

My word for this Fourth Sunday is **forever**.

The antiphon is “**Forever** I will sing the **goodness** of the Lord.”

Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., translates **goodness** as **steadfast love**.¹

The Visitation is the pertinent decade of the Rosary, the second of the Joyful Mysteries.

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

2 Samuel 7:9 and **Psalms 89:29** are related.² The Deuteronomist wrote **2 Samuel 7** during the Babylonian exile. Scholars find three phases in the development of **2 Samuel 7**. The first phase is leading up to the Exile, when there is tension between whether or not there should be a king besides Yahweh. The promise is to the seed of David in general. There is tension between whether Israel should remain tribal, symbolized by the tabernacle at Shiloh or should become monarchical, symbolized by the temple in Jerusalem. King David himself never had the royal title nor did he build the temple. The second phase specifies the promise to Solomon who did build the temple. The final phase, during which the Deuteronomist wrote,³ is exilic, as the Jews begin to realize that they are to look for a Messiah.⁴ Mary and Elizabeth were among those keeping the faith.

The notion of **forever** affects this reading with the throne of David, a throne that is to last **forever**, regardless of how faithful the royal lineage may be.⁵ While Luke 20:41 and Acts 13:22-36 have high praise for David, the Davidic narratives themselves in the

¹ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 74.

² Vincent M. Smiles, “The Concept of ‘Zeal’ in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul’s Critique of It in Romans 10:2,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 291.

³ Christopher T. Begg, “2 Kings 20:12-19 as an Element of the Deuteronomistic History,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (July 1986) 27.

⁴ Antti Laato, “Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997) 244-269.

⁵ Jeffrey S. Rogers, “Narrative Stock and Deuteronomistic Elaboration in 1 Kings 2,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 3 (July 1988) 405.

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books of Samuel and Kings portray a less attractive picture, especially relative to his interpersonal relationships with his wives, children, and political ambitions.⁶

verse 1 When King David was settled in his **palace**.

Saint Jerome⁷ uses **domo** or **house** for **palace**, as does Douay-Rheims.⁸ **2 Samuel** is 2 Kings in Douay-Rheims.

My reason for checking my translations with Douay-Rheims is that Douay-Rheims was first published in 1609. At least the Douay version of the Old Testament was first published in 1609. I am not sure about the Confraternity Edition of the New Testament, though there is an 1826 date on the title page. That 1609 date is before the current dynamic equivalence became ingrained. Since I am coming from the Catholic tradition, my first view is to Douay-Rheims, the translation I used growing up.

verse 2b “Here I am living in a **house** of cedar.
while the ark of God **dwells** in a tent.

For **dwells**, Saint Jerome uses *is placed* or **posita sit**. Douay-Rheims uses **is lodged**.

verse 16 “...Your **house** and your kingdom shall endure **forever** before me;
your throne shall stand firm **forever**.”

verse 3b “Go, do whatever you have **in mind**

Saint Jerome translates this as ***in corde tuo*** or *in your heart*. Douay-Rheims has *in thy heart*.

⁶ John Kessler, “Sexuality and Politics: The Motif of the Displaced Husband in the Books of Samuel,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 409-423.

⁷ 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).

⁸ The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate with Annotations, References, and an Historical and Chronological Table: The Douay Version of The Old Testament, First published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609: The Confraternity Edition of The New Testament: A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (New York. P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1950).

verse 4 **But** that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said:

But is a sign of tension, a tension scholars describe as between Israel as a tribe and Israel as a monarchy.

verse 10 "... I will **plant** them so that they may dwell in their place ...

The notion of Israel the **plant**⁹ permeates Sacred Scripture as a theme, similar to rock.

verse 11c The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a **house** for you.

King David starts to build a **house** for the ark of God, God responds by building a **house** for David, a house originally understood within the context of the Davidic royal house, but finally understood within the context of the Messiah.

The English use of **you** for both singular and plural can mislead, especially when the text is presented orally. **You** is not meant in the plural sense, including us.

verse 3a "Go, do whatever **you** have in mind,
for the Lord is with **you**."

verse 5b Should **you** build me a house to dwell in?"

verse 8b It was I who took **you** from the pasture

verse 9 **I have been with you wherever you went,**
and I have destroyed all your enemies before **you**.

And I will make **you** famous like the great ones of the earth.

verse 11b-c I will give **you** rest from all your enemies.

The LORD also reveals to **you**
that he will establish a **house** for **you**.

verse 12 And when your time comes and **you** rest with your ancestors,
I will raise up your heir after **you**, spring from your loins

Forever is a long time. With time, the promises made to David do devolve upon the Gentiles. These promises merit treasuring, the kind of treasuring the Christmas Season does represent, understood correctly.

Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Psalm 89 is one of the royal psalms, including especially Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89, 110, and 132.¹⁰ By the Third Century B.C., when the Psalms were organized into a meaningful

⁹ Bernard F. Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1987) 206.

collection, **Psalm 89**, with Psalm 2 and 72 were used to divide the first three books of Psalms. **Psalms 89**, 2, and 72 were royal psalms increasingly understood with an eschatological or end-time Messianic awareness.¹¹ Psalms 73-89 constitute book three; 90-106 book four.¹² I would only guess that Psalm 2 is close enough to Psalm 1 book one, to count as a divider. The Psalms are divided into five books: I, 1-41, II, 42-72, III, 73-89, IV, 90-106, V 107-150.¹³

verse 2 The **promises** of the LORD I will sing **forever**;
 through all **generations** my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.

The translators seem to have a problem between **goodness** and **promises**. Saint Jerome used *miser cordias*¹⁴ that I would translate as **mercies**. Psalm 88 is the equivalent of **Psalm 89** in Douay-Rheims. Douay-Rheims uses *mercies*. Scholars think that the Deuteronomist is legitimating the rule of Solomon by attributing the royal **promise** to David.

verse 3 For you have said, "My **kindness** is established **forever**";
 in heaven you have confirmed your **faithfulness**.

Kindness is again *miser cordia*.

Faithfulness for Jerome is **veritas** or **truth**. Faith is more a matter of emotion and politics; truth more a matter of reason and truth. Douay-Rheims uses *truth*.

¹⁰ *Adrian M. Leske*, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 665.

¹¹ Sue Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 477.

¹² Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 138.

¹³ Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP. VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4.

¹⁴ Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP. VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4.

verse 5 **forever** will I confirm your **posterity**
 and establish your throne for all **generations**.”

For **posterity**, Jerome uses **semen**. Douay-Rheims uses **seed**, more fitting with the **plant** image.

*To generate, **generations***, the image of a **plant** changing, growing, even transplanted suits the relationship between God and his people.

verse 27b “... my God, the **Rock**, my savior.’

verse 29 Forever I will **maintain** my kindness toward him

For **maintain** the *Nova Vulgata* uses **servabo**, *I will serve or keep or maintain*, in a way that a master never serves a slave. Douay-Rheims uses **keep**.

Romans 16:25-27

Chapter 16 is the concluding chapter of Romans, verses 25-27 are the concluding verses.

verse 25c according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for **long ages**

verse 26b according to the command of the **eternal** God

Saint Jerome uses *aeternum*, eternity, for **long ages**, **eternal**, and **forever**. Douay-Rheims uses **eternal ages** in verse 25c and **eternal** in 26b.

verse 26c made known to **all nations** to bring about the obedience of faith

All nations means the Gentiles.¹⁵ The covenant ultimately includes all the Faithful, including the dispossessed.

Jerome uses *cunctis gentibus* for **all nations**. *Cunctis* connotes *whole* rather than *every*. Douay-Rheims uses **all the Gentiles**.

verse 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ
 be glory **forever** and ever.

¹⁵ See Robert A. J. Gagnon, Why the "Weak" at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 66.

Luke 1:38

Verse 38 Behold, I am the **handmaid** of the Lord.

Saint Jerome uses *serva* that the grammarian translates as *female slave/servant*.¹⁶ Douay-Rheims uses **handmaid**. God is the only proper object of any human. To substitute a human being for God as the object or end of any human constitutes the sin of slavery. I wonder how racial and other forms of prejudice relate to the sin of slavery.

Luke 1:26-38

verse 28a And **coming** to her, he said

That **coming** or **approaching** must have been intimidating.

verse 28b “**Hail**, full of grace!

The Hail Mary Pass may have influenced the translators here. **Hail** also carried the meaning of *rejoice*.¹⁷

verse 29b and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The grammarian offers as a translation, *what country made up this sort of greeting*.¹⁸

verse 33 “... and he will rule over the house of Jacob **forever**,
and of his kingdom there will be **no end**.

Verse 34 can easily be misread by pausing after the word **But**.

¹⁶ 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) 172.

¹⁷ 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) 171.

¹⁸ 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) 171. Also see Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., *Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 116.

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verse 34 **But** Mary said to the angel,
 “How can this be,
 since I have no relations with a man?”

verse 38b “May it be done to me according to your word.”

Luke has Mary more subtle than Matthew 6:10 in the Our Father, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”¹⁹

Forever includes the promise made to David, reflected in the psalm, explained in Romans and illustrated in the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth, the Second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary. **Forever** implies a faith that God will make good on his promises. **Forever** means that what the faithful give away at Christmas, God will return through time. **Forever** means that historians, as arbiters of time, do properly comment in their professional capacities about what **forever** may mean. There is a Christmas Messianic message in **forever**.

¹⁹ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1966) 172.