

Personal Notes
060319 Third Sunday in Lent 29B
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The message arising out of these readings is that the Faithful must listen and watch very carefully, using their intelligence to receive the Messages of God toward living the life God expects. The readings for this Sunday explain the Cross and suffering as, ultimately, meaningful for life. The connecting theme is wonderment that God revealed himself to humans. That revelation is something more wonderful than creating the cosmos.

The readings begin with the revelation of how to make sense out of life, namely the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. The 19th Psalm is full of excitement at knowing the law, the words of everlasting life. Saint Paul draws the Ten Commandments into the Cross, by identifying Jewish Wisdom and Greek truth with the life of Christ. Finally, the Gospel is about Jesus not being able to trust himself to the Faithful, until they understand the meaning of the Cross in its glorious reward of eternal life. Pastoral Care of the Sick uses the 19th Psalm¹ and 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 to help with suffering.²

The reading from Exodus begins with the Ten Commandments. That reading causes some problems, as developed below. As an aside, to help the Faithful remember what is in these readings, the 1631 edition of the King James Bible had the following misprint, “Thou shalt commit adultery.” For this reason, that edition became known as the “Wicked Bible.”³

¹ The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: 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: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983) 34, 38.

² The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: 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: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983) 268

³ Alister McGrath, In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture (New York: Anchor Books: A Division of Random House, Inc., 2001) 216.

As something more than an aside, Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., notes, "The text of Scripture manifests a dominating male perspective as seen in the Decalogue, where the wife is numbered among a man's possessions, along with slaves, oxen, and donkeys (Exodus 20:17)."⁴ Realizing that the Church has historically changed its ideas, understanding revelation sometimes demands academic rigor. McDonnell struggles with how to incorporate feminist theology into the mainstream.

McDonnell writes, "Instead of men's ham-fisted accent on obedience read into women's lives from the *fiat* [*thy will be done* Marian] text, these feminist theologians propose persuasion as the normal way of exercising authority."⁵ Apparently, that is a good idea and is part of revelation. This gentle approach is in line with the Epistle used February 22, The Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle, 1 Peter 5:3 *overseeing not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it*. Gentle persuasion is found more in these musings than in Magisterial dictates.

To return to the Ten Commandments and the natural law, the ancient Jews had a problem accepting trust in the sovereign rule of God. In the Sixth Century B.C., Ezekiel excoriated the Jews for putting images before the Lord, thereby "compromising the integrity of the covenant relationship."⁶ At that time, the Jews were stuck in Babylon. Ezekiel could look to the reading for this Sunday at Exodus 20:5, *you shall not bow down before them [idols] or worship them*, as his inspiration.⁷

The ancient Jews, the Faithful ones, furthermore, had a problem with the commandment not to kill. For example, the Romans recognized that the observant Jews would not defend themselves on the Sabbath unless directly attacked. This knowledge enabled the Romans to ignore the Jews while the Romans filled in a ravine north of the temple, which they used only after the Sabbath to attack directly.⁸

⁴ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 529.

⁵ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 566.

⁶ Dale Launderville, O.S.B., "Ezekiel's Throne-Chariot Vision: Spiritualizing the Model of Divine Royal Rule," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 2004) 362.

⁷ 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) 222.

Some Jews refused to fight on the Sabbath under any circumstances, regarding fighting as Sabbath work. The issue was what constituted work. When their enemies took advantage of the Jews not fighting to massacre them, the survivors became less convinced that *Thou shalt not kill* meant not fighting on the Sabbath.⁹

Exodus 20:17 ends a particular Ten Commandment passage, to which the Samaritan form of the Pentateuch adds two specifically Samaritan theological tenants. The added inspirations were to build an altar on Mount Gerizim and that God has chosen Shechem, rather than Jerusalem.¹⁰ Eugene Ulrich observes, “over half of the books of the Hebrew Bible circulated in variant literary editions at the time of the origins of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism.”¹¹ Ulrich goes on, “out of the many forms of the texts of the various books circulating in antiquity [at the time of Jesus], only three survived because only three groups survived the defeat and destruction by the Romans.”¹²

In his January 2004 article in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Ulrich wrote some amazing things about the meaning of Divine revelation as found in surviving texts. He wrote, “if the community hears and recognizes its experience of God in a text, the text continues on its trajectory of becoming Scripture; otherwise, the text tends to be left aside.”¹³ In this way, the Faithful left aside the Samaritan form of the Pentateuch.

From that principle of leaving texts aside, Ulrich extrapolates, “Thus, we have the anomalous situation of the “official” Magisterium condemning family planning whereas [historian Jay Dolan wrote that] “(b)y 1993 more than 85 percent of

⁸ John P. Meier, “The Historical Jesus and the Historical Law: Some Problems within the Problem,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 61.

⁹ John P. Meier, “The Historical Jesus and the Historical Law: Some Problems within the Problem,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 58-59.

¹⁰ Eugene Ulrich, “Our Sharper Focus on the Bible and Theology Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 4.

¹¹ Eugene Ulrich, “Our Sharper Focus on the Bible and Theology Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 9

¹² Eugene Ulrich, “Our Sharper Focus on the Bible and Theology Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 12.

¹³ Eugene Ulrich, “Our Sharper Focus on the Bible and Theology Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 19.

American Catholics approve of birth control simply put, the vast majority of American Catholics, both clergy and laity, does not believe that the practice of birth control is sinful.”¹⁴ Exactly what God reveals through his revelations can be confusing.

Ignoring the above difficulties and getting at the heart of the readings, the 19th Psalm expresses exhilaration at knowing the word of God. The first part of the Psalm, which the Lectionary does not use, is about creating the cosmos. In a footnote, Margaret Barker answers her own question, “What does Psalm 19:1-5 mean? Apparently it is the voice of the heavens declaring the glory of God.”¹⁵ The Lectionary does use the part of the 19th Psalm about delighting in the laws of the Lord.

J. Ross Wagner translates Psalm 19:8-11, the part that the Lectionary does use, within the following context.¹⁶

Torah is probably best understood here in its wider sense of “teaching,” “instruction,” rather than in a narrower sense of “legal stipulations” or even “the Pentateuch.” ...

⁸ The Torah of Yhwh is perfect, reviving the soul;

The testimony of Yhwh is trustworthy, making the simple one wise.

⁹ The precepts of Yhwh are upright, bringing joy to the heart;

The commandment of Yhwh is brilliant, giving light to the eyes.

¹⁰ The fear of Yhwh is radiant, enduring forever;

The ordinances of Yhwh are truth; they are altogether righteous.

¹¹ They are more desirable than gold, than the fine gold in abundance;

They are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

¹⁴ Dolan was recently listed in the Catholic News Service as one of “the masters of American Catholic history”; see Patrick J. Hayes, “Review of John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*,” Catholic News Service, July 11, 2003 as found in footnote 67, Eugene Ulrich, “Our Sharper Focus on the Bible and Theology Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 21.

¹⁵ Margaret Barker, the Great high Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 326, fn. 69.

¹⁶ J. Ross Wagner, “From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1999) 254.

In 1 Colossians, Saint Paul joins the issue of finding truth with the issue of finding power. Adding to the confusion associated with linking truth and power, the critical apparatus for the Greek indicates that this particular phrase is omitted from some of the original manuscripts. In a more positive vein, as Margaret Barker words it, "Paul, without any explanation for the Church at Corinth, described Christ as the Power of God and the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24)¹⁷ ... the male and the female aspects incarnate."¹⁸ Paul writes that the Greeks seek truth; the Jews power. How I fit this together is that the Jews, with their Law, are confident they have the truth. Now what they want is God to manifest his power.

Barker uses this passage, 1 Corinthians 1:24, to join male and female and the First Testament with the New Testament.¹⁹

It is more likely that the temple tradition in Christian Liturgy ... gave rise to the original claim that Jesus was the Melchizedek high priest. The high priest was the twofold incarnation of the LORD. The God of Israel took two forms, male and female, and the high priest was the human manifestation of both. Hence Jesus was described as Christ, 'the power of God and the Wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians. 1:24). Jesus is depicted as taking the great rituals of each aspect of the God of Israel: the atonement blood of the LORD and the Bread of the Presence of Wisdom, and combining them into his own ritual. It is more likely that this inspiration was from Jesus himself rather than from the liturgy makers of the early Church.

Western Civilization joins Greek and Jew by driving at the notion that truth should determine politics or the use of power. While truth is not always easy to identify, misusing the power of political authority to short cut the search is no solution. Historically this misuse of authority is seen many times, to mention but two, that the earth is the center of the universe and demanding interest on the use of money. The meaning of Divine revelation is often unclear and confusing.

To add to the thread with a quote from Neil Ormerod,²⁰

¹⁷ Margaret Barker, The Great high Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 182.

¹⁸ Margaret Barker, The Great high Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 257.

¹⁹ Margaret Barker, The Great high Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 94.

Theology has had, from the beginning, a close, if troubled, relationship with philosophy. Plato was the first to use the term “theology.” And while Paul contrasted the so-called “wisdom” of the Greeks with the folly of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:22-25), it did not take the early Christian writers long to employ philosophical terms in their attempts to make the Christian gospel intelligible to an audience more accustomed to Greek philosophical categories than Hebrew biblical narratives.

Ormerod is trying to join the social sciences with ecclesiology, something dear to my heart. I wish the hierarchy would encourage the social scientists to examine the liturgy for its meaning for the Faithful. For example, one of the well-recognized problems by the Faithful at this time is extending the sign of peace at Mass. The sign of peace is particularly difficult among schoolchildren.

Corinthians gets closer to the truth of what God reveals by Exodus 20:8, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*, by identifying the Cross with power. Accepting the Cross, in the spirit of Lenten penance, makes one less self-righteous in a pharisaic manner. To whom it is revealed, having the power of the truth within a Christian context is to own the Cross. That is the meaning of Easter and Lent and human suffering. Paul is setting himself up as an example.²¹

Jesus explains this reality of suffering and the Cross in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus begins by using politics, that is, force, to drive the money-changers out of the temple. Andreas J. Köstenberger dates this event as April 7, 30 C.E.²² From hindsight, Jesus was addressing the Faithful, telling them to drive the moneychangers from their hearts, something the Faithful find far more relevant than an exact date. At the time, the Jews did not understand what Jesus meant, when Jesus said that the Jews might destroy the temple, but that in three days it would arise again, that is, Easter.

The key issue is the Cross of suffering that arises from not understanding.²³ The Gospel according to John features not understanding.²⁴ Time, diligence, and a

²⁰ Neil Ormerod, “A Dialectic Engagement with the Social Sciences in an Ecclesiological Context,” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 818.

²¹ Benjamin Fiore, S.J., “*Covert Allusion*” in *1 Corinthians 1—4*, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 47 (January 1985) 96.

²² Craig R. Koester, review of Andreas J. Köstenberger, John in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 150.

certain amount of admitted confusion are required for Christian living. The result is some suffering, a certain amount of “dark night of the soul,” before the will of God becomes clarified to the next level. According to Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., this Scripture “points to the body of Jesus as the temple.” *They came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken* elevates the word of Jesus to Scripture according to the Gospel of John.²⁵ In the Gospel of John, even when confusing, the word of Jesus is Scripture.

The Faithful did not understand. That is why *Jesus would not trust himself to them* (John 2:24). The context is the Cross. Jesus could not trust the Faithful with the Cross, until he rose from the dead when *his disciples remembered that he had said this* (John 2:22). Jesus is speaking of genuine believers,²⁶ whom fellow Jews had probably excommunicated from the synagogue.²⁷ John probably wrote in the last quarter of the First Century Church, which had severed its relations with the synagogue.²⁸

The readings for this Third Sunday of Lent concern the marvel of God revealing anything to the Faithful. Despite all of the confusion described above, using this revelation with the guidance of Holy Mother, the Church, is how to approach the readings for this Sunday. The readings explain suffering as ultimately meaningful for life.

²³ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 457.

²⁴ Kelli S. O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 287.

²⁵ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 464.

²⁶ Debbie Hunn, *Who Are “They” in John 8:33?* the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 3 (July 2004) 390-391. Also see Mary L. Coloe, P.B.V.M., “Welcome into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 3 (July 2004) 408.

²⁷ Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, “The Signs as Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel: Reexamining the Evidence,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 1994) 529.

²⁸ Craig A. Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989) 242-243.

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For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes