

The single word-focus suggested by Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.,¹ is not working. Let me try a more elaborate focus. The focus for this contemplation of the Holy Family is misunderstanding. With the prayer of Saint Francis, “Lord, that I may not so much seek to be understood as to understand,” the Faithful can relate to misunderstanding within the Holy Family. Misunderstanding is helpful for finding God, who understands everything and makes everything righteous, in the final analysis.

My intention is to build upon what I wrote for this Sunday last year. Last year the presider used the “or in Year B” choices.

This Sunday offers a great many choices. Choices are
Sir 3:2-7, 12-14 Psalm 128:1-5 Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 Lk 2:22-40
or, in Year C
1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28, Psalm 84: 2-3, 5-6, 910, 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24 Lk 2:41-52.

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Reading 17A of 17ABC begins with verse 3, rather than 2 and uses verses 14-16, rather than 12-14 as stipulated in the Lectionary. The discrepancy between 2-7 in the Ordo and 2-6 in the Lectionary does two things. The discrepancy, first, exhibits a lack of due-diligence documenting the source of the readings. The discrepancy, second, places the Faithful in the misunderstandings of the Holy Family. Other Scriptural discrepancies highlighted below have the same effect.

From what happened last year, the presider probably will not use **Sirach**. The reason for attending to **Sirach** is for the Faithful who attend Daily Mass. **Sirach** exemplifies daily worship.

The Jews had a daily service known as the Tamid. This reading from **Sirach** serves as a prologue-forty-two-and-a-half chapter (**Sir** 1:1—42:14) synthesis portraying the twice-daily whole offering or Tamid service. Luke is organized assuming this daily activity. Exodus 29:38-56 describes the service. **Sirach** 44—49 recounts Jewish history through the patriarchs, kings, and prophets. Eventually, Chapter 50:20-21 describes the Tamid to which Luke 24:50-53 alludes in the last appearance of the risen Jesus to his followers.²

Faithful attention to the Word of God can raise more questions than it answers. Wisdom is not so much intellectual as volitional; adhering to the Word of God through all the wiles of the Devil. In **1 Samuel** the Lectionary alludes to the Blessed Virgin.

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

² Dennis Hamm, S.J., “The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke’s Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 215-220.

verse 28b There she left him, for Yahweh.

New American (1970):

verse 24b and presented him at the temple of the Lord in Shiloh.

verse 28b She left him there; and as she worshipped the LORD, she said:

New Jerusalem (1985):

verse 24b and took him into the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh

verse 28b They then worshipped Yahweh there.

Educated Twentieth-century Faithful in the United States wonder what happened, as distinct from the meaning of what happened. The Faithful here need caution. To illustrate why: one does better to accept the meaning of one's purported father, than to delve into who one's father really may be, for example via DNA testing. Meaning is more important than the facts upon which meaning relies. Realizing that, bygone ages lacked due-diligence verifying the facts upon which meaning rests. The result is adolescent ambiguity, the type portrayed in these readings.

Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

verse 6 Happy the men whose strength you are!
Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage.

verse 9a O LORD of hosts, hear our prayer;

The Vulgate (circa 410):

verse 6a Beatus vir, cuius est auxilium abs te,
The Latin is singular, the Lectionary plural.

verse 9a Domine, Deus virtutum, exaudi orationem meam
The Latin is singular, the Lectionary plural.

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

verse 6a Blessed is the man whose help is from thee

verse 9a O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer

King James (1611): Psalm 84

verse 5a Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee

verse 8a O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer

Jerusalem (1966):

verse 6 and happy the pilgrims inspired by you

verse 9a God our shield, now look on us

New American (1970):

verse 6 Happy are those who find refuge in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrim roads.

verse 9a LORD of hosts, hear my prayer; listen, God of Jacob.

New Jerusalem (1985):

verse 5a Blessed those who find their strength in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage

verse 8a Yahweh, God Sabaoth, hear my prayer,
listen, God of Jacob.

verse 9a God, our shield, look,
and see the face of your anointed.

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

cf. Acts 16:14b

Luke 2:41-52

verse 42b they went up according to festival custom.

The Greek means they went up and back, i.e. were on the journey.⁴ Various translations follow.

Sometimes when the Faithful enjoy themselves, they are brought up short, realizing not all is well, in contradistinction with the hymn, "All is Well with Thee." There is a sense of waiting for the other shoe to fall. There is always an ambiguity in any good time. What to take from these readings is that the Holy Family knew how to party and customarily celebrated the Passover, a celebration taking on a new meaning with the Resurrection of Jesus.

I think it may be safe enough for me to write *the Greek*, without attributions such as *the grammarian*, when I customarily am using the appropriate place in A Grammatical Analysis by Max Zerwick, S.J.⁵ I do not think I ever offer an opinion on the Greek without ensuring that

⁴ 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) 93.

⁵ 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).

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Zerwick concurs. When my reference is to Biblical Greek by Maximilian Zerwick, S.J.,⁶ I will furnish the documentation.

verse 43b the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem.
The organized Luke progresses from “an *infant* wrapped in swaddling clothes” in verse 12 to “when the parents brought in the *child* Jesus” for the Presentation in verse 27, to “the *boy* Jesus in this verse.⁷ Verses 12 and 27 are used in readings 14ABC, The Nativity of the Lord—Mass at Midnight and 17B, Holy Family Cycle B respectively.

verse 45 but not finding him,
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.
The Greek may mean they retraced their steps, looking along the route; not only that they began looking again after reaching Jerusalem.⁸

verse 46 After three days they found him in the temple,
sitting in the midst of the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions

This is one of three places in Luke where Jesus is teaching: **2:46**, 4:20, and 5:3. In contrast to Mark, Luke carefully presents Jesus teaching as the Jewish teachers did, sitting. Mark has Jesus riding on a colt (11:7) and watching people drop money into the treasury (12:41).⁹ Luke in his orderliness also has a sense of political correctness.

verse 47b at his understanding and his answers.

verse 48b Your father and I have been looking for you
verse 49b Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house

⁶ 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)

⁷ 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) 181. Zerwick mistakenly confuses verse 21 with verse 27.

⁸ 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) 96.

⁹ Terence J. Keegan, O.P., “Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1982) 418.

Luke leaves an ambiguity over the paternity of Jesus. Is Jesus the Son of Joseph or the Son of God? This ambiguity and misunderstanding eventually cause the crucifixion.¹⁰

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

CHAPTER I

CONTEMPLATING CHRIST WITH MARY

A face radiant as the sun

9. . . .

10. The contemplation of Christ has an *incomparable model* in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her son, as she “wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger” (Lk 2:7).

Thereafter Mary’s gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him. At times it would be a *questioning look*, as in the episode of the finding in the Temple: “son, why have you treated us so?” (Lk 2:48); it would always be a *penetrating gaze*, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus, even to the point of perceiving his hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions, as at Cana (cf. Jn 2:5). At other times it would be a *look of sorrow*, especially beneath the Cross, where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the passion and death of her Son, she also received the new son given to her in the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:26-27). On the morning of Easter hers would be a *gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection*, and finally, on the day of Pentecost, a *gaze afire* with the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

¹⁰ 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), 85-86.

Mary's memories

11. Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: "She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19; cf. **2:51**). The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the "rosary" which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. *Mary constantly sets before the faithful the "mysteries" of her Son*, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.

verse 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. There would be no objection to translating the Greek as "had not understood what he had said to them."¹¹

verse 51b and was obedient to them. The sense of the Greek is continued and daily submission.¹²

verse 51c and his mother kept all these things in her heart. So often, this experience is part of the portrayal of the Sorrowful Mother. The Greek carries the sense of *treasured* these things in her heart. What this means for the Faithful is that lack of understanding can be valued and accepted as a gift from God. The gift is in knowing enough to make an effort.

The value and acceptance of ambiguity and misunderstanding is no excuse for lack of due diligence or intellectual pursuit; rather the value resides in a lack of frustration at having to make an effort to understand. To illustrate at a personal level, we value and accept the fact that we lose things, that that loss is God hiding something from us, and if that pleases God, we are

¹¹ 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) 99.

¹² 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) 125.

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pleasured that that is all it takes. This does not mean that we do not keep looking in anything like the pay, pay, and obey sense and the resulting anti-clericalism.

verse 52a And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor
The Greek for *age* means *stature*.

The Greek is not presenting wisdom, stature, and favor as coordinated, but as intimately connected or identical.¹³

verse 52b before God and man.

The Vulgate (circa 410):

verse 42b ascendentibus illis secundum consuetudinem diei festi

verse 45 et non inuenientes regressi sunt in Ierusalem requirentes eum.

verse 47b super prudentia et responses eius.

Prudence is the virtue to which I pay most attention.

verse 50 Et ipsi non intellexerunt verbum, quod locutus est ad illos.

verse 51b et erat subditus illis.

verse 51c Et mater eius conservabat omnia verba in corde suo.

verse 52a Et Iesus proficiebat sapientia et aetate et gratia

verse 52b apud Deum et homines.

The Latin is plural, the Lectionary singular.

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):

verse 42b they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast

verse 45 And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him

verse 47b at his understanding and his answers.

verse 50 And they did not understand the word that he spoke to them.

verse 51b and was subject to them

verse 51c and his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart.

¹³ 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) 59.

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verse 52a And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace
verse 52b before God and men.

King James (1611):

verse 42b they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

verse 45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem,
seeking him.

verse 47b at his understanding and answers.

verse 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

verse 51b and was subject unto them:

verse 51c but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

verse 52a And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour
verse 52b with God and man.

Jerusalem (1966):

verse 42b they went up for the feast as usual

verse 45 When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him
everywhere.

verse 47b at his intelligence and his replies.

verse 50 But they did not understand what he meant.

verse 51b and lived under their authority.

verse 51c His mother stored up all these things in her heart.

verse 52a And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor
verse 52b with God and men.

New American (1970):

verse 42b they went up according to festival custom.

verse 45 but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

verse 47b at his understanding and his answers.

verse 50 but they did not understand what he said to them.

verse 51b and was obedient to them;

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verse 51c and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

verse 52a And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor
verse 52b before God and man.

New Jerusalem (1985):

verse 42b they went up for the feast as usual.

verse 45 When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

verse 47b at his intelligence and his replies.

verse 50 But they did not understand what he meant.

verse 51b and lived under their authority.

verse 51c His mother stored up all these things in her heart.

verse 52a in wisdom, in stature, and in favour

verse 52b with God and with people.

These readings focus on ambiguity and misunderstanding within the Holy Family. The greatest ambiguity is over the paternity of Jesus, an ambiguity that eventually led to his Resurrection. The Faithful deal with similar ambiguities and misunderstandings as they experience the meaning of God in their lives and in the lives of others. The point is not to panic, but to realize that "All is Well" with the Lord.

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