

My word for this Second Sunday is **justice** and **righteousness**.

Justice and **righteousness** express a Marian hope and expectation. Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae*¹ advises, "In order to supply a Biblical foundation and greater depth to our meditation, it is helpful to follow the announcement of the mystery with *the proclamation of a related Biblical passage*, long or short, depending on the circumstances." These Personal Notes will begin to look for relevance between the Sunday readings and the Rosary. Since *Rosary* is often capitalized when referring to the Roman Catholic devotion,² these notes follow that practice. The Christmas Season seems conducive for such a beginning.

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

verse 3

A voice cries out:

In the desert prepare the **way** of the LORD!

Make straight in the wasteland a **highway** for our God!

The idea here is a new Exodus.³ The original exodus is out of Egypt, the new one out of Babylon. Later Christians refer to Christianity as the **way**, an Exodus out of sin and into **righteousness**.

verse 5

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all **people** shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

This verse refers to a return to an original monotheism whereby there are neither kings nor priests intermediating between the **people** and their God. This refers to a type of democratization of religion.⁴

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae*, at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2ROSAR.HTM>, 10/16/02, paragraph 30, page 16 of 26.

² Merriam-Webster's Collegiate ® Dictionary: Tenth Edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993), page 1017.

³ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980), page 6; Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 181.

⁴ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 666, 673; Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The

Once one grasps the meaning of God, the need for a good intermediary becomes heart felt, the need for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., regards **Isa 40:5** as the principal “meditation” and “memory” book for Psalm 97. Reading 15ABC, the Christmas Mass at Dawn and 61C, the Seventh Sunday of Easter use Psalm 97.

verse 9 Go up onto a high mountain,
 Zion, **herald** of glad tidings;
 cry out at the top of your voice,
 Jerusalem, **herald** of good news!

Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. points out “YHWH is surrounded by lesser deities (called **angels**), as in any number of biblical passages (1 Kgs 22:19-22; Psalm 29:1; 58:1; **Isa 40:1-8**; Job 1:6, 12).”⁵ Zion and Jerusalem seem regarded as angels. More importantly, Zion and Jerusalem are symbols of the souls of the Faithful, wherein the **herald** of grace resonates against the politics of the world.

verse 10b who rules by his strong **arm**⁶

During the **Visitation**, Mary proclaims *He has used the power of his **arm***.⁷

Isaiah is prophesying **justice** at the new Exodus, an Exodus Christians regard as liberation from Original Sin into the life of Grace, by “the power of his **arm**.”

Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

The antiphon is verse 8.

Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 69.

⁵ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 61.

⁶ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998). I use this translation when quoting the liturgy, generally noted after indenting after the word *verse*.

⁷ Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985). Unless otherwise noted, I use this translation.

verse 11b **justice** and peace shall kiss.

verse 12b and **justice** shall look down from heaven.

verse 14a **Justice** shall walk before him

2 Peter 3:8-14

verse 13 But according to his promise
we await new heavens and a new earth
in which **righteousness** dwells.

Luke 3:4, 6

verse 4 Prepare the **way** of the Lord, make straight his **paths**

Mark 1:1-8

The Baptism of Jesus is the first Mystery of Light of the Rosary.

verse 1 The **beginning** of the gospel **of** Jesus Christ the Son of God.

This **beginning** probably refers to the whole book, but it may also refer to verses 2 and 3 as a parenthesis.⁸ Many scholars regard verses 1-13 as a prologue to the whole Gospel of Mark.⁹

This is "the gospel not as preached by Jesus but about him."¹⁰

verses 2-3 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
*Behold, I am sending my **messenger** ahead of you:*

⁸ Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 100.

⁹ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001) 647.

¹⁰ Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 100.

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*he will prepare your **way**.
A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the **way** of the Lord,
make straight his **paths**."*

Mark 1:8, below, because of the way it is repeated sometimes the same, sometimes differently in Matthew, Luke, and John, helps make the argument of many contemporary sources for the Gospels.¹¹ Scholars generally accept Mark as one source available for all the other Evangelists. Scholars also generally accept a Q source, though with less confidence. By the Q source is meant a reliable source other than the surviving Four Gospels. **Justice** and **righteousness** are tempered by the realization that the Gospels are very human documents, though Divinely inspired.

Justice and **righteousness** have a lot to do with verse 8.

verse 8 I have baptized you with water;
 he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John's baptism **justified** within the parameters of the law. Scholars quarrel over just what is meant. Some say this middle Jewish period (300 B.C.E-200 C.E.),¹² before and after Jesus, held a sterile view of the law. Some, following Josephus, say justification had an important racial aspect.¹³ Others, based on Saint Paul, say that nonmessianic Judaism at the time of Jesus was dynamic, including an attitude of heart. Perhaps because he was concerned about hearts and souls, Saint Paul had a pessimistic view of human nature.¹⁴ In contrast, middle Judaism was optimistic that salvation was on its

¹¹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 560; Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July, 1992) 485, 488.

¹² See Gabriele Boccaccini, Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) as cited in Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001), page 2, footnote 6. I cite Talbert with admittedly excruciating particularity for my own benefit tracking down the references. Some of the following paragraphs in which Taylor is cited draw from the whole article, pages 1-30.

¹³ Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 5.

¹⁴ Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 16.

way. As one scholar puts it, "Paul criticizes the boasting and self-righteousness arising even from covenantal nomism."¹⁵ The term *nomism* derives from the Greek for *law*.

Particularly relevant to the readings for this Sunday is the scholarly comment that

Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 say that John preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." When this is taken alone, it sounds like a call for an atoning activity done within a covenantal nomistic context so as to "stay in" the **people** of God who will survive the last judgment.¹⁶

In other words, the passage seems to involve a touch of racial ethnicity.

verse 4 John the Baptist appeared in the desert
 proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Paul polemicized against "works righteousness," against understanding the law "as a summons to human achievement"¹⁷ According to Saint Paul, depraved humanity could do no good by itself; incorporation into the life of Christ was required. Ethnicity and race had little to do with it, especially insofar as the Gentiles are concerned. Incorporation into the life of Christ meant that only kindness, gentleness, and maturity are acceptable. While only grace saved, works composed the test for **justification**.¹⁸

¹⁵ Timo Laato, Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 115; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), passim, as cited in Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001), pages 4 and 16, footnotes 10 and 59.

¹⁶ Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 8.

¹⁷ Kasemann, New Testament Questions, 184-85 as cited in Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001), page 12, footnote 42. Charles H. Talbert delivered this paper as the presidential address at the Sixty-third International Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, held at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, August 5-8, 2000. Talbert does not offer a full citation for this source. On page 1, footnote 1, Talbert does cite Ernst Kasemann, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

¹⁸ Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 16.

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The Transfiguration Mystery of Light. Just as Jesus was transfigured, so are the Faithful transformed and empowered with the image of clothing in Saint Paul. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).¹⁹ As one scholar puts it, "Christian behavior is fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)...It is all of grace!"²⁰

Justice and **righteousness** are prophesized in Isaiah, and reflected in the antiphon where the Faithful pray, "Lord let us see your kindness" in one another. 2 Peter reminds the Faithful that "we await new heavens and a new earth in which **righteousness** dwells." Luke and Mark remind the Faithful to "prepare the **way** of the Lord."

¹⁹ Charles H. Talbert, Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 21.

²⁰ Charles H. Talbert, Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 21, 22.