

## Personal Notes

Third Sunday of Advent, 07A, December 12, 2010

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## **Readings**

First Reading:	Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
Responsorial Psalm:	Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 (cf. Isaiah 35:4)
Second Reading:	James 5:7-10
Alleluia:	Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)
Gospel:	Matthew 11:2-11

## **Commentary**

Eleven weeks ago, on July 2, I wrote about the First Sunday of Advent, for September 19. I predicted the media would present new documents laying the sexual cover-up at the feet of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. I missed by a week. Saturday, September 25, 2010, from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.; 11:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. CNN television presented an exposé, titled “What the Pope Knew (HD).” CNN repeated the show in the middle of the night Sunday, September 26, and again from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. The program showed that Benedict XVI signed documents revealing he knew what was happening in the sexual abuse cover-up.<sup>1</sup>

When the hierarchy in the United States is involved, so must be the Papacy as CNN documents. The so-called “man-in-the-street” knows this. The question is how to alert the Vatican to stop pretending the crisis does not exist. I present the following personal experience to illustrate that even when Bette and I were so tired of fruitlessly trying to help, we were unable to avoid the topic.

Bette and I set out for dinner with the purpose of exploring the use of vocabulary that would have meaning as the General Assembly of Virginia creates a budget surplus by not fully funding our Virginia Retirement System. The language that seems to work for the Virginia General Assembly is “political pushback.” As Bette and I were thinking about the matter, and neither of us wanted to talk any more about the sexual cover-up, the Holy Spirit seemed to get involved.

Against our unstated but deliberate mutual purpose, we found ourselves looking for vocabulary that would have meaning and resonate for the Vatican in the current sexual cover-up scandal. I explored representing the behavior of Pope Benedict XVI as “morally reprehensible.” Bette doubted people would know what that meant. We decided to test the difference between us with our waitress, Kitty Watkins, at Vancostas

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<sup>1</sup> Saturday Evening, September 25, DP Daily Press TV, Sunday, Sept. 19-25, 2010, page 19; Sunday Evening, September 26, DP Daily Press TV, Sunday, Sept. 26—Oct. 2, 2010., page 7. The Daily Press does not show what is playing between midnight and 8:00 a.m. <http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/otn.cfm?id=711> accessed September 26, 2010 offers a rebuttal to the program, a rebuttal that leaves me unimpressed, after watching the CNN show. Rather than dealing with the message, the rebuttal seems to attack the messenger. To the contrary, John W. Kennedy regards the journalism as solid. <http://blog.beliefnet.com/catholicsmediaandculture/2010/09/cnns-what-the-pope-knew-offers-solid-reporting-on-the-catholic-churchs-sex-abuse-scandal.html> accessed September 26, 2010.

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Restaurant on Denbigh Boulevard in Newport News, Virginia, Friday evening, September 24.

Kitty knew what “morally reprehensible” meant and was hurt that we did not realize that she is a college graduate who has a passion for vocabulary building. The reason she waitresses is to increase her data base as a real estate agent. That understood, she suggested “contributory negligence” and told a story to illustrate what she meant.

Before going on, I am trying to make two points. The first point is that not only did our waitress understand our quandary with the Vatican and we can expect every other average person to understand it. The second point is once Kitty quickly understood, she was able to offer the vocabulary we sought. She explained contributory negligence as follows.

An underage seventeen-year-old boy set a car on fire with a lighted cigarette he had been smoking. The driver-owner of the car sued the mother for damages. The judge agreed with the defense that the adult owner was guilty of contributory negligence by permitting the underage boy to smoke. Since this was a legal matter of statute, the decision could not be appealed to a higher court. These Personal Notes, therefore, are beginning to refer to “contributory negligence” for the sexual crimes covered up by the hierarchy, in particular Benedict XVI.

Benedict XVI needs one more half-exculpatory point. To his credit, as Cardinal Ratzinger, Benedict did get Pope John Paul II to change his attitude toward guilty priests, but not toward bishops guilty of the sexual cover-up. Benedict himself remains the Supreme Pontiff of his fellow bishops in the cover-up. So long as Cardinal Bernard Law remains in high office, helping determine whom the Vatican should raise to the episcopate. All of the so-called apologies of Benedict XVI to his victims remain a hollow front. Benedict XVI is missing the forest of contributory neglect by himself and his fellow bishops for the individual trees of sexually abused victims, all with the misguided notion to avoid scandal in the Church. Ancient Scriptural readings explain how to cope with this archaic pomposity

In the readings, Isaiah 35:3-4 promises to “strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those who hearts are frightened: Be strong, Fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you.” The Responsorial Antiphon, “Lord, come and save us” is about saving us from criminal negligence on the part of the hierarchy covering-up sexual crimes. James 5:10 reminds the Faithful how to deal with the problem. “Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” The verse that particularly applies to the “What did the Pope Know” is Matthew 11:5: *the deaf hear*. The Pope effectively covered up the fact that 200 deaf boys were sexually abused by a guilty priest he refused to authorize immediate removal from ministry.

Evil can only be ignored so long before it becomes a worse scenario, which we have now with the continued state of denial in which the Faithful find their leadership: now as of old. Where the hierarchy in a state grace, rather than a state of denial, the hierarchy would realize that the Faithful see their situation clearly. That probably

accounts for why, according to a PEW survey, the more educated one is, the less likely one is to be religious.

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### **Annotated Bibliography**

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting material.

#### **Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10**

Readings from Sacred Scripture in Pastoral Care of the Sick includes Isaiah 35:1-10.<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah 35:3-6

Matthew J. Lynch, "Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b—63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions"<sup>3</sup>

Lynch explains, "The beneficiaries of Yhwh's vengeance, moreover, are Zion's weak, lame, and disfranchised inhabitants (35:3-6)."

#### **Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 (cf. Isaiah 35:4)**

Funeral Rites<sup>4</sup> uses this Psalm on page 307, as one of the Second Psalms for Morning Prayer.

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<sup>2</sup> Old Testament Readings, G, Part III: Readings, Responses, and Verses from Sacred Scripture, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983) 257-259.

<sup>3</sup> the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (April 2008) 257.

<sup>4</sup> N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998).

## **James 5:7-10**

James 5:10-11

Joel Marcus, review of David R. Nienhuis, Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon<sup>5</sup>

Not by Paul Alone is an oblique reference to the Epistle of James. Marcus offers a counter-argument to Nienhuis, as follows,

The central conclusion that the Epistle of James is intended as a refutation of Marcionism also seems open to question. Why is there not a more direct refutation of the central Marcionite claim that the God of the OT is a disjunct from and inferior to the God revealed by Jesus? The dual-God theology of Marcionism would seem to necessitate an overtly theological response rather than an indirect, paraenetic one. It is true, as N. points out, that James cites OT paradigms where one might expect him to cite the example of Jesus (see 5:10-11 [used here], 17-18), but he neither makes an explicit point about these examples being *alttestamentlich* nor frames them as art of a larger theological argument about the continuity between the testaments. If this is anti-Marionette polemic, it is subtle indeed.

In other words, Marcus argues Nienhuis argues on thin ice. Marcus concludes by referring to “the provenance and canonical placement of one of the most puzzling documents in the NT.”

## **Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)**

### **Matthew 11:2-11**

Matt 11:7-8

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.<sup>6</sup>

The Alands explain, “The scriptio continue of the original texts not only ignored the division of words, but naturally also lacked any punctuation. ... At Matt. 11:7-8 in the question about John the whole construction depends on the place of the question mark.” The apparatus shows some manuscripts with “did you go out into the desert?” rather than *what did you go out to the desert to see?* and the like. The point is that the Faithful have reason for caution about the degree of certitude translations carry.

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<sup>5</sup> the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (April 2008) 385.

<sup>6</sup> Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 287.

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Matt 11:4-5

Paul Lawrence, The IVP Atlas of Bible History<sup>7</sup>

Lawrence explains:

When John asked some disciples to check on reports he had been hearing about Jesus, Jesus sent John a report which could serve as a summary of his ministry:

*‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.’*

Matt 21:11

Craig A. Evans, review of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., The One Who Is to Come<sup>8</sup>

In the spirit of VanderKam, below, Evans reports, “But more troubling is F.’s critique of Mowinckel.” Evans concludes, Further work is needed to clarify the messianic expectations of the time in which Jesus and his followers lived.”

Directly relative to the reading for today, Evans writes,

Jesus’ appeal to Isaiah 61, which speaks of the proclaimer of the good news as “anointed” by God’s Spirit (see Lk 7:18-23 and Mt 11:2-6 [used here], as well as LK 4:16-30), is now clarified by 4Q521, which speaks of God’s messiah, at whose appearance people will be healed and the poor will hear good news. It is very probably that Jesus’ reply to the imprisoned John was indeed messianic and that his disciples understood it in this way. For his followers, including those who noisily entered Jerusalem Palm Sunday proclaiming the “coming of the kingdom of our Father David,” Jesus was the longed-for ideal king who is none other than the Anointed of the Lord.

Matt 11:2-13

Edward F. Siegman, C.P.P.S., “Teaching in Parables: (Mk 4:10-12; Lk 8:9-10; Mt 13:10-15)”<sup>9</sup>

Siegman argues, “*The Parallel in Mt 13*—Mt’s ‘Day of parables’ is part of the evangelist’s third booklet (11, 2-13, 53) which presents the Kingdom as Mystery, ‘... a symbolic history of the origin, growth, and final destiny of the kingdom.’”

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<sup>7</sup> Downers Grove, Illinois, *InterVarsity Press*, 2006, 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Theological Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (June 2008) 440-441.

<sup>9</sup> *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (April 1961) 170.

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Matt 11:3

James C. VanderKam, review of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., The One Who Is to Come<sup>10</sup>

VanderKam reports that Fitzmyer examines the meaning of messiah, *the one who is to come*. VanderKam reports that “The book is a rich resource for the textual data relevant for studying the word “messiah,” not only in the well-known works but also in ones less frequently mined; it is also a valuable survey of the concept of messiah understood in a restricted sense.” VanderKam thinks Fitzmyer owes more to the non – restricted sense of messiah, e.g. when messiah is not a title.

Matt 11:2

Sean Freyne, “The Galilean Jesus and a Contemporary Christology”<sup>11</sup>  
Freyne argues,

By contrast, both Matthew and Luke remove the secrecy in their redaction of the Markan account. Both extend messianic status to the birth of Jesus, where his true identity and purpose are already made known by heavenly signs and voices. For Matthew, Jesus’ messianic status is plain to see, since his life is the fulfillment of scriptural expectations at every step of the way, most especially in his words and healings, which are described as “the works” (*erga*) of the Christ” (Mt 11:2 [used here]). Throughout, Matthew is at pains to show that Jesus is the Son of David, and on each occasion the declaration gives rise to a heated discussion with the Jewish authorities. Yet, significantly as we shall see Jesus’ actions and demeanor do not correspond with popular expectations of the Son of David, as these are expressed in the contemporary Jewish literature. Clearly, by the time of the writing of Matthew’s Gospel the messianic status of Jesus has become a major bone of contention with the synagogue, as was also true in the case of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 7:25-44; 10:24-25; 12:34-35).

For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at [www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes](http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes)

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<sup>10</sup> the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 600-601.

<sup>11</sup> Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2009) 286.