

Personal Notes
050320 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion 37A and 38A
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Total abandonment brings the Faithful to total union with God. Palm Sunday, beginning with the procession of palms, begins with superficial union with God. When the situation becomes serious, the crowds turn on Jesus. Careful reading distinguishes between the plural, *crowds* (Matt 26:55, 27:20) to whom Jesus reaches out, and the singular, *crowd* (Matt 26:47, 27:15, 24), that helps condemn Jesus.¹ Ultimately, the issue is total abandonment, first by Christ for the Faithful, then by the Faithful toward Christ.

Isaiah 50 presents a suffering, but hopeful, servant, a precursor of the Messiah. Isaiah 50 is part of the remnant returning from Babylon to not much left in Jerusalem. Isaiah is mainly concerned with the salvation of Israel. Despite his apparently abandoned situation, Isaiah remains confident, but not so confident that he is unwilling to turn to the Gentiles at any moment (Isaiah 49:6).²

Jesus cites Psalm 22 as his parting cry on the Cross. Jesus knows why he has been abandoned, namely for my sins and the sins of all the Faithful. His hopeless situation makes all other human situations hopeful.

Philippians joins the Trinitarian union with the love of God for humanity. Philippians 2:6-11 also proclaims that before Jesus became human in time, he was God through eternity. This passage is a confessional formulation Paul assumes the Faithful recognize.³

Philippians 2:7 proclaims that Jesus *emptied himself*, meaning that Jesus accepted his own abandonment.⁴ The will of the Father is to smite the shepherd, whose abandonment makes it possible for the distraught Faithful to pray to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵ In the Christian life, grace and obedience are not sequential.

¹ Terence J. Keegan, O.P., "Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1982) 425.

² Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980) 28.

³ Joseph Plevnik, S.J., "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 565, 570.

⁴ F. Gerald Downing, "'Honor' among Exegetes", the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 1999) 67.

⁵ Stephen L. Cook, "The Metamorphosis of a Shepherd: The Tradition History of Zechariah 11:17 + 13:7-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 3 (July 1993) 464.

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Grace and obedience are concomitant acts of God in the Faithful, made manifest through love.⁶ The Gospel by Matthew is about a reversal of fortunes, none greater than abandonment by God Almighty.

Matthew uses the metaphor of the Good Shepherd to hold his narrative together, beginning with the infancy narrative and ending with the passion narrative (Matt 2:6 9:36, 10:6, 16; 14:14; 15:24, 32; 18:12-14; 25:32; and 26:31-32). Matt 26:31-32 is the only place Matthew uses *shepherd* for Jesus and *flock* for his disciples.⁷ A sense of abandonment permeates the metaphor.

In Matt 26:26 Jesus pours out his blood for the forgiveness of sins as part of his Eucharistic gift. At his baptism by John, Jesus stands with Israel and the Faithful; at his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus dies and rises again on behalf of Israel and the Faithful.⁸ The abandonment of Jesus includes his blood, even daily in the Holy Mass. Abraham sacrificing Isaac prefigured this abandonment, and, with it, a new covenant (Matt 26:28).⁹

Somehow, an emotional union between God and the Faithful, both as a group and as individuals, results from the apparent abandonment both to and by God. Jesus is the Son of David, who had a very emotional relationship with the LORD, particularly as seen in Psalm 22.¹⁰ David not only felt abandoned by God but he also abandoned God by sin. Jesus took on the sins of the world, as the Lamb of God, to enable the Faithful to draw emotionally close to their Creator.

Total abandonment involves total commitment. It took one of my students to point out that I, personally, tend to confuse what I hope for from others for commitment

⁶ Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 17.

⁷ 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) 698, 706.

⁸ 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) 522.

⁹ C. T. R. Hayward, "The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic Against Christianity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 2 (April 1990) 294.

¹⁰ Mark K. George, "Yhwh's Own Heart," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 459.

from others. I see what Jesus does in his ministry as an effort to translate his hope for the Faithful into commitment by the Faithful. How that may relate to my particular hope-commitment confusion, I do not know, because my confusion is just that, confusion, not virtue.

Unconfused and clear, the best religious leaders of his time convinced themselves that by putting Jesus to death they would do the will of God and purge Israel of the fraudulent activity of Jesus. The Jewish leaders considered and rejected the idea that Jesus was a true prophet, a Son of David. Jesus incurred the potentially capital charge of blasphemy by extending his claim from Son of David to Son of God (Matt 9:3; 26:63-66).¹¹ The messianism of Matthew far exceeds other forms of Jewish messianism.¹²

Luke forms a corrective to the Matthean and Marcan implication of an earthly political messianic leader. Luke does this by omitting the use of the name of David, simply to proclaim, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." Luke is not denying that Jesus is the Son of David. Luke is correcting a possible false implication that the Kingdom of God is earthly.¹³

Matthew uses the phrase *Son of David* both to show that Jesus is the royal Messiah of Israel fulfilling the prophecy concerning David and to underline the guilt of Israel for not grasping who Jesus is. The blind, the possessed, children, and even a Canaanite understand, but the leadership does not.¹⁴

A sense of the self-assurance of the Jewish leaders is found just four years before the outbreak of war with Rome. At that time, a Jew was purportedly "flayed to the bone" for predicting doom for the temple. In rabbinic tradition, threats against the temple warranted capital punishment. For Jesus to predict the destruction of the

¹¹ 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) 64, 68, 71.

¹² Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 274.

¹³ 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) 88.

¹⁴ W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 571.

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temple, even meaning the temple of his own body, was risky business. In reality, the temple was a place of sacrifice.¹⁵

The Lectionary mentions, *temple* in the passion narrative by Matthew at 26:55, teaching; 61, destroying; 27:5, flinging money into; 6, the treasury. Jesus is translating the temple from a place of geographic space to a place in the hearts of the Faithful. I wonder if the religious leaders turning out so badly has anything historical to do with why the preachers of today do not get to use these readings for inspiration. (By 2014, Presiders were preaching on Palm Sunday.) The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers includes sermons for Palm Sunday.¹⁶

Matthew homogenizes those in authority as "leaders," namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the chief Priests, the elders, and the scribes. In this way, Matthew takes them all, diverse in other ways though they were, to deride as of the same despicable character as Herod the Great.¹⁷ The Gospel of Matthew tends to call the Pharisees to task.¹⁸ Jesus may have been a Pharisee at one time. The political correctness learned in the Holy Family was of no help as Jesus tried to express his love. Abandonment through the passion, death, and resurrection was the only way.

Abandonment also highlights courage in the face of uncertainty. Nonviolence is one large focus of uncertainty. Though Jesus in his relationship to his persecutors is

10 (While the footnote number may be incorrect, the sequence is correct. The problem is with the Word program). Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989) 236-237, 257.

¹⁶ Remigius of Auxerre, Ecclesiastical Writer, +908 in Exposition from the Catena Aurea; Origin, Priest and confessor, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *The Colt a Figure of the Gentiles*, St. Jerome, Priest and Doctor, *The Meaning of the Gospel*, St. John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor, *Lessons of Today's Gospel*, St. Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor, *On the Passion of our Lord*, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), 157-184.

¹⁷ 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) 57-58, 73.

¹⁸ Terence L. Donaldson, "The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 695, 709.

nonviolent, Matthew in his portrayal of the parables is violent in the treatment of evildoers: Matt 13:43-43, the Weeds and the Wheat; 13:49-50, the Dragnet; 18:23-35 Forgiveness Aborted; 25:31-46, the Final Judgment. The previous four parables are unique to Matthew. The following four parables are not unique: Matt 24:45-51, Treacherous Tenants; 22:1-14, the Wedding Feast; 24:45-51, Faithful Servants; 25:14-30, the Talents. There is a risk misinterpreting these parables as condoning violence.¹⁹

During his passion and death, Jesus pointedly avoids violence as a remedy. At the risk of abandonment by the religious leaders of his day, Jesus demonstrates courage in the face of what must have been, at best, an uncertain ambiguous hope for justification before, rather than through, death.

Because of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Faithful are able to face their own mortality with equanimity. Facing mortality requires abandonment, giving up of life itself. Holy Week shows how to do that.

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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.

37A At the procession with Palms **Matthew 21:1-11**

Verse 5, about the *meek* king refers to the third beatitude, Blessed are the meek (or oppressed), for they shall inherit the earth that, in turn reverberates back to Zephaniah 3:12.²⁰ Zephaniah is one of the twelve Minor Prophets who worked in the reign of Josiah, 640-609. Zephaniah is a prophecy of the Day of the LORD.²¹ That day is present with Jesus.

¹⁹ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 237-238. 248.

²⁰ Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 466, 476.

38ABC At the Mass Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24 (2a)

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Verses</u>	<u>Antiphon</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
38A	243-244	8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24	(2a)	Palm
53B	409-410	26-27, 28, 30, 31-32	(26a)	Easter 5

The Lectionary omits verse 10 that compares God to a midwife. This verse, with verse 9, is one of at least six depatriarchializing tendencies in Sacred Scripture: (Gen 1:26-27; Deut 32:18; Num 11:12; Isa 42:14a; Isa 49:15; Psalm 131:2).²²

While Matthew uses Psalm 22, neither Mark nor Luke does. Luke associates the last words of Jesus with the 3:00 p.m. daily Tamid service that used Psalm 31.²³

Fragments of Psalm 22 are included among the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁴

Philippians 2:6-11

Matthew 26:14—27:66

This passage is one of twenty-five with common material found in all four evangelists.²⁵

²¹ Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 1183.

²² John W. Miller, "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation: A Critique," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 614.

²³ 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) 225.

²⁴ Patrick W. Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, Peter W. Flint, "A Scroll Containing "Biblical" and "Apocryphal" Psalms: A preliminary Edition of 4QPs^f (4Q88)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No 2 (April 1998) 269.

²⁵ Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 1992) 488-489.

Verse 1, Bethphage is already written up for Palm Sunday in 2003.

Matt 21:2, obtaining an ass and colt is only a colt in Mark 11:2. This is one example of the penchant in Matthew to pluralize what other sources leave in the singular. All four Gospels have three denials, but differ in those to whom the denials were made. In this instance, Matthew doubles the girl to whom the denials were made from Matt 26:29-70 to 27:71-72. Matthew is aiming at clarifying the third denial in Mark. The second girl in Matthew instigated the third denial in Mark.²⁶

Matt 26:17 parallels Matt 14:15, the first miracle of the loaves.²⁷

Matt 27:39-44 causes one to wonder how Peter and the two sons of Zebedee knew what Jesus prayed, if they were asleep. The Faithful must have filled in the prayers.²⁸

The Lectionary in verses 38 and 44 translate the Greek for *robbers* as *revolutionaries*.²⁹ Why escapes me.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

²⁶ Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P., "Peter's Denials—How Many? To Whom?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No 3 (July 1990) 468, 470-471.

²⁷ Terence J. Keegan, O.P., "Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1982) 422.

²⁸ Mark Kiley, "'Lord, Save my Life' (Psalm 116:4) as Generative Text for Jesus' Gethsemane Prayer (Mark 14:36a)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 4 (October 1986) 656.

²⁹ Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989), 267.