

Personal Notes
080106 Epiphany 20C
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Epiphany is the only set of readings that is the same for all three Liturgical Cycles. This means the readings receive extraordinary scrutiny.

Before getting involved with the readings, a dictionary look at the word *Epiphany* uncovers some fascinating facts. To begin, Epiphany is a noun meaning *manifestation*. *Epiphany* is not a verb, i.e. to epiphany. Historically the feast of the Epiphany carries different meanings. In the Eastern Christian Churches, the

Epiphany refers primarily to the Baptism of Jesus and secondarily to the marriage at Cana. In the Fifth Century, the Western Church changed those commemorations to the arrival of the Magi, as the first manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles. The dictionary capitalizes *Gentiles*.¹

This year has only one scholarly article from the Catholic Biblical Quarterly to reference these readings. The article refers to Ephesians 3:3-6. The scholar, John Paul Heil, examines the Greek for the sense of the phrase *by the Spirit*. Heil thinks that the translation *by* is misleading. A better translation would be *in* the Spirit, carrying the sense of “the dynamic realm of being in union with the Spirit with which the members of the audience were ‘sealed’ when they became believers (1:13).” Paul is referring to a direct contact with the Holy Spirit, independent from the teaching Magisterium of the Church.

This sense of direct contact with the Holy Spirit is not anything I find in extraordinary mystical ecstasy, but, rather, in the ordinary course of events lived by the Faithful. The Faithful experience God in all forms of prayer, not only in those devotions approved by the Church, but also as private revelation. The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults² defines private revelation as “intended only for the good of the person who receives it and does not need to be believed by others.”

Private revelation is the revelation to which Paul refers in the Public Revelation, which is Ephesians. Paul is excited because the Gentiles are newly invited to participate in the Divine life of God as experienced by the Jews. Paul sees God reaching out to all humanity in a new encompassing Divine embrace.

¹ <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/unabridged?va=Epiphany&x=0&y=0071118>.

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) 526.

In The Catholic Virginian for November 5, 2007, Father John Dietzen writes:³

Catholics who do not accept the church's teaching on contraception are often wrongly called heretics. They are not. While it is church teaching, that particular teaching is not technically a matter of "divine and Catholic faith."

If church teaching on contraception is not a matter of Public Revelation, then it seems to be a matter of private revelation, at best. It bothers me that the papacy demands the Faithful place their very sustenance at risk, all the while the papacy is not willing to place its infallibility at risk over its teaching on contraception. Neither does the papacy express the degree of certitude that underlies its teaching on contraception. That is why church teaching on contraception lacks credibility for many. Consequent duplicity and lack of transparency causes some to leave the church.

Another difficult matter is the ordination of women. William Tabbernee, of Phillips Theological Seminary affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),⁴ writes, "If there were ever any doubts that women were ordained to ministerial positions in the early church, such doubts can now be put to rest." More academic details on this book review are below the double line.

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some of the fun stuff scholars are digging up.

³ Father John Dietzen, "Clarification on couples receiving penance together," Catholic News Service, The Catholic Virginian, November 5, 2007, page 9, column 2.

⁴ <http://www.ptstulsa.edu/about.asp> 071121.

The First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6⁵

What books belong in the Bible as Divinely inspired? Who decided and when? What follows is a chronological table, taken from the internet.⁶

- 170 Bishop Melito of Sardis, the first known Christian attempt at a First Testament Canon.
- 360 Council of Laodicea, an early decision.
- 366-384 At the 382 Council of Rome, Pope Damasus listed the books used today by Catholics
- 382 Council of Rome
- 393 Council of Hippo
- 397 Council of Carthage, which Protestants use. The Protestant First Testament is in agreement with the Hebrew Palestinian Canon.
- 419 Council of Carthage
- 1441 Council of Florence, first Roman Catholic definitive list
- 1556 Council of Trent, first infallible definition of canonical books. Catholic Christians accept 46 books from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Alexandrian Canon. In general, Protestants and Jews only accept 39 books of the First Testament.

The Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Eph 3:6

John Paul Heil, "Ephesians 5:18b: `But Be Filled in the Spirit'"⁷

This is the article described above the double line.

The Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew 2:4

The 28th edition of Nestle-Aland⁸

Nestle-Aland does not identify conjectures with regard to punctuation by their authors. In the Greek, there is some question about placing a question mark (?) after

⁵ a

⁶ <http://www.catholicapologetics.org/ap030700.htm> 071118.

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 3 (July 2007) 511-516.

⁸ Nestle-Aland: Greek-English New Testament: Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece, in the tradition of Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger. English text 2nd Edition of the Revised Standard Version The Critical Apparatuses prepared and edited together with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Munster/Westphalia by Barbara and Kurt Aland (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1998) Editio XXVII 11*, 35*, and 130.

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he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. The Lectionary uses a period. I am trying to offer a better understanding of the technicalities underlying the original Greek as currently understood.

As noted above, the Epiphany readings are the only ones exactly the same for all three liturgical cycles. This is the sixth time I have reviewed the same Epiphany readings. My pattern is to continue to reread the Greek for both the Epistles and Gospels. I then take the first three cross-references, looking for further insights. This pattern is in different states, from reading to reading. I have worn out two Greek New Testaments and am now working on my third, where my focus will remain. The binding on this third one is better than the others.⁹

William Tabbernee, review of Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History, edited and translated by Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).¹⁰

While the Sacred Scripture Tabbernee cites are not used in the Lectionary, the matter is of sufficient importance to deserve mention in these Personal Notes. My thinking is that God reveals himself to women much as He reveals Himself to Gentiles through Jesus. Consideration, therefore, is suited to this feast of the Epiphany.

Please pass along suggestions you may have for improving the changed format. Thank you. For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ in The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. XCIII, No. 1 (January 2007) 127.