

Personal Notes  
040418 Second Sunday of Easter 45C  
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Forgiveness of guilt within a context of Faith is the theme of these readings. The readings begin with the Acts of the Apostles telling of the marvelous deeds of the Apostles; continue with Psalm 118, a hymn of thanksgiving, on to the Apocalypse unifying suffering, self-esteem, and endurance; concluding with the institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Risen Christ is the sign of reconciliation against the guilt of sin.

As a point of intellectual housekeeping, on January 25, I pledged to include the Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli, S.T.D., S.S.L, D.D. in these notes for sixty days, which are now completed. Bishop Serratelli was recently appointed head of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Review of [liturgical] Scripture Translations by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. My purpose was to improve scholarly use of the Lectionary, at least by improving documentation of verses used. The sixty days are now completed. I have no more intention directly addressing Bishop Serratelli in these Notes.

## **Acts 5:12-16**

Just as John highlights signs according to the pattern found in the Book of Wisdom, so are signs highlighted in this section of Acts, as the very shadow of Peter heals the sick. All were cured. My friend, the Rev. Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J., travels the world with signs of healing to foster belief in the Lord. Such signs are available here and now for believers.

To my amazement, when I would ask my students at Thomas Nelson Community College, who had experienced miracles, as many as ten percent had. Students would then ask me how they were to respond to miracles. My response, in turn, was that God likes to show off, so the proper response would be to let people know what God has done and is doing for them. While not a classical miracle, *The Passion of the Christ* exemplifies how Mel Gibson does today what Peter did thousands of years ago.

The Lectionary rightfully explains that signs are given “that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.” This statement seems to contrast with Jesus who says, “Blessed are they who have not seen me, but still believe.” The question is why do not the signs work all of the time?<sup>1</sup> Where is the guilt in all of this?

The Gospel of John offers several reasons for missing signs: hardness of heart; preferring human to Divine honor; not chosen by the Father.<sup>2</sup> The signs do not

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<sup>1</sup> 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) 521-522.

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force consent. Free will prevails. Some people simply are not good at reading signs. That signs either are not read or are read incorrectly does not mean that signs do not exist. The Acts of the Apostles in general and this passage in particular are designed to point the way to God through the morass of human living and the guilt associated therewith.

**Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 (1 or alleluia)**

The Lectionary uses this Psalm as follows.

<u>Readings</u>	<u>Page in</u>	<u>Verses used</u>		
	<u>Lectionary</u>			
41ABC	341	1-2, 16-17, 22-23	(alleluia)	E. vigil
Also treated by me 030420 Easter [E. = Easter] Sunday 42ABC, 41ABC				
42ABC	346	1-2, 16-17, 22-23	(24 or alleluia)	Easter
43A	350-351	2-4, 13-15, 22-24	(1 or alleluia)	Today
44B	356-357	2-4, 13-15, 22-24	(1 or alleluia)	E. 2
Also treated at 030427 Second Sunday of Easter 44B				
45C	362-363	2-4, 13-15, 22-24	(1 or alleluia)	E. 2
50B	394-395	1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29	(22)	E. 4
Also treated at 0300511 Fourth Sunday of Easter 50B.				

This Psalm begins with a communal liturgical<sup>3</sup> celebration, for example with the House of Israel, the House of Aaron, and those who fear the Lord. After the communal hymn is begun, individuals take over with their tales of experiencing the Lord. The antiphon carries the message, "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting."

The verses about the stone that the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone is a relatively ancient theme of earlier psalms, applied in the New Testament to Christ. The psalmist shifts his tenor from thanksgiving to praise for the rejected people of God. Verse 24, "This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it" suggests a hymn of victory from the war metaphors of the royal psalms.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 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) 535-535.

<sup>3</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 198-202.

<sup>4</sup> Since I do not read Hebrew and my computer does not write Hebrew, \*\*\* represents Hebrew letters in the following text. Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-

Verses 22 and 23 also suggest laying a new foundation for the temple. To cite a scholar citing a scholar,

the principal function of any temple is to serve as a place for sacrifice, and that sacrifices *require* the supply of suitable animals ... the requirement to sacrifice must always have involved the supply of sacrificial animals, their inspection, and the changing of money.<sup>5</sup>

The sacrifice of Christ atoned for the guilt of all; that is the Faith; that is the Glory; that is the meaning of the Resurrection.

### **Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19**

John, the author of the Revelations describes himself (verse 9) by his name. His role is not essential to the plot of his story. His role is like a separate window on a computer screen, the author in one window, the text in the other. John regards himself as a *brother*, in a communal rather than a hierarchical clerical order.<sup>6</sup> Hierarchy begets guilt; brotherhood, forgiveness.

Verse 9, giving *testimony* to Jesus is translated from the Greek from which the word martyr is derived. Testimony and martyrdom also beget forgiveness and atonement for sin. The suffering of the elderly must rise to God like sweet-smelling incense.

John describes the Christian life as (1) distress, suffering, and persecution, (2) self-esteem and membership in the kingdom of God, and (3) endurance, patience, and passive-aggressive subversion of Rome. Revelations, also known as the Apocalypse, verse 18, runs in parallel with a return of Nero (mentioned again below), dead and about to rise again. A slightly different translation of verses 17-18 brings out the difference, "I am the first and the last, and the living

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150: A Continental Commentary, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1961/1978, 1989, 1993) 398.

<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989), 257 citing E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 64.

<sup>6</sup> François Bovon, "John's Self-presentation in Revelation 1:9-10," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 696, 698.

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one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever.”<sup>7</sup> The life of Christ is re-lived one by one in each Christian. Bringing Nero into the picture connects the Holy Spirit and Jesus with historical reality; that very reality through which the Faithful live.

John describes his being caught up in the Spirit or in ecstasy, hearing a loud voice, like a trumpet sound. Another translation of verses 9 and 10 follows:

I, John, your brother, who shares with you in Jesus, the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, **was** on the island called Patmos because of the world of God and the testimony of Jesus. I **was in the Spirit** on the Lord’s day and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.<sup>8</sup>

Key comparisons with well-known translations:

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	found myself ... caught up in spirit
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	fui ... fui in spiritu
The Greek uses the same verb twice.	
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	was ... was in the spirit
<u>King James</u> (1611):	was ... was in the Spirit
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	was ... the Spirit possessed me
<u>New American</u> (1970):	found myself ... caught up in spirit
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	was ... was in ecstasy

Verse 10 cites two senses, hearing and seeing, those senses most capable of leading the Faithful to the Lord. The other senses function with the first two finding the Lord.<sup>9</sup> The sense of touch is the sense brought out in the Gospel. Guilt is often associated with misuse of the senses. The Apocalypse is about washing out the stain of guilt with the blood of the lamb.

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<sup>7</sup> Hans-Josef Klauck, “Do They Never Come Back?’ *Nero Redivivus* and the Apocalypse of John,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001).

<sup>8</sup> François Bovon, “John’s Self-presentation in Revelation 1:9-10,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 694.

<sup>9</sup> François Bovon, “John’s Self-presentation in Revelation 1:9-10,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 696.

Verse 11, concerning the angel “with a voice like a trumpet” acts not on his own behalf, but as a slave before the Almighty.<sup>10</sup> John, then, records what the angel dictates. The voice of the angel is a sign of reconciliation with the Lord.

## **John 20:29**

A reason to rejoice is that the Faithful are capable of believing without seeing.

## **John 20:19-31**

In this passage, the Evangelist invites the Faithful to consider their guilt. As the first disciples were afraid of the Jews, so modern disciples bear other fears, often hidden from consciousness. Those first disciples knew of what they feared. Moderns often do not understand their hidden fears. This passage is meant for moderns.

Verse 19 begins “on the evening of that first day of the week,” thereby reflecting the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian church’s preference for the Resurrection, rather than the “after three days” of the Greek-speaking church. New creation, the New Testament or Covenant is the reason for emphasizing the first day of the week. The first day of the week begins creation in Genesis 1:1—2:4a. The church begins a movement toward a cosmic Sabbath reign of God, with the Second coming.<sup>11</sup> The new creation is after guilt is forgiven.

When the Evangelist writes that the doors were locked, those doors can be understood as doors to the subconscious. “Peace be with you,” then refers to peace in a people guilty of disbelieving the meaning of the Resurrection. In authorizing the disciples to forgive sins, Jesus means to exculpate the Faithful even of whatever has sunk from the consciousness, as their minds shield themselves from unpleasant memories.

Luke and John stress peace. “Perhaps the most impressive agreement of all (between Luke and John) is found in Luke 24:36 and John 20:19 where we read that Jesus “stood in their midst and says to them, `Peace (be) with you.’”<sup>12</sup> Luke and John emphasize different aspects of the Life of Christ. Luke attends to the

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin E. Miller, “The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19—22,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 307.

<sup>11</sup> John M. Perry, “The Three Days in the Synoptic Passion Predictions,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 4 (October 1986) 645-646.

<sup>12</sup> Robert H. Stein, “The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July, 1992) 493.

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witness of historical events; John to the witness of the Spirit and prophetic vision and hearing. Both historical events and prophecy suit the detection and eradication of sin and guilt.

In conclusion, after the Resurrection, the disciples go wide and far spreading the Gospel of healing and forgiveness of sin. Psalm 118 rejoices in God, our Savior from the ravages of sin, including rejecting the cornerstone. The Apocalypse is about accepting the vision of grace offered by God, not to be deaf to the trumpet sound of the Lord now out of sight. The Gospel of John is about how difficult it can be to believe what God has wrought. The Gospel of John is an encouragement to let go of sin and the guilt that causes more sin and to rejoice always in the Lord.

For more on sources, besides the footnotes, see the Appendix file.