the OT and make use of terms drawn from Greek philosophy? What is most striking about the figure of wisdom? Of what is this poem the nearest thing to a revelation in the OT? How are characteristics here attributed to wisdom attributed to the Son and the Spirit in the NT?

*For application*

1. **7:1–6.** How would you apply these verses to your view of yourself? What good does it do to remind yourself that in certain respects you are just like everyone else? In what ways are you unique? How often do you thank the Lord for what makes you human?
2. **7:7.** In the normal course of life, how does one naturally acquire wisdom, as distinct from skill? What kind of wisdom can come only through prayer? As one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, what makes divine wisdom different from natural wisdom?
3. **7:13.** How does instruction or discipline teach wisdom? Why must one who acquires divine wisdom share it with others?
4. **7:22–24.** How do these verses describe what God is like? What does each attribute mean to you? For example, why does wisdom require purity?

## Chapter 8

*For understanding*

1. **8:7.** What are virtues? Which are those that are specified in classical antiquity and here in the Jewish life of wisdom? How are these four cornerstones of human formation defined? What does Catholicism likewise commend them as being?
2. **8:8.** Why can knowledge of the past and future only be imparted by God? What was one of Solomon’s more famous intellectual abilities? For what is the expression “signs and wonders” biblical terminology?
3. **8:13.** What double meaning does immortality have in the context of this verse?
4. **8:19–20.** In this brief reflection on the author’s natural endowments, what was it apparent that God had already given him in his youth? What do some scholars read these verses to mean with respect to their author’s beliefs? For what two reasons is this unlikely?

*For application*

1. **8:2.** The note for this verse says that a “loving union with wisdom [8:18] amounts to a loving friendship with God himself.” How do you approach God: as a judge, as a distant parent, as someone to be afraid of, or as a friend? Why do the saints compare union with God to marriage? Do you think such a union is possible for yourself? If not, why not?
2. **8:7.** Of the four cardinal virtues, of which do you think you are most in need? Of which would someone who knows you well (e.g., a spouse) say you are in need?
3. **8:9–20.** Bearing in mind that the speaker in these verses is Solomon, the king, what is to prevent the reader from attributing these verses to a power-hungry narcissist? How might the list of these attributes actually be considered a humble admission?

## Chapter 9

*For understanding*

1. **9:1–18.** On what is Solomon’s prayer for divine wisdom based? For what does the king seek wisdom? With what does the prayer link God’s wisdom? How does the NT reveal the mystery of the Trinity in terms that recall these OT portraits of wisdom?
2. **9:8.** What did the terms of the Davidic covenant specify that David’s royal heir should do? What is the name of God’s “holy mountain”? Of what were the sanctuaries of Israel supposed to be earthly replicas? To whom was its pattern first shown, and to whom was it later revealed as an inspired blueprint?
3. **9:13.** Why did human ignorance of divine things make a deep impression on the author? What makes the counsel of God accessible to humans?
4. **9:15.** What language did Greek thinkers use to describe the trials of the human condition? While the same is true of the author, how does his Jewish perspective influence his view of the body? What does “this earthly tent” mean?

*For application*

1. **9:1–3.** Just as every Christian enjoys the “common priesthood of the faithful”, so each is privileged to play a kingly role, exercising dominion over certain aspects of creation. What does “dominion” mean to you, and how is it different from domination? Where do you exercise dominion in your environment (e.g., in your family, over your time)?
2. **9:5.** According to 1 Cor 3:18–20, the wisdom of this age is folly with God, and the thoughts of the wise are futile. How would you describe the wisdom of the age in which we live? What about it is futile from God’s viewpoint?
3. **9:7.** The note for this verse names Solomon’s brothers Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. What about their characters might explain the wisdom of God’s preference for Solomon? How do you see the wisdom of God at work in placing you where you are in life?
4. **9:13.** How do you try to discern the will of God for your life? What makes discernment difficult for you? According to v. 17, from where does the ability to discern God’s will come?

## Chapter 10

*For understanding*

1. **10:1–21.** What activity does chap. 10 review? In addition to examining the leading personalities in Genesis and Exodus, what additional allusions does it also make? Why is salvation history retold this way? How is God’s work in the world described?
2. **10:1.** Who is the “first-formed”? How does Genesis portray him? What does the text imply that he did after his first transgression against God, although this is not mentioned in Genesis?
3. **10:6.** Whom does the author call the “righteous man” in this verse? What are the Five Cities, and which four are named in Scripture?
4. **10:10.** Who is the righteous man in this verse, and from what did he flee? How is the kingdom of God understood here? What dream is alluded to in this verse?

*For application*

1. **10:7–8.** Scripture is full of stories of people whose unwise behavior proved disastrous for subsequent generations. Can you think of any historical person whose failures had such consequences for those who followed them? How can the pursuit of divine wisdom help you avoid decisions that negatively affect people for whom you are responsible?
2. **10:9.** By the same token, how has the pursuit of divine wisdom protected you and yours from trouble? What encouragement can you derive from the lives of the saints?
3. **10:10–12.** These verses call the patriarch Jacob, whom Genesis portrays as a trickster and a shrewd manipulator, a “righteous man” protected by wisdom. According to v. 12, how did Jacob learn that “godliness is more powerful than anything” (hint: see Gen 32:23–29)? Through what struggles is the Lord teaching this lesson to you?
4. **10:21.** Who are the “mute” and the “infants” of this verse? What kind of language is needed for praising God? How does the grace of God help you build a vocabulary of praise?

## Chapter 11

*For understanding*

1. **11:1—19:22.** How do the final chapters of Wisdom continue tracing the events of salvation history? What is emphasized here? In the overall argument of the book, for what do these saving actions of God in the past give hope? What is a *midrash*? How does the author also make use of a Greek rhetorical device known as *synkrisis* or “comparison”? How many antitheses punctuate this part of the book?
2. **11:4–14.** What is the first Exodus antithesis?
3. **11:9–10.** What kind of time was Israel’s testing in the wilderness? How was it an exercise of the Father’s mercy? Whether preventative or corrective, at what does divine discipline aim?
4. **11:20.** To what does “the breath of your power” refer here? According to what laws is the cosmos ordered? How does this biblical outlook stand in marked contrast to pagan world views? What would the biblical conviction that a divine rationality is inscribed into creation later inspire? According to St. Augustine, how was every creature, without exception, made?

*For application*

1. **11:4–14.** Read the note for these verses. How many antitheses can you detect in your reading of other parts of Scripture (e.g., what appears as folly to one group is salvation to another, as in 1 Cor 1:18)? How might you view general human experience in terms of antitheses, such as what is a bane for one group proves a boon to another?
2. **11:9–10.** How is God's discipline of his servants different from the wrath of his judgment on his enemies, even when both are undergoing similar difficulties? What is the purpose of God's discipline?
3. **11:16.** What examples can you think of to illustrate the truth of this verse? For example, how might one be punished by sinning with food?
4. **11:20.** Read the note for this verse, paying attention to the comment about divine rationality and the natural sciences. What happens to the natural sciences when scientists reject divine rationality? What happens to the minds of the scientists?

## Chapter 12

*For understanding*

1. **12:3–11.** What point does this aside on the conquest of Canaan illustrate? Why were the Canaanites robbed of life and land? Since the Lord could have annihilated the Canaanites at a stroke for their crimes, why did he parcel out punishments "little by little"?
2. **12:10.** What is the ultimate reason that God tempers his judgment with mercy? Why does this verse not mean that the Canaanites were created evil or predestined for damnation? What idea is being presented?
3. **12:12–18.** Of what do the critics of Israel's conquest of Canaan accuse God? In what three ways does the author challenge these allegations?
4. **12:21.** Who are the fathers? In the biblical world, how were covenants established? When God makes a promise on oath, what is he giving?

*For application*

1. **12:2.** When it comes to the correction of children, which is more beneficial: to correct misbehavior a little at a time or to store up offenses and then apply correction once for everything? Why?
2. **12:13–14.** To whom is God accountable? When there is a difference of opinion between God and man, whose opinion must change? Why?
3. **12:19.** The note for this verse suggests that kindness toward others is an attribute of divine wisdom, an idea that anticipates Jesus' teaching on love of enemies. What motive does the verse itself give for being kind? How might such a motive affect your relations with people you regard as enemies?
4. **12:26.** What does a parent do to a child who fails to learn from gradual disciplines, or an employer do to an employee who fails to respond to repeated admonitions? How does failure to respond to discipline prepare one for the final Judgment?

## Chapter 13

*For understanding*

1. **13:1–15:17.** Against what does this excursus on the foolishness of Gentile idolatry seek to strengthen Jewish readers? At several points, of what literary approach does the author make use? In what four ways do both Wisdom and Paul in the NT treat the subject of idolatry?
2. **13:1–9.** For what does the author fault idolaters? Instead of coming to know the Creator, at what did they stop short and fail to recognize? What teaching of Scripture does the Catholic Church uphold in this regard?
3. **13:5.** In a remarkably positive assessment of human reason, what does the author contend that the mind can do by applying the philosophical principle of analogy?
4. **3:6.** What mitigates the blame that can be assigned to worshipers of creation? What three categories of blame does the author delineate?

*For application*

1. **13:2.** While secular scientists claim not to deify nature, how do they think the world operates? Where do they believe such principles of operation originate?

2. **13:7.** How do you determine that something is beautiful? How can beauty become a way of leading people to faith in God? To what kinds of beauty would you refer someone as pointing to God?
3. **13:13–19.** What religious images do you own? Where do you place them in your home, and what veneration do you give them? Since Scripture forbids the making of “graven images”, why does the Church allow their use (CCC 2132)?

## Chapter 14

### *For understanding*

1. **Word Study: Providence (14:3).** To what does the Greek word *pronoia*, translated “providence” or “provision”, refer? Appearing first in the OT in the Book of Wisdom in this verse, what does it designate here? For what is it used in the NT? In ancient Greek writings, what does *pronoia* denote? How did Latin speakers designate this benevolent rule and wise ordering of the cosmos? Although Hebrew had no single word that expressed the idea of God’s Providence, what belief did numerous passages express about it? Under what notion is biblical teaching on divine Providence often subsumed? In Catholic teaching, to what does divine Providence lead creation?
2. **14:7.** What “blessed wood” is referred to here, and who made it? To what wood did the Fathers of the Church often apply this verse?
3. **14:12.** How is the abandonment of God for idols the “beginning of fornication”? What makes this more than just a metaphor?
4. **14:15–21.** To which ancient customs is idolatry traced? What two cases are given in the note?

### *For application*

1. **14:3.** Read the word study on Providence, which refers to CCC 302. If, according to CCC 303, God has “absolute sovereignty over the course of events”, how is God’s Providence and solicitude over creation manifested in natural disasters and man-made terrors?
2. **14:7.** Read the note for this verse. How many hymns and prayers can you think of that celebrate the wood of the Cross? What does the Cross or crucifix mean to you personally?
3. **14:12.** Why were so many idols of ancient society associated with fertility or sexual potency? In modern times, how does our culture idolize sex? How is that idolatry usually represented or portrayed?
4. **14:22–31.** Compare these verses with Rom 1:22–32. In terms of our culture, how accurate do you think this assessment is? How does the assessment affect your own life? What should be the Christian response to it?

## Chapter 15

### *For understanding*

1. **15:1.** What were three divine attributes made known to Moses in Ex 34:6? In what senses is the Lord true?
2. **15:8.** What irony does this verse point out? At death, what was believed to happen to the “living spirit” divinely infused in man?
3. **15:17.** In relation to human nature, what is obvious about idols? What did the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo similarly declare it absurd for persons with souls to do?

### *For application*

1. **15:2.** In sacramental terms, how do you know that God accounts you as his? When you sin, how do you make a perfect act or purpose of contrition? According to the *Catechism*, when is going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation necessary (CCC 1446, 1856)?
2. **15:3.** For a human person, what constitutes holiness? This verse says that knowledge of God is “complete righteousness”; in the biblical understanding of knowledge, what sort of knowledge is this?
3. **15:7.** Christian hymns sometimes address the Lord as a divine Potter molding the human spirit. How would you like this Potter to mold yours? What kind of reshaping might he need to do to you so as to answer that request?
4. **15:16–17.** Modern technology is trying to create an artificial intelligence that is virtually human, capable of learning and operating on its own. How might these verses apply to such an effort? In what sense might such a device actually be alive, and in what sense would it be dead? What questions about being human would such a device raise?

## Chapter 16

### *For understanding*

1. **16:1–4.** What is the second Exodus antithesis in Wisdom?
2. **16:5–14.** What is the third Exodus antithesis?
3. **16:13.** Since all living things are in the hand of God and subject to his absolute Lordship, what point is Wisdom making here? What was the realm of the dead, known in Greek as Hades and in Hebrew as Sheol, imagined to be? Once a deceased “soul” passed within, what happened to it?
4. **16:15–29.** What is the fourth Exodus antithesis?
5. **16:20.** What was the “food of angels” and the “bread from heaven”? How have Catholic liturgy and hymnody used both expressions? What detail is not mentioned in the biblical accounts of the manna?

### *For application*

1. **16:3.** How is a modicum of suffering good for the soul? Why do the saints often mortify themselves, and why does the Church insist that some mortification is necessary in the pursuit of holiness (CCC 2015)?
2. **16:6.** The note for this verse refers to the bronze serpent made by Moses (Num 21:9), which King Hezekiah later smashed because it had become an object of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4). What kinds of religious articles (e.g., icons, crucifixes, statues, rosaries) do you own? Why do you have them? At what point would these articles cease contributing to genuine devotion and become objects of superstition?
3. **16:12.** In what sense is the word of God “living and active” (Heb 4:12)? How does it provide healing?
4. **16:20.** The Church calls the Eucharist the “source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324). What does that mean in practice? How would you explain Catholic devotion to the Eucharist, both within and outside of Mass, to a non-Christian?

## Chapter 17

### *For understanding*

1. **17:1—18:4.** What is the fifth Exodus antithesis? What sort of account of the terror does the author give? What does he further imply?
2. **17:3.** What scattered the “lawless men” (v. 2) from one another? What is unclear about the specters that appalled them?
3. **17:11.** Though familiar to Hellenistic moralists, where is the term *conscience* first used in the Bible? What function of conscience is in view?
4. **17:21.** Of what was the plague of darkness a foretaste?

### *For application*

1. **17:3.** Why is there no such thing as a perfectly private sin? What effects do personal sins that we think are unobserved have on our relationships with others, especially family members and friends?
2. **17:11.** In what sense is wickedness cowardly by nature? How do specific vices, such as lying or stealing, oppose the virtue of fortitude? What does the author mean by saying that wickedness exaggerates difficulties for the conscience?
3. **17:18–21.** Why are people afraid of the dark? If you were alone in a cave with no light, of what would you be most afraid? What does light reveal? Why do Christians refer to God in terms of light?

## Chapter 18

### *For understanding*

1. **18:4.** What kind of lamp is the Torah? With what was Israel, entrusted with divine revelation, tasked? What does the author deduce from this about Egypt?
2. **18:5–25.** What is the sixth Exodus antithesis?
3. **18:5.** Who was the one child who was exposed and rescued? What was the mighty flood referred to here? How did Jewish tradition outside the Bible view this judgment by water?
4. **18:14–16.** How is the word of God personified here? Why does the author use such poetic imagery? How does this passage appear to be echoed in Rev 19:11–16? What has Catholic tradition often read 18:15 as anticipating?

*For application*

1. **18:4.** According to 2 Tim 3:15–16, for what is Scripture useful? What is the ultimate personal goal of reading it?
2. **18:9.** Where in today's world must Christianity be practiced in secret? What dangers do people in that area face for practicing it? Although you enjoy relative freedom of religion, what (if any) are some of the restrictions that local laws or policies place on practicing your Christian faith?
3. **18:14–16.** How does the word of God cut so as to be compared to a sword? As Heb 4:12 describes, how has it helped you discern “the thoughts and intentions of [your] heart”?
4. **18:21.** What is your experience with intercessory prayer? For whom or what do you typically intercede? How confident are you that your prayers are being heard? Have you noticed any results from persistent intercession?

## Chapter 19

*For understanding*

1. **19:1–22.** What is the seventh and final Exodus antithesis?
2. **19:6.** For what purpose is the entire natural world at the service of God? In paralleling the miracle of the sea crossing in Ex 14 to the creation of the world in Gen 1, what two points of correspondence are clear?
3. **19:13–17.** To what is the inhospitality of the Egyptians compared? In spite of the sacred duty throughout the Near East to show kindness to strangers, what did the men of Sodom wish to do, and what happened to them? What likewise happened to the men of Egypt?
4. **19:22.** What has the author of Wisdom shown in chaps. 10–19? How are these lessons from the past also lessons for the present?

*For application*

1. **19:1–3.** When are strong emotions morally good, and when are they evil (CCC 1768)? Why is making a major decision in the heat of anger a bad idea? From a more positive viewpoint, how can the passion of anger work for good?
2. **19:4.** In the story of the Exodus, what compulsion drove Pharaoh to recapture the Israelites, despite the recent deaths of their first-born? Did God's foreknowledge of events determine Pharaoh's behavior? Why do we view compulsive behavior as a problem?
3. **19:6.** According to the *Catechism* (CCC 280), what is the end for which God created the universe? What will its realization mean both for the universe itself and for mankind (CCC 1042–47)?
4. **19:9.** Be it a sporting, a political, or a military victory, how do people tend to celebrate it? How does a rehearsal or review of the events leading up to the victory enhance the celebration? Why is it right to include praise of God in the celebration?