

Personal Notes
051211 Third Sunday in Advent 008B
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Bringing the presence of God out of difficult situations is manifest in the contemplations offered for this Sunday. Though the Magnificat is unused in the Lectionary readings for this Sunday, Mary, the unwed mother, does exemplify dealing with a difficult situation singing of her joy with the Magnificat. Third Isaiah, happy to return from Exile to Jerusalem, rejoices at the extent to which God overcame their difficulties. Commentators frequently use Isaiah 61:1-4 as background for the Beatitudes,¹ which make God present by overcoming evil.

¹ Thessalonians 5:16-17 urges the Faithful to rejoice in prayer at how Jesus enables them to overcome hardship. The Gospel is about John heralding the presence of Jesus. The first chapter, used in the readings today, portrays John as a witness to Jesus seven times, four times in the Lectionary readings (John 1:7, 7, 8, 19).² John the Baptist exemplifies overcoming sin through fasting and prayer.

The Gospel of John brings together many theological threads. John the Evangelist probably offered his presentation many times, before his redactor wrote it down.³ Through his Gospel, John is preaching. The style is polemic.⁴

The Gospel of John recognizes the Word of God in the First Testament. These are words in documents. The living Word in the New Testament is Jesus. For John, everything Jesus says is the Word of God. That is new. That the Faithful necessarily carry the same Word as an aspect of themselves is also new.⁵

¹ Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., review of Michel Talbot, "Heureux les doux, car ils hériteront la terre" (Mt 5:4 [5]) in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol. 66, No 3 (October 2004) 669.

² Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, "The Signs as Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel: Reexamining the Evidence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 1994) 523.

³ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "Raymond Brown's New Introduction to the Gospel of John: A Presentation—And Some Questions," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 4, 16.

⁴ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 457; Craig L. Blomberg, review of Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 3 (July 2005) 541.

⁵ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 457; Craig L. Blomberg, review of Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the

To be Christophers, to be Christ-bearers, the Faithful must overcome many difficulties, difficulties enumerated in Isaiah 61:1, the poor, the broken hearted, captives, and prisoners. Overcoming such difficulties makes God present at Isaiah 61:10, *the joy of my soul*. Isaiah 61 describes the glorious city,⁶ Zion, which, in turn, becomes a metaphor for the souls of the Faithful.

Luke 4:16-20 uses Isaiah 61:1-2 when Jesus begins his public ministry in Nazareth. Jesus picks up the scroll, moves down sixty-one chapters to Isaiah 61:1 and reads, *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me*, etc. By identifying himself, Jesus also identifies the Faithful. The first of the totally human Faithful is Mary.

Mary's Magnificat also carries a list of difficulties overcome: Luke 1:48, 53, lowly servant, the hungry. As Mary puts it, Luke 1:46, *my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*. 1 Thessalonians 5: 19, 20 continues in a similar vein, though with double negatives, *do not quench the spirit, [or] despise prophetic utterances*.

Questioning the original Greek can raise grave difficulties and gave way to the Protestant Revolt. God, however, is present in the difficulties. The risk of getting it wrong or upsetting the Faithful is one of the accepted risks developing these Personal Notes.

The original Greek for 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 is relatively stable. The Greek for 16-22 is in poetic form, form identified in neither the Nova Vulgata nor the Lectionary. This poetic form may mean that the Faithful sang the original verses 16-22 as a hymn, beginning with *Rejoice* and ending with *Refrain from every kind of evil*.

Because there were only two spots of unstable text, I was able to examine the instability more closely than before. The critical apparatus indicates that a *however* may have been omitted in several manuscripts.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Lectionary (1998):

test everything

The Vulgate (circa 410):

omnia *autem* probate

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

But prove all things

Johannine Understanding of God in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 3 (July 2005) 541.

⁶ Richard J. Clifford, S.J., "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and Its Cosmogonic Language," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January 1993) 16.

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King James (1611): prove all things
Jerusalem (1966): think before you do anything
New American (1970): test everything
New Jerusalem (1985): test everything

The Jerusalem *think before you act* is different and does invite recognition of evil, rather than a “pay, pray, and obey” assumption that all is well with the world. The Greek for *test* is also used to *assay* metals, *distinguish*, and *discern*.⁷

The other omitted word is *our* found in the translation in the Latin translation of Irenaeus about 395.⁸

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Lectionary (1998): May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ

The Vulgate (circa 410): Ipse autem Deus pacis sanctificet vos per omnis, et integer spiritus vester et anima et corpus sine querela in adventu Domini **nostri** Iesu Christi servetur

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610): And may the God of peace himself sanctify you in all things: that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ

King James (1611): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ.

Jerusalem (1966): May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit,

⁷ William D. Mounce, Zondervan Greek Reference Series: the Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House: A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 151.

⁸ Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine: Textum Graecum post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle communiter ediderunt Barbara et Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger: Textus Latinus Novae Vulgatae Bibliorum Sacrorum Editioni debetur: Utriusque textus apparatus criticum recensuerent et editionem novis curis elaboraverunt Barbara et Kurt Aland una cum Instituto Studiorum Textus Novi Testamenti Monasterii Westphaliae (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1999) Editio XXVII, 32*.

soul and body, for the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ.

New American (1970): May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ

New Jerusalem (1985): May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may your spirit, life and body we kept blameless for the coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ.

A footnote to the New Jerusalem:

This is the only reference made by Paul to a tripartite division of body (see Rm 7:24/), soul (see 1 Co 15:44w [sic]) and spirit (which can be taken in two ways: as the divine presence in a human being, giving new life in union with Christ, Rm 5:5e, or more probably as the innermost depths of the human being, open and awake to the Spirit, see Rm 1:9e). The accent is on the totality of the effects of the sanctifying action of God 3:13; 4:3c, the effect of his fidelity.

Pope John Paul II mentions 1 Thessalonians 5:17 in “Rosarium Virginia Mariae.”⁹

The Rosary, a contemplative prayer

12. The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary’s own experience, is *an exquisitely contemplative prayer*. Without this contemplative dimension, it would lose its meaning, as Pope Paul VI clearly pointed out: “Without contemplation the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: ‘In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words’ (Mt 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to mediate on the mysteries of the Lord’s life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are disclosed.”¹⁰ It is worth pausing to consider the profound insight of

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginia Mariae*, at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2ROSAR.HTM>, 10/16/02, paragraphs 12-13, pages 5-6 of 26.

¹⁰ Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 47: AAS (1974), 156.

Paul VI, in order to bring out certain aspects of the Rosary which show that it is really a form of Christocentric contemplation.

Remembering Christ with Mary

13. Mary's contemplation is above all a *remembering*. We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (*zakar*) as making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation. The Bible is an account of saving events culminating in Christ himself. These events not only belong to "yesterday"; *they are also part of the "today" of salvation*. This making present comes about above all in the Liturgy: what God accomplished centuries ago did not only affect the direct witnesses of those events; it continues to affect people in every age with its gift of grace. To some extent this is also true of every other devout approach to those events: to "remember" them in a spirit of faith and love is to be open to the grace which Christ won for us by the mysteries of his life, death and resurrection.

Consequently, while it must be reaffirmed with the Second Vatican Council that the Liturgy, as the exercise of the priestly office of Christ and an act of public worship, is "the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all its power flows."¹¹ The Rosary, in its own particular way, is part of this varied panorama of "ceaseless" prayer. If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a *saving action par excellence*, the Rosary too, as a "meditation" with Mary on Christ, is a *salutary contemplation*. By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer's life, it ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.

Examining 1 Thessalonians 5:23 highlights the life of God within the souls of the Faithful. Omitting **our** seems to mean that Jesus is Lord of all, not only us. The focus now retreats from difficulties with the Greek text to difficulties John the Baptizer had insisting he was not the Christ.

John the Evangelist 1:20 presents John the Baptist as overcoming a false identity as Christ, *I am not the Christ*.¹² The evangelist then builds on Isaiah, *the voice of one crying out in the desert* (John 1:23). In humility, John announces that he is not worthy to untie the sandal strap of his cousin, who is Jesus, the Christ (John 1:27).

¹¹ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

¹² Edwin D. Freed, "Ego Eimi in John 1:20 and 4:25," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1979) 288-291.

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All four Gospels use common wording for this incident (Mat 3:11, Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16) and the Lectionary uses all three in different places.¹³

Lack of worthiness before God implies difficulties or evil within the Faithful. Out of these difficulties arises the presence of God, celebrated first in the souls of the Faithful, then externalized in Christmas.

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

¹³ Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 1992) 488-489.