

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

The Gospel of Luke is the focus for the Cycle C Sunday Lectionary readings. Luke presents his material not only in a particularly orderly way but also in an especially ordinary gynocentric¹ way as is brought out in the following readings.

The readings for this Sunday suit an examination of the vocation of motherhood. The two mothers, Elizabeth and Mary, are there together, with no man present, discussing their own situations. Their purpose is not to extend some patriarchal line, such as the line of David, but to do the will of the Father, God himself. As Richard Bauckham words it, “. . . the importance of her [Elizabeth’s] son has nothing to do with continuing his father’s line.”² Doing the will of God is the ultimate form of liberation, for anyone.

Micah 5:1-4a

Micah is tricky. Micah is a prophet wanting to get from under the Assyrians, without success. What Micah prophesied, relief, never happened as Micah prophesied. That being the case, others revised the prophecy. We must now deal both with the unrevised and revised prophecies.

Luke makes no mention of the prophecy of Micah thereby not needing “Quirinius and his census to get Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, as a form of `prophecy historicized.”³ One scholar notes, “Birth of the messiah in Bethlehem may be explicitly dependent on **Mic 5:2** but it could have a wider and less specific basis in a typological reading of the story of King David.”⁴ That typology leans into the Lukan concern for ordinary poor people.

In its own right, the prophecy of Micah reflects a dissatisfaction with how the Judaic Kings are ruling with a view to “a new king who would fulfill the ancient ideal (Isa 8:23-

¹ A word made up by Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002). See the review by Kathleen E. Corley in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 463. Brittany E. Wilson, “Pugnacious Precursors and the Bearer of Peace: Jael, Judith, and Mary in Luke 1:42,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 442 also uses *gynocentric*.

² Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 65.

³ Mark D. Smith, “Of Jesus and Quirinius, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (October 2000) 283.

⁴ John Nolland, “The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998), 294.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

9:6; 11:1-10; **Mic 5:1-5**; Jer 23:5-6).⁵ In the words of Bauckham, "Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospel, but more clearly in Luke's, is a return to the authentic source of David's line among the ordinary people."⁶

verse 1 Thus says the LORD:
 You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
 too small to be among the clans of Judah,
 from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel;
 whose origin is from of old,
 from ancient times.

verse 2 Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
 when she who is to give birth has borne,
 and the rest of his kindred shall return
 to the children of Israel.

verse 3 he shall stand firm and shepherd his flock
 by the strength of the LORD,
 in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;
 and they shall remain, for now his greatness
 shall reach to the ends of the earth;

verse 4a he shall be peace.

Scholars become exercised when ancient prophecies are twisted away from their original intent. For example, one scholar quotes another, "that interpreting clearly imminent temporal denotations as distant is worse than ungrammatical and unreasonable, it is immoral."⁷ Micah is looking for an immediate return from exile. Scholars do not mind if the Evangelists reinterpret the prophecies into a new meaning. What the scholars do mind is attributing the new meaning to the old prophet.

⁵ J.J.M. Roberts, "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 683.

⁶ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 74

⁷ Randall E. Otto, "The Prophets and Their Perspective," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2001), page 237. Otto quotes J. S. Russell, The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming (1887, reprint 1983) 321-22.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

Scholars regard verse 3 as messianic in tone, one of the few such verses in the first Testament. Scholars recognize a divide between Christians, who, after the fact, regard Middle Judaism as highly focused looking for the Messiah, and the contemporaneous Jews themselves, most of whom left little evidence of regard for the promised messiah. As one scholar words it, "the existence of a pervasive Davidic messianism that is, in fact, largely the construct of Christian imagination."⁸

Another scholar, reviewing the composition of the Micah, comments as follows:

The author of the revision breaks up the flow of the dramatic poetry. He preempts and encircles it with a continuous sub-plot (2:12-13; 4—5; 7:10-20) to give Micah's prophecy a new climax and meaning. The reviser recognizes that the drama is about Samaria and Jerusalem and thus portrays Micah's prophecy as one extending from the end of the eighth century to the beginning of the seventh (**1:1aBb**). The revision agrees with the overall thrust of Micah's drama and its message of hope for better days, but while Micah makes the hope immediate, dramatizing it as something occurring in the present (7:7-9), his editor ties the hope to events that are going to happen in the near or distant future.⁹

Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 (4)

As Bauckham puts it, this Psalm is readily

understood as a prayer for God to restore the northern tribes (cf. v 2 [MT 3]) to the land, this refrain occurs three times (vv 3, 7, 19, [MT 4, 8, 20]): "Restore us, O [LORD] God [of hosts]; let your **face** shine, that we may be saved." God's **face** shining on the exiles is his favor bringing them back from exile to the land of Israel.¹⁰

The Lectionary uses the above passage in the following places:

⁸ 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), page 81.

⁹ Joyce Rilett Wood, "Speech and Action in Micah's Prophecy," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), 646.

¹⁰ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 95.

Personal Notes
 031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
 © 2012
 Raymond J. Jirran

Readings	Page in Lectionary	Verses used
2B	11	2-3, 15-16, 18-19, (4) Fourth Sunday of Advent.
12C	61	2-3, 15-16, 18-19, (4) The readings for today.
138A	871	9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20, (Isaiah 5:7a) 27 th Ordinary

verse (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your **face** and we shall be saved.

verse 2 O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
 from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.

verse 3 Rouse your power,
 and come to save us.

The Lectionary does not indicate that verses 2b and 3a are omitted.

The Vulgate (circa 410): (2) Qui **pascis** Israel, Intende,
 qui deducis velut ovem Ioseph.
 Qui sedes super cherubim, effulge
 (3) coram Ephraim, Benjamin et Manasse
 Excita potentiam tuam et veni,
 ut salvos facias nos.

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610): (2) Give ear, O thou that *rulest* Israel: thou that
 leadest Joseph like a sheep. Thou that sittest upon
 the cherubims: shine forth
 (3) before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses.
 Stir up thy might: and come to save us.

King James (1611): Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest
 Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between
 cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and
 Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and
 come and save us.

Jerusalem (1966): Shepherd of Israel, listen,
 you who lead Joseph like a flock;
 enthroned on the cherubs, shine
 on Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh
 rouse your strength,
 come to us and save us!

The King James and Jerusalem verses are not numbered because they begin with
 number one.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

Readings	Page in <u>Lectionary</u>	Verses used
<u>New American</u> (1970):		verse 2 Shepherd of Israel, listen, guide the flock of Joseph! From your throne upon the cherubim reveal yourself to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Stir up your power, come to save us.
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):		Shepherd of Israel, listen, you who lead Joseph like a flock, enthroned on the winged creatures, shine forth over Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh; rouse your valour and come to our help.

The image of God as shepherd comes to infiltrate the First Testament, especially Ezekiel 34 and, in the New Testament, Matthew.¹¹

verse 15 Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted,
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

This verse suits contemplation in a garden of peace.¹² Not only are the people of God analogized as a flock of sheep guarded by God, but also as plants, grown by him. Such a nourishing function suits a gynocentric understanding of the relationship between God and his people.

Scholars regard this verse 15 also as messianic.

¹¹ John Paul Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 4 (October 1993), pages 698-699.

¹² Bernard F. Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1987), 206.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

Hebrews 10:5-10

This passage is about the sacrificial priesthood of Jesus.¹³

verse 10 By this “will,” we have been consecrated
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.

Luke 1:38

This verse immediately precedes the Gospel verses.

verse 38 Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word.

The Lectionary links Mary’s *fiat* with the “will” in Hebrews above, with the *make us turn to you* in the Psalm, and with *by the strength of the LORD* in Micah.

Luke 1:39-45

This is the closest the Sunday Lectionary readings come to offering the Magnificat. The Lukan idea remains that the LORD “sets on high those who are lowly.”¹⁴

Rosarium Virginis Mariae, the October 16, 2002 Apostolic Letter by Pope John Paul II refers to these readings.

CHAPTER II

MYSTERIES OF CHRIST—MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

The Rosary, “a compendium of the Gospel”

18. ...

The Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ’s **face**. Pope Paul VI described it in these words: “As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer

¹³ Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 112.

¹⁴ NRSV as quoted by Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., “The Least in the Kingdom: Matthew 11:11, Its Parallel in Luke 7:28 (Q), and Daniel 4:14,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 51.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany—like succession of *Hail Marys*, becomes in itself an increasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the Angel's announcement and of the greeting of the Mother of John the Baptist: 'Blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of *Hail Marys* constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each *Hail Mary* recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin".¹⁵

...

The Joyful Mysteries

20. ...

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of Mary's voice and the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to "leap for joy" (cf. Lk 1:44). Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as "news of great joy" (Lk 2:10).

...

Bauckham observes, "In Elizabeth and her son the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament culminates, while in Mary and her son the new creation begins."¹⁶

verse 39 Mary set out
 and traveled to the hill country in haste
 to a *town* of Judah,
verse 40 where she *entered* the house of Zechariah
 and greeted Elizabeth.
verse 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
 the infant leaped in her womb,
 and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
verse 42 cried out in a loud voice and said,
 Blessed are you among women,
 and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

¹⁵ Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 46: AAS 6 (1974), 155.

¹⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 58.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

Reading the Greek, different parts of the above translation bother me. I am going to try to characterize the various translations for my own spiritual benefit. Saint Jerome used the original documents. Saint Jerome assumed he knew what the Sacred Scriptures said, the problem was getting the translation understandable. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that the Vulgate is divinely inspired. Douay-Rheims translates the Vulgate. To my disappointment, the Douay-Rheims I just received is updated to 2002, "diligently compared with the Hebrew, Greek and other editions in divers languages," something not on the title page of the Douay-Rheims with which I grew up.

The King James Version reflects the Greek and avoided the Latin as too Catholic. The King James Version, ultimately went back to the original documents Saint Jerome used.

Just as the Douay-Rheims is a translation of the Vulgate, so is the Jerusalem a British English translation from a French Bible, La Bible de Jérusalem that, in turn, went back to the original sources.

The New American Bible reflects the relatively unscholarly influence of the United States hierarchy. This is the translation used, except for the Psalms, in the Lectionary. An Australian bishop, who may have been a scholar, but who translated without scholarly acclaim, translated the Psalms. The New Jerusalem is more an equivalent than a literal translation.

History teaches to be careful when dealing with the Magisterium. The Holy Spirit works through the Magisterium in ways that too often seem strange to historians. Historians generally present Church History as the history of scandal, which it is not, rather than the history of grace, which it is. The knack here is to accept the current Lectionary, understanding that a revision was built into its original promulgation.

The Vulgate (circa 410):

verse 39 Exsurgens autem Maria in diebus illis abiit in montana cum festinatione in *civitatem* Judae (40) et intravit in domum Zachariae et salutavit Elisabeth. (41) Et factum est, ut audivit salutationem Mariae Elisabeth, exsultavit infans in utero eius, et replete est *Spiritu Sancto* Elisabeth (42) et exclamavit voce magna et dixit: "*Benedicta* tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui. (43) Et unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me? (44) Ecce enim ut facta est vox salutationis tuae in auribus meis, exsultavit in gaudio infans in utero meo. (45) Et beata, quae credidit, quoniam perficientur ea, quae dicta sunt et a Domino."

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

verse 39 Now in those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town of Juda. (40) And she *entered* the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. (41) And it came to pass, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe in her womb leapt. And Elizabeth was filled with the *Holy Spirit*, (42) and cried out with a loud

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

voice, saying, "*Blessed* art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! (43) And how have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) For behold, the moment that the sound of thy greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy. (45) And blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished."

King James (1611):

verse 39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, *into* a city of Judah; (40) And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth [English spelling]. (41) And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the *Holy* Ghost: (42) And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. (43) And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Jerusalem (1966):

verse 39 Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a *town* in the hill country of Judah. (40) She went *into* Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. (41) Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the *Holy* Spirit. (42) She gave a loud cry and said, "Of *all* women you are the *most* blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. (43) Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord? (44) For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. (45) Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

New American (1970):

verse 39 During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a *town* of Judah, (40) where *she* entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. (41) When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the *holy* Spirit, (42) cried out in a loud voice and said, "*Most* *blessed* are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. (43) and how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. (45) Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The *holy Spirit* in verse 41 is a surprise, because the grammarian observes that the Greek does not refer to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.¹⁷

¹⁷ 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) 48.

Personal Notes
031221 Fourth Sunday of Advent 12C
© 2012
Raymond J. Jirran

Most blessed is another surprise because the grammarian observes the convoluted Greek is superlative. The Lectionary follows the traditional words of the *Hail Mary*.¹⁸

New Jerusalem (1985):

verse 39 Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a *town* in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the *Holy Spirit*. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of *all* women you are the *most* blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. (45) Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

verse 45 Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."

In conclusion, the **face** of God almighty looks best when ordinary. Micah points to the ordinary Bethlehem, rather than the exalted Jerusalem, as the birthplace of the Messiah. The Psalmist, disgusted with high living kings, looks for the restoration of Israel, implicitly by way of a messiah. Hebrews brings in the Cross, the **face** of God is found in the Cross, a Cross of love. Recounting the meeting between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth recounts the meeting of two ordinary women doing the will of God as best they are able. The point of the readings is to find the **face** of God in ordinary Faithful who are likely to find God in the nature of things, such as gardens.

For more on sources, besides the footnotes, see the Appendix file.

Comment [RJJ1]: K struck: Motherhood is an ordinary vocation performed by ordinary Faithful. Motherhood is more than giving physical birth. Motherhood is most especially giving birth to the Holy Word of God. Just as Jesus joins the physical with the spiritual in the Cross, so does the vocation of motherhood join the physical with the spiritual in nourishing the needs of children. Parenting is far more than physical. Unmarried women in consecrated religious life nourish the Faithful in a manner properly analogous to what married women do raising their children.

One of the most severe Crosses I see among the Faithful at Daily Mass is loss of Faith by their children. The effort to bring their children back to the Magisterium of the Church is a soul-wrenching sacrifice, easily by-passed for more entertaining pursuits. These readings find Mary and Elizabeth rejoicing in whom they are about to deliver and raise. One can only wonder and pray for the loss of too many our children from the Magisterium despite our best efforts.

¹⁸ 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) 58.