This is Good Shepherd Sunday.\(^1\) The Twenty-third Psalm, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* is one of the most consoling Judeo-Christian prayers. In John 10:3-5, 27, Jesus says he calls the Faithful by name, like a Good Shepherd, meaning the Faithful recognize his voice, as did Mary Magdalene at the Resurrection.\(^2\) Being recognized by God is the consolation. These readings are about the Good Shepherd guiding the Church through institutional and personal difficulties.

1 Peter 2:25, in some translations, offers high praise of bishops. Bishops who bear the cross of their high office deserve such praise. Just before the praise, 1 Peter 2:24 uses an Isaac/Christ typology with the reference to the Cross. As an aside, the Bible records at least twenty-five different covenants between two human parties.\(^3\) Bishops, like all Christians, have an obligation to offer themselves to God as part of the New Testament or Covenant.\(^4\)

Interestingly, 1 Peter 2:21 does not refer to the Resurrection. Peter regards the Passion and Death offering as the source of benefactions.\(^5\) The Gospel of Luke regards Jesus as the mediator with the Father for the bestowal of divine benefactions.\(^6\) In Acts 2:37-38 Peter translates his certainty about the Divine plan, into repentance and conversion for the Faithful.\(^7\) This reading is from the

\(^1\) My search engine did not find *Good Shepherd Sunday* in anything I have written so far.


\(^3\) Scott W. Hahn, “Covenant, Oath, and the Aqedah: \(\Delta\lambda\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\eta\) in Galatians 3:15-18,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 1 (January 2005) 83.

\(^4\) Scott W. Hahn, “Covenant, Oath, and the Aqedah: \(\Delta\lambda\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\eta\) in Galatians 3:15-18,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 1 (January 2005) 92.


Pentecostal speech of Peter, part of Saint Luke explaining the concepts involved in the life of Jesus.

In the first reading, Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Saint Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, stands up to insist that Jesus Christ, who can be reached through repentance and Baptism fulfills the Divine plan for history. This snippet of preaching, Acts 2:14-36, was among a variety of summaries the first preachers used to outline their sermons. The best such outline is in 1 Cor 15:3b-5, used in Cycle C at the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary time and in visits to the sick. In John 10:1-6, Peter explains that Jesus is the Shepherd of Israel, as implicitly foretold by the Prophet Zechariah 13:7-9. That shepherding continues through the RCIA.

At that first Pentecost, about three thousand were baptized, without benefit of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The Congregation for Divine Worship established the RCIA procedure in 1972, during the pontificate of Paul VI (1963-1978). On September 1, 1988, during the pontificate of John Paul II (1978-April 2, 2005).

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2005) the Congregation put the revised form, taking at least a year, into effect. A reason for the change, perhaps, is that preachers no longer replicate the numerous miracles associated with preaching in Acts 2:1-41; 3:1-26, 8:6-8, 13; 13:6-12; 14:8-18; 16:25-34.\(^{14}\)

From my observations, those who preach do not run the RCIA program. Less educated laity do. To my mind, birth control is the issue for the contemporary Church, an issue the RCIA laity let slide, mostly because the clergy does.

The best RCIA bibliography I found March 13, 2005 was at http://camellia.shc.edu/theology/ChristianInitiation.htm. That bibliography last edited in January 2000 by Father William Harmless, S.J., is eight pages long, with special emphasis for books in the collection of Byrne Library, Spring Hill College. Father Harmless, S.J. is a Catechumenate scholar in his own right.\(^{15}\) He lightly annotated his bibliography. From the bibliography, three concerns mainly interest me.

The function of these three main areas is to express the need for courage in the face of uncertainty with the understanding that the Good Shepherd is guiding the Church through institutional and personal difficulties. Such courage is demonstrated from the top to the grassroots as the hierarchy imposes its will, contravening a thousand years of practice. That courage is demonstrated from the grassroots up with continuing sociological and anthropological examination of the results of the change. Using the social sciences under the powerful political aegis of the hierarchy does take courage and skill. My three main concerns follow.

One concern is baptismal lyrics from the greatest of the ancient Christian poets, Ephrem, the Syrian Deacon.\(^{16}\) The second is Thomas M. Finn, author of two volumes on early Christian Baptism, Chancellor Professor Emeritus at the College of William and Mary.\(^{17}\) What I find disturbing is that the Richmond Diocese ignores both the Deacon Saint and the college professor. The college is about twenty-five years old.

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\(^{17}\) Thomas M. Finn, e-mail, tmfinn1@cox.net
miles away from my Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish (OLMC). The third concern is the classic study of the RCIA by Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* (1978, reprint 1992) that focuses almost entirely on Third Century sources, before the Age of Constantine and political acceptance of the Church. After Emperor Constantine (306-337), Church politics had an unprecedented and unacknowledged advantage suppressing truth. The attitude of the Church toward suppressing the telescope of Galileo (1564-1642) illustrates my concern.

The problem with this early Third Century focus is that the Twenty-first Century Church must accept responsibility for culture, responsibility that was not available to the Church before the Christian Emperor, Constantine. Despite some of the preaching there, my own parish cannot be counter-cultural because many political and civic elected and appointed leaders are members. OLMC may be the most powerful single religious congregation in Newport News. Like it or not, we are in fact, largely responsible for our culture.

A long-standing irritation for me is that Sunday dismissals for catechumens seem rude and crude. The clergy remain in the sanctuary. The laity go off to run the RCIA. Non-catechumen visitors can remain through the whole service without compromise.

Current practice forces sponsors out of the assembly with the catechumens. I wonder what Mary K. Milne, *Sunday Dismissals for the RCIA* (1993)\(^\text{18}\) thinks. Another work of similar interest is Catherine Vincie, “Gender Analysis and Christian Initiation,” *Worship* 69 (1995) 505-530.\(^\text{19}\) In addition, there is a debate over Infant Baptism.\(^\text{20}\) Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, eds., *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration* (1983) express the final issue.\(^\text{21}\)

Acts 2:39 is important for Gentiles as Catechumens, … and to all those far off …, that would be far off in both time and place. Saint Peter, *Rocky*, did not think he was so much better than those he was trying to bring into the fold that they had to wait a


year for Baptism. Saint Peter was urgent, save yourselves (Acts 2:40). The loss of urgency in the new RCIA remains unexplained.

The Gospel warns about false shepherds, anyone other than Jesus. In this Gospel, Jesus says Amen four times, John 10:1, 7. In the original Greek, Amen appears 126 times in the New Testament and means so let it be, truly, amen. The Gospel also warns against the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, their missing the example that Jesus was making of them. As for the RCIA, self-righteousness is a two-edged sword, both for those imposing the RCIA and those chafing under the imposition.

Continuing with institutional difficulties, Psalm 23 illustrates the difficulty getting the translation correct. Psalm 23 in the original Masoretic Hebrew text is a beautiful prayer that restores and vitalizes the human person in poetry, but the familiar King James translation of Psalm 23:2a is prose; He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. The Lectionary translation is in verdant pastures he gives me repose, close to iambic pentameter, that is, poetry. In the Sixteenth Century, translators struggled over how to distinguish poetic material, finally settling for indenting poetic translations to indicate the original was in poetic form. See, for example 1 Timothy 3:14—4:3 at Wednesday of the Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time, Year I or any standard English Bible. The struggle to translate poetry continues.

Years ago, Saint Augustine (354-430) struggled with the directions in which the Church was headed. The readings for today are about taking comfort in the Good


Shepherd for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), he gives me repose (Psalm 23:3), the shepherd and guardian of your souls (1 Peter 2:25), and I am the gate for the sheep. (John 10:7)

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.

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Verse 37

Lectionary (1998): my brothers
The Vulgate (circa 410): viri fratres
Douay-Rheims (1582-1610): men and [italics in original] brethren
King James (1611): Men and brethren
Jerusalem (1966): brothers
New American (1970): my brothers
New Jerusalem (1985): brothers

Viri fratres did not seem to translate my brothers. The translators do seem to have a difficulty with this.

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

Psalm 23 is used four times in the rites for funerals and three times in visitations for the sick.

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Reading | Page | Verses | Antiphon | Sunday
---|---|---|---|---
31A | 194 | 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 | (1) | Lent 4
49A | 388 | 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 | (1) | Easter 4 = Today
107B | 716 | 1-3a, 3b-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, Christ the King

1 Peter 2:20b-25

1 Peter 2:13—3:7 is among other prohibitions against female leadership, a prohibition Black churches generally accept, to the chagrin of feminists.²⁹

Verse 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectionary (1998):</th>
<th>guardian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Vulgate (circa 410):</td>
<td>episcopum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douay-Rheims (1582-1610):</td>
<td>bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King James (1611):</td>
<td>Bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem (1966):</td>
<td>guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jerusalem (1985):</td>
<td>guardian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was wondering about bishop, as it turns out, with reason.

John 10:14

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²⁸ 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.

John 10:1-10
Verse 6
Lectionary (1998): figure of speech … the Pharisees
The Vulgate (circa 410): proverbium … illi
Douay-Rheims (1582-1610): proverb … them
King James (1611): parable … them
Jerusalem (1966): parable … them
New American (1970): figure of speech … them
New Jerusalem (1985): parable … them

*Figure of speech* seemed strange and it is.

Verse 8
Lectionary (1998): before me
The Vulgate (circa 410): ante me
Douay-Rheims (1582-1610): as many as have come
King James (1611): before me
Jerusalem (1966): before me
New American (1970): [before me] [brackets in original]
New Jerusalem (1985): All others who have come

I thought *ante* meant *in front of* rather than sequential. Translators are having a problem with it.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.