

Epiphany Apostolic College, where I began college in Newburgh, New York, made the Feast of the Epiphany special to me. While the idea of making the Christ Messiah known to the Gentiles is correct, this time I would pray around the notion of **righteousness**. The Epiphany is no free ride, but a call to **righteousness**. While the first word is **righteousness**, the second word is **people**.

Three mysteries of the Rosary suit this feast, the Third Joyful Mystery, the Nativity; and the First Mystery of Light, the Baptism of Our Lord, the third Mystery of Light, the Coming of the Kingdom.

Isaiah 60:1-6

verse 2¹ See, **darkness** covers the earth,
and **thick clouds** cover the **peoples**;

Second Isaiah had a far different cosmogony, a theory of the origin of the universe, from the present Faithful. Second Isaiah saw creation as a great conflict from which God brought order out of chaos, a place already inhabited by people, a place without evolution as moderns think of evolution. Habitable places are in conflict with uninhabitable places, namely desert and sea.² This sense of finding a way through the **darkness** and **thick clouds** suits the sense of order in Matthew. *Thy kingdom come.*

Peoples, or as the *Nova Vulgata* puts it, *populos*, not *gentes*.

To see God the Faithful must pierce the clouds of darkness, not only outside of themselves, but also inside of themselves. To find God, the Faithful need to see past evil. God is not evil.

verse 3 **Nations** shall walk by your light
and kings by your shining radiance.

¹ All quotations set off in this manner are from 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).

² 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) 8-9.

Nations in the Latin is *gentes*.³ That means us, the Gentiles.

verse 6 ... bearing gold and frankincense ...

Myrrh is omitted. Myrrh is used for embalming and to signify mortification of the flesh.⁴

verse 6 all from **Sheba** shall come

Sheba is in Africa.

Liturgists may be calling the story of the Queen of Sheba to the attention of the Faithful in parallel with the story of the Magi. The Queen of Sheba demonstrates the significance of Solomon in a manner as the Magi demonstrate the significance of Jesus Christ. While the scholar does not regard Matthew as having the Queen of Sheba in mind as Matthew portrayed the Magi, who knows, perhaps the liturgists do.⁵

This is Second or Deutero-Isaiah,⁶ in Babylon, looking forward to the return of Israel to Jerusalem and our own return from sin to **righteousness**.

Second Isaiah understands Jewish history developing from a first stage of sinful behavior to a second stage of divine judgment, to a third stage of restoration. Second Isaiah is in this third stage, regarding the Assyrian exile as a harbinger of the definitive Babylonian exile; the restoration of Hezekiah as a harbinger of the definitive restoration of Cyrus.⁷ God hardwires the spiritual lives of the Faithful into history.

³ 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, 1095.

⁴ Gregory, Hom. 10 in Matth., Exposition from the Catena Aurea by Saint Thomas, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), 210-211.

⁵ John Nolland, "The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998), 285-286; 290.

⁶ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 674.

⁷ 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) 15-16.

Psalm 72:1-2; 7-8, 10-11; 12-13

verses 1-2 O God, with your **judgment** endow the king,
and with your **justice**, the king's son;
he shall govern your **people** with **justice**
and your afflicted ones with **judgment**.

People is a translation of *populum*.

verse 7 **Justice** shall flower in his days ...

The Messiah is described as **righteous**, saved, and afflicted. Verse seven is the **righteous** description.⁸ The Faithful can also expect to be **righteous**, saved, and afflicted.

verse 11 ... all **nations** shall serve him.

Nations is a translation of *gentes*.

verse 13 ... the lives of the poor he shall **save**.

When this psalm is understood within the context of racism in the United States, the call for **justice** and saving the lives of the poor, suit the revelation of God to the Gentiles.

This is one of the Royal Psalms, ending the Second Book of Psalms. The Psalms are divided into five books: I, 1-41; II, 42-72; III, 73-89; IV, 90-106; V 107-150.⁹ Eventually the **people** become grafted onto the King of the Royal Psalms.¹⁰ This psalm is a prayer for the grace to govern ourselves with **justice**.

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

⁸ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 671.

⁹ *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

¹⁰ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 67.

verse 2 You have heard of the **stewardship** of God's grace.

verse 5 It was not made known to **people** in other generations

People is translated from *aliis generationibus*.¹¹

verse 6 that the **Gentiles** are coheirs, members of the same body.

Saint Jerome translates **Gentiles** with *gentes*, that is, *nations* or *peoples*.

Matthew 2:2

No comment.

Matthew 2:1-12

verse 1 When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
 in the days of King Herod,
 behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"
 We saw his **star** at its rising
 and have come to do him homage"

Matthew mentions this **star** three times in this reading. Before reexamining this passage, I thought that the star rose in the east, where the Magi picked it up, to follow to Bethlehem. A scholar notes that the Magi did not need the star to get to Jerusalem. The Greek here uses a plural form for **from the east**, a form that excludes the notion of rising in the east. Except for this first plural form, the singular used later might mean a star seen from the East.¹²

The idea that Herod could not find Jesus, that he had to use the Magi as spies defies human nature. What makes more sense is that in reconstructing his narrative, Matthew combines two different original stories, one featuring Herod as the protagonist, the other the Magi. When Matthew merges the stories, Matthew is interested in portraying the

¹¹ Nova Vulgata: Biblicorum 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, 1739.

¹² John Nolland, "The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 285-286; 291-292.

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Matthew in similar manner, “Matthew emerges from our study as a creative innovator with conservative instincts.”¹⁷ *Conservative instincts* means that, given a choice, Matthew permitted his narrative to remain flawed rather than undo his original sources. Just as the New Testament writers applied the First Testament from the perspective of the New Testament, so are the Faithful obliged to apply the whole of Scripture from their own personal perspectives. This is not to deny the role of the Magisterium, but to say that the application of the Magisterium must be personal to be meaningful.

The *Nova Vulgata* uses *reget*,¹⁸ a root from which comes the English *regal*. The idea is *to lead*. The grammarian mentions “*lead (as a shepherd)*” as one meaning.¹⁹ I do not know why the grammarian writes, ... *the Vulgate rightly uses the subjunctive “qui regat” and not as in Greek the future (“qui reget”), the sense can be roughly “a leader such as to lead.”*²⁰ The grammarian wrote in 1963, reprinted a sixth time in 1994. The number of reprints means that the book was in demand. The *Nova Vulgata* copyright is 1998. The grammarian seems to differ with the *Nova Vulgata*. *To rule* carries a stronger sense of **justice** than *to shepherd*.

One scholar points out, “The use of the metaphor of shepherd and sheep for the leaders and their people embraces the entire Gospel of Matthew.”²¹ Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the Messiah. Matthew’s main concern in the first part of his Gospel is to

¹⁷ John Nolland, “The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 300.

¹⁸ 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, 1457.

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 1996), 3.

²⁰ 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, 69.

²¹ 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) 706.

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portray Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God,²² as gentle shepherd Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and as mighty Messiah, judge of the universe. Later in the Gospel, Matthew will describe miracles worked by Jesus as a sign of Divinity.

People is found as *populum* in the *Nova Vulgata*

verse 7 Then Herod called the magi secretly
and ascertained from them the time of the star's **appearance**.

9b And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

While the scholar does not relate his presentation on Haley's Comet to the **star** at Bethlehem at all, he quotes Josephus describing the comet as "a **star** resembling a sword."²³ Astronomers place the comet in 164 B.C., "as the date of the culminating events of the Maccabean Revolt."²⁴ The scholar does wonder about the memory of the comet in 66 A.D. as a portent just months before the outbreak of the Jewish war of 66-73 A.D. If the scholar can wonder about that, I wonder about the **Star** of Bethlehem.

verse 11 They **prostrated** themselves ...

verse 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to **Herod** ...

Magi were interpreters of dreams.²⁵ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., author of Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (1993) speculates that Herod learned of the Messiah through a dream that the Magi interpreted for him.²⁶ Brown follows the Herod-protagonist approach, an approach not

²² Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the "Miracle Chapters" of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 564.

²³ Josephus *J. W.* 6.5.3 ^s, 289 as cited in Wayne Horowitz, "Halley's Comet and the Judaeen Revolts Revisited," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 3 (July 1996) 459.

²⁴ Wayne Horowitz, "Halley's Comet and the Judaeen Revolts Revisited," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 3 (July 1996) 457.

²⁵ 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), 3.

²⁶ John Nolland, "The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 283, footnote 1 for the full title; 288, footnote 13 for the nearest

followed here. Brown is so important that his difference bears mentioning and is included.

Herod symbolizes disorder in the general theme of Matthew from order to community to transformation.²⁷

The idea that means much to me is that there would have been solidarity between the people of Bethlehem and the Holy Family not to give away that the Holy Family had fled.²⁸ The Feast of the Holy Innocents commemorates this solidarity. Matthew portrays a cost-conscious bloody awareness of the entrance of the Messiah onto the historical stage.

Justice is seen in Isaiah 60 in the mention of **Sheba**, the need to be able to see the Christ Messiah both in ourselves and in others. The Psalm is a call for self-**righteousness**, not only in a private personal sense, unknown historically until Early Modern Europe,²⁹ but also in the various communities and groups to which the Faithful belong. Ephesians is about **stewardship**, in other words, **justice**.

page reference, namely 192, and 289, footnote 18, which does not indicate specifically what page Nolland uses to attribute the speculation to Brown.

²⁷ Warren Carter, "Recalling the Lord's Prayer: The Authorial Audience and Matthew's Prayer as Familiar Liturgical Experience," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3 (July 1995) 529.

²⁸ John Nolland, "The Sources for Matthew 2:1-12," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 295.

²⁹ Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe," The American Historical Review, Vol. 107, No. 4 (October 2002) 1031-1064.