

Personal Notes
050306 Fourth Sunday of Lent 31A
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These readings depict the presence of God as light. The reading from Ephesians emphasizes the point.¹ The question is how are the Faithful to react in the light of the presence of God? Taken together, the readings develop over an extensive history.

1 Samuel 16:14 begins with the account of how David reached power, ending with 2 Samuel 5:10.² 1 Samuel 16:7 admonishes Samuel and his Faithful followers, not to judge from worldly externals, but from the light of the interior life, the way God judges. When the LORD points out whom to choose, the Vulgate uses *minimus*, a sense of insignificant, where the Lectionary uses youngest. I do not have the resources to go back to the Hebrew or Septuagint, but I can check various translations.

Verse 11

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	youngest
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	minimus
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	a young one (1 Kings)
<u>King James</u> (1611):	youngest
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	youngest
<u>New American</u> (1970):	youngest
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	youngest

I cotton to Saint Jerome's *minimus*.

The Lectionary ends by saying that after Samuel anointed David *the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David*. David went into ecstasy, something Saul also did. The difference was between externals and internals.³ Subsequently, the gift of the spirit, that is, light, to Saul was temporary, but to David more permanent.⁴

¹ Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 1990) 673.

² Anthony R. Ceresko, O.S.F.S., "The Identity of 'the Blind and the Lame' (*'iwwer upisseah*) in 2 Samuel 5:8b," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 28.

³ Bill T. Arnold, "Necromancy and Cleromancy in 1 and w Samuel," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 208, also see John R. Levison, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 505-513, 520-521.

1 Samuel 16 is about the contrast between David and Saul in the presence of God. While the Lectionary does not include Saul here, elsewhere in Chapter 16, Samuel portrays Saul not as worldly, but simply as not tuned in properly. Today the Faithful may look to Saul in the more complete context of worldliness. Saul is worldly in that Saul sticks to externals, rather than focusing on the light of his interior relationship with the LORD.⁵

Saul reacts exteriorly, David interiorly. The First Testament responds that the interior reflection is preferred, so much so that 1 Samuel depicts the covenant with Saul as broken, in that God did not hold up the Divine promise, though with good reason.⁶

The 23rd Psalm is about the promise God keeps with the people of Israel through the monarchy. God promises to protect the Faithful through all their troubles. God is a safe-haven. As valuable as the cosmos is for revealing God, the First Testament is even better, with Psalm 23:3a, *refreshing my soul* with Divine light.⁷

From explaining how King David took over from King Saul, the readings skip to the Christian era. Ephesians parallels the 23rd Psalm by regarding Christ as refreshing the soul. Ephesians is full of confidence that *Christ will give you light* (Eph 5:14). Ephesians admonishes the Faithful simply *to try* discovering what pleases the LORD. Ephesians is full of joy at the reality of the Christian life.

In conjunction with Ephesians, the Gospel of John helps answer the question about how to react in the light of the presence of God. John is juridical in the sense of judging how people react in the presence or light of Jesus. Based on evidence that reaches the interior life, John shows the disciples, including the man born blind, accepting Jesus. Based on the same evidence, this time not enlightening the interior life, John shows some of the Jews rejecting Jesus. John begins by showing

⁴ Richard J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us' (Isa 32:15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January 1984) 9.

⁵ Mark K. George, "Yhwh's Own Heart," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 442-459.

⁶ Mark K. George, "Yhwh's Own Heart," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 445-446.

⁷ 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) 255.

that Jews were rejecting Jesus and about this point in his Gospel, begins to substitute *the world* for *Jews*, a substitution complete in Chapters 13-17.⁸ John is actually about worldly rejection of Jesus, rather than Jewish rejection of Jesus, particularly because the first Apostles were all Jews.

The Gospel is about the man born blind, whom Jesus brings to sight, physical sight as a miraculous sign of the Divinity of Jesus, and spiritual sight as a sign of that same Divinity. My visits to the Faithful in proximity of death reveal that it is sign and insight.

John is about symbolism and signs, signs that obtain their meaning from the light of Christ. Water is one sign of the miraculous means of the Exodus from Egypt. Christians use water as another sign, a sign of the exodus from Original Sin through Baptism. The blind man washing himself at the Pool of Siloam corresponds to darkness in Egypt before the Exodus and to the old rites.⁹ John follows a pattern from the Book of Wisdom.¹⁰

In the Greek for Verse 10, his neighbors and acquaintances did not ask the man born blind how his eyes were opened *again*. His neighbors and acquaintances simply ask how his eyes were opened. For his neighbors and acquaintances, politics associated with *again* is not an issue.

As much as I like the idea that the Pharisees lacked integrity, assuming that the man born blind once could see, in verse 11, the man born blind does use the Greek for to see *again*, thereby undermining some of the following paragraph. While the facts do not fit the theory, the theory still furnishes grist for contemplation.

The Greek in the Gospel is also about deceit and lack of integrity in questioning the man born blind and his parents. The Pharisaical question assumes that the man once saw, because the Greek wording, brought out in neither the Vulgate nor the Lectionary, is about whether and how he came see *again* rather than about whether and how he came to see at all. The Pharisees formulate their question uninterested in the facts. They phrase the question in a closed worldly manner, rather than in an open God-fearing manner. Two Greek words are involved: *to see* and *to see again*.

⁸ Stanley B. Marrow, "Κοσμος in John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 100.

⁹ Dennis M. Sweetland, review of Wai-Yee Ng, Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003), 133.

¹⁰ Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205 and 207-208.

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Jesus tells his disciples that the man is blind so that the work of God may be visible. In that sense, sin is irrelevant. The issue is openness and courage as a response to the love and word of God, even when that love seems uncertain and the work ambiguous at best. Jesus is present so that the love of God for the world can be manifest, even in rejection.

In verse 16, by pointing to the cure as a *sign*, John calls attention to the signs embedded in his Gospel.¹¹ The Faithful are to look for those signs, realizing that any sin involved concerns closing the mind to the facts. Openness to the facts over politics in the university system in Western Civilization accounts for the good things found there. Oftentimes facing facts forces Faith to link with courage against prevailing notions of politics and power.

Verse 27, in which the man born blind questions the Pharisees about why they are questioning him a second time, can be taken in several ways. In one way, the man is naïve and serious, and his question informational. In another way, the man is sophisticated and less serious, and his question mocking. In yet a third way, the man may be standing in judgment over the Pharisees, which is how the Pharisees took his question. *Are you trying to teach us* (John 9:34)? I think the judgmental Pharisees were spinning their own bias on the poor man. I like the idea of the man born blind gently chiding the Pharisees with a mocking question.

In verse 35, Jesus identifies himself as the Son of Man, identifying himself with the religious problems of the man born blind. In John, “Son of Man” means the crucified, suffering humanity of Jesus, a sign of love for the world.¹² The Gospel urges the Faithful to accept their own humanity and the suffering that goes with it as a return sign of their love of God. Suffering, at least in the sense of the effort required, is an element of the intellectual life, of thinking.

In the final verse, verse 41, Jesus offers approbation for college life. The way to approach college life is as a blind man, looking for light, not as somebody with all the answers. The difference between somebody with a doctorate and somebody without a doctorate is that persons with the doctorate are far more aware of their

¹¹ 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) 525-527.

¹² See Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., “Raymond Brown’s New Introduction to the Gospel of John: A Presentation—And Some Questions,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 9-10.

own ignorance. The Church can evangelize this humility by drawing college life toward the very light of God through Jesus.

Oftentimes college is a joyful experience. This Fourth Sunday in Lent is also known as *Laetare* Sunday, *laetare* means *to rejoice*. Lent is ending, only three more weeks to go. The love of God and the light of the Word are becoming manifest. There is a possibility of graduation from a sinful to a holy life. The closeness draws forth the mandate to rejoice.

In 1 Samuel, the reason to rejoice is the anointing of David. Psalm 23 presents God as the Good Shepherd. Ephesians praises God for the Christian life. Finally, the man born blind echoes praise through the centuries for the light that enlightens both his eyes and his soul in appreciation for the Son of Man. No one can take away the interior life of the soul well led.

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Scriptural references to the Lectionary follow. Since the main purpose of these Notes is annotating the scriptural references in the index at www.western-civilization.com, references pertinent, but not fitting the flow imposed above, are included below. I do not assume that the reader is following the readings cited either in the Lectionary or in the Bible. Like the footnotes, the citations are for reference purposes for anyone interested. The large, bold letters facilitate locating exactly what the Lectionary presents for these Notes.

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

As the chart below shows, the Lectionary will use Psalm 23 three more times in Cycle A.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Verses</u>	<u>Antiphon</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
31A	194	1- 3a, 3b-4, 5, 6	(1)	Lent 4 = Today
49A	388	1- 3a, 3b-4, 5, 6	(1)	Easter 4
107B	716	1- 3, 3 - 4, 5, 6	(1)	Ordinary 16
142A	888	1- 3a, 3b-4, 5, 6	(1)	Ordinary 28
160A	975	1-2, 2-3. 5. 6	(1)	Ordinary 34

Note the sloppy scholarship at Reading #107B. In readings #31A, 49B, and 142A the Lectionary properly distinguishes verse 3a from 3b. Though the verses are the same in all four readings, the attribution is different in Reading #107B. That is sloppy scholarship.

Funerals uses Psalm 23 in four places,¹³ Pastoral Care of the Sick in three.¹⁴

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 8:12

Identifies Jesus as the light of the world.

John 9:1-41

Verses 1-41 include the whole of Chapter Nine.

Verse 6, the Greek for *pool* means *swimming pool*.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

¹³ 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) 143, 223, 253, 267.

¹⁴ 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) 171, 188, 323.