

Personal Notes
050213 First Sunday of Lent 22A
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These Personal Notes are meant to annotate the index at www.western-civilization.com. At first, there was not much introductory material, as I worked my way through the research. Such an approach left the material unfocused. More recently, I have first gone through the research, then focused the findings. Some material that did not fall into focus appeared after citing the Scripture of the Sunday.

These Notes do not presume anything but a most general knowledge of the Bible. Anyone wanting to pick up a Bible to read the passages used should use the New American Bible (NAB), as cited in the Appendix. While the Lectionary does not always follow the NAB, the NAB is as close as one can find, without using the Lectionary itself.

The Gospel for this First Sunday in Lent is about Jesus overcoming temptations from the Devil. By overcoming his own temptations, Jesus shows the Faithful how to overcome their own temptations to be less than loving toward one another and their God. Temptations are personal and frequently hidden from the view of others. Building on past traditions, this personal aspect of temptations focuses the following readings. The question is how appropriate to Christian life is vulnerability and openness to others?

The question extends to not only other human beings, but also to how personally close will the Faithful let the Divine-human, Jesus, get? That is the question for these readings. With obesity as a national issue comes gluttony as a moral issue. Gluttony is an issue for everyone, even for children. Controlling the appetite for food also controls the appetite for sex. That is how marriage and fasting are connected in these Notes. Controlling the appetite for food and sex heightens the appetite for Jesus and God.

Gluttony is a very personal affair, which destructive influence arrives from the Devil. In the Greek, where “the tempter *approached*,” the word *approached* connotes a personal relationship. The context of what happened, with the Devil discussing the matter with Jesus, is, likewise, personal. Fasting is to gluttony as marriage is to sexual immorality. The readings today include both.

Marriage is a personal human relationship. The reading from the Book of Genesis is not only about the institution of marriage,¹ but also about Paradise. What do the Faithful know about Paradise? When the Good Thief asks Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes into his kingdom, Jesus replies about Paradise, not his kingdom. *This day you will be with me in Paradise.* (Matt 23:43). The honeymoon of Adam and

¹ Bernard F. Batto, “The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 628-631.

Eve was in Paradise.² Forced out of Paradise, their former integration of mind and heart eluded the first parents of the Faithful.³

Paul individuates the reference to the Garden of Eden, Paradise, in Genesis 2:8 as a reference to Jesus, as the new Adam. Whereas death came to humanity through Original Sin, life comes to humanity through expiation on the Cross.⁴ Remembering that the Original Sin consisted of eating, Lenten fasting is one form of expiation for sin.

Who was responsible for Original Sin? Scholars often contrast Paul and Matthew.⁵ While Paul blames Adam,⁶ Matthew blames Eve, the temptress of Adam. Matthew draws a parallel between the sinful Adam and the sinless Christ. Very carefully and subtly, Matthew is doing more. Matthew is paralleling the religious hierarchy with the work of the Devil.⁷ This parallel becomes evident in the overview of the whole Gospel. The relationship between sin and virtue is not only communal, but also individual and personal.

Matthew portrays Jesus as hungry not during, but only *after* the fasting event. At least such is the insistence of Saint John Chrysostom (354-407), one of The Four Great Eastern Doctors of the Church, Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople. Moses and Elias were hungry during, rather than after, their fasting, as are the

² 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) 93-94.

³ Dale Launderville, O.S.B., "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 179.

⁴ Stanley B. Marrow, "Κοσμος in John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 95.

⁵ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "The Problem of Νομος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 309.

⁶ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986) 92.

⁷ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 66.

Faithful today. According to Chrysostom, the Divinity of Jesus blocked out his human hunger for food.⁸

Jesus was led, passive voice, by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted. Similarly, the Spirit also leads the Faithful into a desert of dryness of soul and apparent abandonment as a temptation to give up on God and, by extension, fasting. Combating gluttony through fasting is one way to maintain self-esteem and, on a human level, avoid dryness of soul and apparent abandonment.

Out of love for the Father, Jesus left himself vulnerable to the intimate wiles of the Devil in the desert. Similarly, out of love for the Father, the Faithful can also leave themselves vulnerable to the intimate wiles of the Devil during dryness of spirit, especially as couched in personal terms. Out of love for one another, married couples also leave themselves vulnerable to the wiles of the Devil—vulnerability distinguished from stupidity. As Theodotus, Bishop of Ancyra, modern Angora in Galatia Asia Minor, martyred under Diocletian (284-305),⁹ warns, “For he tempts God who unreasonably exposes himself to danger.”¹⁰ Fasting helps keep all things under the Divine umbrella of order.

Chrysostom explains the symbolism of the temptations. The first temptation in Matthew moves from gluttony (*turn these stones into bread*), to avarice (*I will give you all these things*),¹¹ to idolatry (*worship me*). Saint Gregory the Great (540-604), Pope and a second of The Four Great Doctors of the West, notes the progression from gluttony to vainglory to avarice.¹² Here, Mathew is portraying Jesus more as Divine than human.

⁸ Chrysostom, *ex Op. Imp* in Exposition from the Catena Aurea, 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) 6-7.

⁹ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14579a.htm> January 16, 2005.

¹⁰ Theodotus, in Exposition from the Catena Aurea, 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) 9.

¹¹ Origen, *Hom. 30 on Luke*: in Exposition from the Catena Aurea, 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) 10.

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In this first part, from Matthew 1:1 to Matthew 4:16, Matthew is establishing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.¹³ Exchanging scriptural citations with the Devil takes human courage in the face of uncertainty. By example, Jesus encourages the Faithful to be confident, not to be afraid.

When the Devil refers to Jesus as *Son of God*, the Devil may not have in mind the Divine attribution Matthew and the Faithful do.¹⁴ Using the same words, the Devil probably had a more human appellation in mind. Combating the Devil in his overall outline, Matthew begins his narrative with the Incarnation, showing Jesus as the Son of God. Matthew continues with the Baptism, again portraying Jesus as the Son of God. As intimate as the Devil came to Jesus, "Jesus as Israel,"¹⁵ overcame the temptations, thereby exonerating Israel, again as Messiah and Holy God.

The forty days and nights is a prototype of the forty years Israel spent in the desert wandering. Where Israel gave up on God, Jesus did not. Before God led Israel into the desert of Sinai, God gave Israel stone, the stone of the Ten Commandments. After the Devil tempted Jesus to turn stone into bread, the temptation came to dare God to keep his promise about protecting the Messiah from hurting his foot upon a stone. According to Chrysostom, the stone in this case is "the Law, which was inscribed on tables of stone."¹⁶ The scriptural point is that God expects the Faithful to use their minds to avoid insulting God by placing themselves in impossible moral situations.

¹² St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, *Given to the People in the Basilica of Saint John, which is called The Constantinian, on the First Sunday of Lent* PL 54, col. 274; Sermo. 4 de Quad. in 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) 33, 36.

¹³ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 564.

¹⁴ 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), 83.

¹⁵ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 518, 525, 526.

¹⁶ Chrysostom, *Hom. 13 in Matt.*: in 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) 9.

In Romans, Saint Paul regards the law as a prototype of stone, something causing the Faithful to stumble. Paul is no longer enamored of the law, as he once was, as Saul. Paul is enamored of the death of Jesus as a Divine gift, enabling the Faithful to save their souls in the midst of sin.¹⁷

Matthew portrays the Devil in control of the world.¹⁸ Matthew also portrays fasting as the way to deal with this control. Ultimately, God will win out. In the *Our Father*, Matthew prays for order, community, and transformation—all of which intimacy with God and fasting foster.¹⁹

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Scholars observe that, before finishing, several human authors revised the Book of Genesis, one of whom is called the Yahwist. The Yahwist wrote Genesis 2:18-24 in which “the communitarian, affective function of marriage takes precedence over the procreative function of marriage.”²⁰ This observation has serious ramifications in the history of moral theology, as theologians shift over the ages from primacy of procreation to something less than primacy, for sexual relations within the marriage bond.

The Lectionary uses 1 Cor 15:45 for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time C, to cite *The first man, Adam, became a living being.*²¹ The Lectionary, thereby, implies a Christology flowing out of Genesis 2:7.²²

¹⁷ Brendan Byrne, S.J., “The Problem of Νόμος and the Relationship with Judaism” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 295 and throughout.

¹⁸ Mark Allan Powell, “The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 468.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Bernard F. Batto, “The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in Atrahasis,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 631.

²¹ 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) 590.

Genesis 2 also applies to monotheism. Adam of Genesis 1 is a spiritual androgyne, neither male nor female. The division into male and female in Genesis 2 was the beginning of the fall. The monotheistic Adam falls into a less worshipful stance.²³ The implications for such divisiveness for humanity invite issues of sexism and racism.

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Those following these Notes may recall the following comments from the Fifth Sunday in Lent in 2003. After two years, repetition seems appropriate.

Psalm 51 is one of the Christian seven penitential psalms. Psalms 32, 38, and 130 are special in complementing Psalm 51. These psalms all blend individual with communal piety with a view toward justice. "This interaction assures a strong, healthy spirituality, so that personal sincerity keeps a heart and soul within external activity, while the latter prevents individual piety from degeneration into navel gazing and selfish or even morbid subjectivism."²⁴

The Lectionary uses this Psalm differently on four different occasions:

Verses	Antiphon	Readings	Page	Sunday
3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 17	(cf. 3a)	22A Today	146	Lent 1
3-4, 12-13, 14-15	(12a)	35B	224	Lent 5
12-13, 14-15 18-19	(12a)	41A 339		Easter Sunday—Easter Vigil
3-4, 12-13, 17 19	(Luke 15:18)	132C	833	Ordinary 24

Sloppy scholarship, noted the first time here, February 13, 2005, appears in the Lectionary verse references for the psalm. Though these Notes list verse 14 above, sloppy scholarship in the Lectionary omits the reference on page 146. In other words, the Lectionary uses verse 14 but does not document the verse for Readings 22A. The verse is: *Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me*, a personal, intimate verse.

²² Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 264.

²³ Demetrius K. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 46-47.

²⁴ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 156, 157.

Romans 5:12-19

Funerals also uses Romans 5:17-21, 345#3 in Part III: Texts of Sacred Scripture, 13. Funerals for Adults.³⁶ The Lectionary uses Romans 5:12-19 for the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Reading 94A.

In verse 19,³⁷ Paul claims righteousness for all through the obedient death of Jesus that offsets the disobedience of Adam, mentioned in verse 14, Adam (without Eve). Romans 6:1—8:17 is about an uncompromising demand for righteous conduct, within a context of the saving grace of God, obtained through the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 4:4b

The bread alone, by which people do not live, becomes the Eucharistic Bread, by which people can gain eternal life.

Matthew 4:1-11

As Augustine (354-430), African Bishop of Hippo, a third of The Four Great Doctors of the West (Jerome is the fourth), notes in The Harmony of the Gospels, Luke also recorded these temptations, but not in the same order.³⁸ The parallel passages are in Luke 4:1-13 and Mark 1:12-13.

³⁵ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998)271-272, 304-305.

³⁶ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 214.

³⁷ R. Barry Matlock, "Even the Demons Believe': Paul and πιστις Χριστου," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 308.

³⁸ Augustine, The Harmony of the Gospels: in Exposition from the Catena Aurea, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of

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In verse 5, Mathew mentions the parapet of the temple to which the Devil took Jesus. Remigius of Auxerre, the Ecclesiastical Writer who died in 908, explained:

The pinnacle was the seat of the Doctors. The temple did not possess a high roof ridge or summit, such as our houses possess, but was flat on top, after the manner of Palestinian houses. And in the temple itself there were three stories. You must know that the pinnacle was placed on the floor, and on each floor there was a pinnacle. Whichever pinnacle therefore he set Him upon, we know that he set Him upon one from which he could fall down.³⁹

Verses 5-7, showing that even the Devil can quote scripture, even from a pinnacle, is a caution against using Scripture out of the context of its social production to advocate anything about power and public policy, especially in matters of sexism and racism.⁴⁰

Verse 10 is in explicit tension with Jewish monotheism. *Him alone shall you serve* implies there are other gods, besides God. The Scriptural quotation Jesus uses is from Deut. 6:13.⁴¹ Controlling the appetite is one way the Faithful ensure their god is not their belly, but God.

Jesus offsets gluttony and obesity by fasting. Thus fortified, Jesus also lets the Spirit leave him vulnerable to the intimate approach of the tempter, the Devil. Later in the *Our Father*, Jesus prays not to be led into temptation. This means the Faithful ought not to tempt one another deliberately.

Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 12.

³⁹ Remigius, in Exposition from the Catena Aurea, 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) 8.

⁴⁰ 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) 130.

⁴¹ Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 274.

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The question for this First Sunday in Lent is how appropriate to Christian life is vulnerability and openness to others? The readings help the Faithful pray about the matter. Genesis 2 is about the temptations that led to Original Sin. Psalm 51 is a penitential reaction. *Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned* as the Responsorial antiphon puts it. Romans shows how personal righteousness comes through the merits of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, by overcoming his own temptations, Jesus shows the Faithful how to overcome their own temptations to be less than loving toward one another and their God.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.