

Obedience is the key to the Lectionary readings for this Fourth Sunday in Advent. After God romances Mary through his angel, Gabriel, Mary makes her choice, like a disciple rather than a slave,¹ *may it be done to me according to your word* (Luke 1:38). Mary, thus, gives her permission to face the cultural implications of having a child out of wedlock. The Lectionary emphasizes this verse by using it as the Alleluia verse. Feminist theologians offer insight. Theological feminism dates from 1968.²

Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B. describes a Latino Marianismo dimension,³

Mary's *fiat* has traditionally been interpreted in terms of patriarchy, subordination, humility, passivity, and an unlimited capacity for self-sacrifice. In Latin America, this conglomerate of virtues is known derisively as "Marianismo." "In subordination to Him and along with Him, by the grace of almighty God she served the mystery of redemption."

McDonnell goes on,⁴

African American women reject servanthood in favor of the empowering "discipleship," quite justly a major theme in feminist Mariologies.

Feminists object to the *pay, pray, and obey* mentality of the hierarchy. Some feminists see no hope in Sacred Scripture, which is also hierarchical.⁵ Vatican II

¹ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 534.

² Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 532.

³ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 532.

⁴ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 533.

dismissed cultural anthropology.⁶ As someone with a cognate area at the doctoral level in sociology and anthropology, my blood pressure rises when I hear *anthropology* from the altar. Until reading Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology.” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 534, it never occurred to me that anthropology could be anything but cultural.

Dictionary definitions of anthropology:⁷

1: the science of human beings; *esp.*: the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture. 2: theology dealing with the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings.

Feminist theologians insist on treating Mary, as found in the Lectionary readings, within an anthropological context. Pope John Paul II, nevertheless, wrote without much concern for cultural anthropology. In the Marian spirit, Personal Notes for reading 047B, the Third Sunday of Easter, March 5, 2004, available at <http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes/Personal%20Notes.htm> has the first two paragraphs of paragraph 16 of *Rosarium Virginia Mariae*. The “17.” Appearing below is to paragraph 17. Continuing,⁸

The Rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. She is “all-powerful by grace,” to use the bold expression, which needs to be properly

⁵ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology.” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 565.

⁶ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology.” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 541.

⁷ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate @ Dictionary: Eleventh Edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2003) 53

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginia Mariae*, at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2ROSAR.HTM>, 10/16/02, paragraph 16-17, page 8 of 26.

understood, of Blessed Bartolo Longo in his *Supplication to Our Lady*.⁹ This is a conviction which, beginning with the Gospel, has grown ever more firm in the experience of the Christian people. The supreme poet Dante expresses it marvelously in the lines sung by Saint Bernard: "Lady, thou art so great and so powerful, that whoever desires grace yet does not turn to thee, would have his desire fly without wings."¹⁰ When in the Rosary we plead with Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35), she intercedes for us before the Father who filled her with grace and before the Son born of her womb, praying with us and for us.

Proclaiming Christ with Mary

17. The Rosary is also *a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge*, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at different levels of the Christian experience. Its form is that of a prayerful and contemplative presentation, capable of forming Christians according to the heart of Christ. When the recitation of the rosary combines all the elements needed for an effective meditation, especially in its communal celebration in parishes and shrines, it can present *a significant catechetical opportunity* which pastors should use to advantage. In this way too Our Lady of the Rosary continues her work of proclaiming Christ. The history of the Rosary shows how the Dominicans used this prayer in particular at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy. Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have recourse to the Rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before us? The Rosary retains all its power and continues to be a valuable pastoral resource for every good evangelizer.

The 2002 Apostolic Letter from Pope John Paul II never questions the translation, *Hail Mary, full of grace*. The Rosary, *Hail Mary, full of grace* is a translation that greatly distracted the great Renaissance figure, Erasmus (1466?-1536). From this translation flows the notion that Mary was a source of grace, not that Mary had found grace. For Erasmus, this was a clear example of a theological opinion that was

⁹ The *Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary* was composed by Blessed Bartolo Longo in 1883 in response to the appeal of Pope Leo XIII, made in his first Encyclical on the Rosary, for the spiritual commitment of all Catholics in combating social ills. It is solemnly recited twice yearly, in May and October.

¹⁰ *Divina Commedia*, Paradiso XXXIII, 13-15.

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firmly grounded in an untenable Latin translation.¹¹ For that reason, a look at the various translations is in order.

Luke 1:28

Lectionary (1998):

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”

The Vulgate (circa 410):

“Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.”

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee:

King James (1611):

Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with three:

Jerusalem (1966):

“Rejoice, so highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

New American (NAB) (1970):

“Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you”

New Jerusalem (NJB) (1985):

Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favour! The Lord is with you.

I am shocked that the Lectionary does not follow the New American translation here. This is the most egregious example of improper adulation of Mary that I know within Catholicism. Church politics is determining the truth of the translation.

Psalm 89, reflecting the crises of 598-586 B.C.,¹² is of little comfort. Psalm 89: 39-42, 45-47, and 50-52, beyond what the Lectionary uses, are about the people experiencing shaming through divine abandonment.¹³ The happy verses, celebrating the Exodus,¹⁴ used in the Lectionary omit the later verses that berate God for not keeping his promises and sending the Jews into their Babylonian Exile. Some feminists need a new Exodus.¹⁵ Psalm 89 is a community¹⁶ lament.¹⁷ Exile, of

¹¹ Alister McGrath, In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture (New York: Anchor Books: A Division of Random House, Inc., 2001) 58.

¹² John S. Kselman, S.S., and Michael L. Barré, S.S., “Psalm 55: Problems and Proposals,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 3 (July 1998) 462.

¹³ Louise Joy Lawrence, “‘For truly, I tell you, they have received their reward’ (Matt 6:2): Investigating Honor Precedence and honor Virtue,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 693.

¹⁴ 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) 4.

¹⁵ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology.” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 565.

one sort or another, is part of the spiritual life. One way to deal with the solitude of trying to live a good life is with a life of Faith and obedience to moving of the Holy Spirit.

For Saint Paul, Faith and obedience are synonymous.¹⁸ The persuasiveness of God is gentle. If God ever wanted to convince me to believe anything, he could make his point with thunder and lightning in such a way that I, or anyone like me, would certainly believe. If God is gentle with humanity, ought not humanity to be gentle with one another?¹⁹ Hierarchy can be harsh commanding ascent. Harsh, for example, is how the hierarchy is handling sexual abuse scandal and how the hierarchy attacked the Catholic candidate, John Kerry, in the last presidential campaign.

These contemplations are an effort to understand the role of obedience in religious life correctly. These reflections offer no template answer. The Lectionary begins with readings from 2 Samuel about promises made to David, a man never known as king in his own lifetime. King David is a posthumous political title designed to justify the monarchy.²⁰ The Lectionary selection comes just after David dances before the Arc of the Covenant as it arrives in Jerusalem.²¹

¹⁶ Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., "The Use of "Panels" in the Structure of Psalms 73-78," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 4 (October 2004) 540.

¹⁷ Wilma Ann Bailey, "The Sorrow Songs: Laments from Ancient Israel and the African American Diaspora," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 64.

¹⁸ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 534.

¹⁹ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 535-536.

²⁰ Melody D. Knowles, *The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms*, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 237-238.

²¹ Anthony R. Ceresko, O.S.F.S., "The Identity of 'the Blind and the Lame' ('*iwwer upisseah*) in 2 Samuel 5:8b," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 28.

2 Samuel 7:5 refers to David as servant, a meaning with far different implications when Luke 1:38 refers to Mary as handmaid.²² Within the Middle Eastern context of the time, God chooses David to represent God before the people. The king and the people both share an obligation to obey God. Psalm 89:27 and 29 in the Lectionary presents this traditional model of royal authority. *You are my father ... my kindness toward him.*²³

Some manuscripts omit Romans 16:25-27, the very end of the epistle. An NAB footnote explains, "This doxology is assigned variously to the end of chapters 14, 15, and 16 in the manuscript tradition. Some manuscripts omit it entirely. Whether written by Paul or not, it forms an admirable conclusion to the letter at this point." At Romans 16:25, the Greek sense of *mystery* is truth found through revelation. In this way, the mystery has not so much been kept secret, as has the truth. The Greek for *mystery* (as used in Romans and 1 Corinthians) is one of the markers for the genuine writing of Saint Paul. Transferring Faith in God to faith in people is a risky proposition, compounded by the hierarchical abuse of authority.

I recognize that the Greek apparatus is in a quandary at 16:27. While I do not understand the Greek problem, at least I can lay out the differences in translation by those who do understand the problem.

Romans 16:27

Lectionary (1998):

to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Vulgate (circa 410):

solī sapienti Deo per Iesum Christum, cui Gloria in saecula. Amen.

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

To God, the only wise, through Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

King James (1611):

To God [sic] only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Jerusalem (1966):

He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

²² Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 533.

²³ Dale Launderville, O.S.B., "Ezekiel's Throne-Chariot Vision: Spiritualizing the Model of Divine Royal Rule," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 2004) 362.

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New American (NAB) (1970): to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen] [sic]
New Jerusalem (NJB) (1985): to him, the only wise God, give glory through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

The NJB shows Romans 16:25-27 in the form of poetry, undoubtedly a hymn. The problem is that Nestle-Aland keeps the Greek text in prose format.²⁴

Moving on to the Gospel, Luke 1 and 2 reflect the colonial status of Palestine in the ancient Roman Empire. Romans exploited the underclass politically, economically, and ideologically. Rome was a class-based society that racism in the United States reflects.²⁵ Feminists also have problems with the ancient order of things.

One of the enduring problems with feminist theology is dealing with the masculinity of Jesus, whom Luke 1:35 calls *holy, the Son of God, Christ*.²⁶ The post-Vatican II era has tended away from devotion to Mary toward Eucharistic devotion, something Pope John Paul II addressed directly with an encyclical.

Only two more sections of John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae* remain, one for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 14, 2005; the other for the Fourth Sunday of Lent in 2008. This frees me to bring in John Paul II's *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* in a Simplified Version by Rev. Msgr. Vincent M. Walsh. I have divided the encyclical into sixteen parts, seven in Cycle B (the current Cycle), three in Cycle C, and six in Cycle A.

My purpose in bringing in the writings of the Pope is, like the purpose of the Pope writing, catechetical. Toward this end, I have applied to take part in the catechetical certification of the Richmond Diocese at Our land of Mount Carmel Church, in

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 140.

²⁶ Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 1992) 497.

Newport News, Virginia. Only time will tell whether the Diocese and Church will accept my application. To begin with the encyclical,²⁷

Her Own Flesh And Blood

55. Even before the Last Supper, Mary offered her virginal womb [☉ and her whole self, not just her uterus, like Jesus, who offered his whole self, not just one part of his body.] for God to “become flesh.” By conceiving the physical reality of Jesus’ body and blood, she anticipated what happens in every recipient of Eucharist. Mary was asked to believe that she conceived “the son of God” (Lk. 1:30-35), just as we are asked to believe that the Son of God is fully present within us under the sign of bread and wine. Elizabeth’s words, “Blessed is she who has believed” (Lk. 1:45) show that Mary anticipated the Church’s faith. In visiting Elizabeth, Mary was the first tabernacle in history and Elizabeth adored the son of God in Mary’s womb. At Jesus’ birth, Mary contemplated the face of Christ and held Him in her arms. This should inspire us when we receive Eucharist.

Mary’s “Anticipated Eucharist”

56. When Mary presented Jesus in the temple, she heard Simeon call Him a “sign of contradiction” and prophesy that a sword would pierce her own heart (Lk. 2:34-35). This foreshadowing of the cross was her daily “anticipated Eucharist,” a spiritual communion of oblation which culminated in her sharing in the Passion and in her partaking of the Eucharist after Pentecost. What were Mary’s feelings when she heard the apostles (like Peter) say “this is my body which is given for you?” (Lk. 22:19) Mary had conceived this body in her womb. In receiving the Eucharist she welcomed again the heart that had beaten with hers.

Mary’s Teaching

57. What Christ did within His Mother is still present in the Eucharist. So, He continually says to her, “Behold your son” and to us ‘Behold your mother.” (Jn. 19:26-37) We must continually receive this gift, accepting Mary as our mother and renewing our commitment to have her accompany us.

²⁷ “Letter on the Eucharist: Pope John Paul II,” A Simplified Version by Rev. Msgr. Vincent M. Walsh (Merion, PA 19066: Key of David Publications, 2003) 33-35.

As Mother of the Church, Mary is present at every Eucharist because she cannot be separated from the Eucharist anymore than the church can be separated. To express this truth, the liturgy (East and West) has always commemorated her.

The Magnificat

58. Her Magnificat reveals her Eucharistic union. When Mary proclaimed "My soul magnifies the Lord," she already bore Jesus in her womb. She had the true "Eucharistic attitude" praising God "in" and "with" Jesus. While recalling God's wonders in the Patriarchs, she proclaimed the greatest wonder, the saving birth of Jesus. She also spoke of the Eucharist's power which puts the proud "down from their thrones" and exalts "the lowly" (Lk 1:52). By these words she proclaimed the "new heavens and the new earth" which the Eucharist will bring about. Through the Eucharist, our life can also become a Magnificat.

Luke 1:26-38 offers a correction showing that Jesus determines what Messiah means. The concept of Messiah does not determine what Jesus means.²⁸ As Messiah, Jesus offers the faithful his Eucharistic body for spiritual nourishment, even within a feminist context.

In summation, following the truth is to follow God despite whatever political pressures may impinge on the truth. Mary, the Mother of God, does show the way, by choosing to believe that God has her best interests in mind. The Faithful may contemplate choices before them as they relate to the readings.

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

²⁸ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "Jesus as Messiah in the Gospel of Luke: Discerning a Pattern of Correction," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 82-83.