

Personal Notes  
0300518 Fifth Sunday of Easter 53B  
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The word for this Sunday is **praise**, in the sense that the psalmist equates praise with thanksgiving.

Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. suggests that the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, used today, may have been the favorite of Jesus. This is the psalm Jesus quotes on the Cross—in the intimate Aramaic, rather than the formal Hebrew—“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” What is also noteworthy is that this psalm does not bring the wrath of God down upon those responsible for the pain this psalmist feels. Shortly before the verses used this Sunday appear, the psalmist switches from lament to thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

One reason for the following lengthy quotation from *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae* is that Sunday liturgies are meant to catechize the Faithful. Tying the Apostolic Letter with the liturgical readings sails the Letter into the safe harbor of basic Church doctrine.

In Paragraph 15, Pope John Paul II’s, Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae* does mention cf. **John 15:5**. The context is Chapter I, *Contemplating Christ with Mary*. In Paragraph 15, “Being conformed to Christ with Mary,” the Pontiff writes:<sup>2</sup>

Christian spirituality is distinguished by the disciple’s commitment to become conformed ever more fully to his Master (Cf. Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10, 12). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism grafts the believer like a branch onto the vine which is Christ (cf. **Jn 15:5**) and makes him a member of Christ’s mystical [*sic*] Body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12; Rom 12:5). This initial unity, however, calls for a growing assimilation which [*sic*] will increasingly shape the conduct of the disciple in accordance with the “mind” of Christ: “Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). In the words of the apostle, we are called “to put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).

In the spiritual journey of the Rosary, based on the constant contemplation—in Mary’s company—of the face of Christ, this demanding ideal of being conformed to him is pursued through an association which [*sic*] could be described in terms of friendship. We are thereby enabled to enter

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Sue Gillingham, “From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 471-472.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2ROSAR.HTM> consistently leaves the punctuation outside the quotation marks. While I note *which* for *that* grammatical errors with [*sic*], changes I make with punctuation are not documented.

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naturally into Christ's life and as it were to share his deepest feelings. In this regard Blessed Bartolo Longo has written: "Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection."<sup>3</sup>

In this process of being conformed to Christ in the Rosary, we entrust ourselves in a special way to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin. She who is both the Mother of Christ and a member of the Church, indeed her "pre-eminent and altogether singular member," is at the same time the Mother of the Church." As such, she continually brings to birth children for the mystical Body of her Son. She does so through her intercession, imploring upon them the inexhaustible outpouring of the Spirit. Mary is *the perfect icon of the motherhood of the Church*.

The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth. This enables her to train us and to mold us with the same care, until Christ is "fully formed" in us (cf. Gal 4:19). This role of Mary, totally grounded in that of Christ and radically subordinated to it, "in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power." This is the luminous principle expressed by the Second Vatican Council which [*sic*] I have so powerfully experienced in my own life and have made the basis of my episcopal motto: *Totus Tuus*. The motto is of course inspired by the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, who explained in the following words Mary's role in the process of our configuration to Christ: "*Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ*. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus

Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ.” Never as in the Rosary do the life of Jesus and that of Mary appear so deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ!

The Rosary mystery is the Institution of the Eucharist.

## **Acts 9: 26-31**

verse 31a<sup>4</sup> The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and *Samaria* was at peace.

*Samaria* means that outsiders were attracted to Jesus, as Jesus was attracted to them.

## **Psalm 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32**

The only other place this Psalm is used is Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion.<sup>5</sup> The difference is that Palm Sunday begins with the lament and abruptly changes to **praise**<sup>6</sup> while this Sunday stays with the **praise** and thanksgiving. Patient endurance is one sign of that grace to **praise**. A willingness to joke and see humor in what life is serving is another sign.

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<sup>4</sup> Indented verses are taken from National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), Readings 38 ABC, page 243

<sup>6</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 110.

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Jesus **praising** and thanking God from the Cross can be seen in the lives of the Faithful suffering the ravages of debilitating sicknesses such as old age, brittle bones, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, strokes, and the like. When that happens, people often relate to their maker leaving them in such a situation. That relationship can take on bitterness, but also joy at knowing the Father in the midst of such a distraction. Physical and mental illnesses are not the worst. The worst is betrayal by the guardians of the Covenant. Nuns, Sisters, and Brothers especially need the grace of joy and praise in the midst of abuse.

The Lectionary does not use verse 10, "Yet you drew me forth from the womb, made me safe at my mother's breast," i.e. "Yahweh is likened to a mid-wife."<sup>7</sup> The sexism of Holy Mother the Church by omitting this feminine portrayal of God, remains a problem, calling for grace. Bias against the aged, e.g. forcing resignation at age seventy-five, is more straightforward Church discipline. Ageing is a type of Cross.

Once I met a soul, who, like me, left the seminary before ordination and then went on to get a doctorate. Like me, he was preparing to be a missionary priest. He was given the task of attending aged priests, in the equivalent of what would be the Josephite Manor. How he saw those men handling old age forever discouraged him from the priesthood. The issue is real, though I have not experienced it personally. While I know of no one ever looking forward to spending time at the Josephite Manor, neither was I disheartened by what I saw there recently, men doing their best to hang tough with their spiritual lives and, apparently, full of **praise** and thanksgiving for the opportunity. As I have heard the old folks say repeatedly, "Old age [and the Cross] are not for sissies."

A scholar points out that in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, the psalmist is pouring out his heart to the Father.<sup>8</sup> Jesus was doing the same from the cross. I, personally, have prayed the psalms with the Faithful in a similar pouring out of hearts.

verse 27                      The lowly shall *eat* their fill;  
                                         they who seek the LORD shall praise him:  
                                         "May your hearts live forever!"

*Eat* is Eucharistic. The joy is at having reason to overcome the hardship of the Cross and giving **praise** to the Father for bringing others along, for putting suffering, somehow, to some good use. Stuhlmüller writes of this Psalm, "A structure that leads beyond abandonment to thanksgiving ... No literary structure [of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm] ever

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Miller, "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation: A Critique," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 614.

<sup>8</sup> Mark K. George, "Yhwh's Own Heart," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 459.

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masks the stark, naked realism in the psalm: the shame suffered by an innocent person and the callous shamelessness of those inflicting it.”<sup>9</sup>

Parish sermons often proclaim that life is hard, difficult, rough. As the sermons point out, the proclamation is only the beginning. Compared with having the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus, life is a joy and full of **praise**.

Stuhlmüller writes, “It is possible that Jesus frequently turned to Psalm 22 for inspiration and guidance.”<sup>10</sup> The life of Jesus followed the pattern of the Psalm. In verse 26, “I will offer **praise** in the great assembly; my vows I will fulfill before those who fear him,”<sup>11</sup> the psalmist invites the poor to join “in a prayer of thanksgiving for a table service.” I am concluding that Stuhlmüller and the Lectionary are numbering verses differently from the Nova Vulgata.<sup>12</sup> In that way, verse 26 for Stuhlmüller becomes verse 27 above. Verse 28 means that the war-weary, impoverished remnant is beginning to look outside Judaism.

verse 28      All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;  
                    all the families of the nations shall bow down before him.

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<sup>9</sup> Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 110.

<sup>10</sup> Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 113.

<sup>11</sup> Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible: Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources; Including The Revised New Testament and the Revised Psalms Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and Approved by the Administrative Committee/Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference: with many helps for Bible reading: Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, How to Read the Bible, Historical Survey of the Lands of the Bible, Bible Dictionary, Liturgical Index of Sunday Readings, Doctrinal Bible Index, and over 50 Photographs and Maps of the Holy Land (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992) 616.

<sup>12</sup> Saint Jerome, the Latin, and the Vulgate all refer to Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita Iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

Jesus was attracted to outsiders. For example, one of the first Christian communities was Samaritan.<sup>13</sup> See **Acts 9:31a** above. Jesus made his home in Capernaum, along a trade route, where there were outsiders. The Gospels portray a Jesus somewhat torn between his ministry to his Chosen People and the rest of us outsiders. StuhlmueLLer explains, "Quite naturally, Jesus turned to Psalm 22 when dying a crucified criminal." The openness of Psalm 22 to outsiders extended from Jesus through the early church to the Gentiles. StuhlmueLLer concludes, "The liturgy, especially the Eucharist, continues to be a barometer of openness on the part of the Church to the poor, the oppressed, the neglected, and the ostracized."<sup>14</sup>

StuhlmueLLer states that verses 22-31, all of which are included in the reading for this Sunday, are a confession of faith. With that confession in mind:

verses 30-32 To him alone shall bow down all who sleep in the earth;  
before him shall bend all who go down into the dust.

and to him my soul shall live; my descendants shall serve him.  
Let the coming generation be told of the LORD  
that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has  
shown.

One more mention of the relationship between the Psalms and the Passion Narratives bears mentioning. Which came first, the Narrative or the Psalms?<sup>15</sup> Plainly, the Psalms influenced the Narratives, but how much, to what extent? In other words, what is the ongoing role of the Faithful interpreting our history for our present identity? Each generation interprets its own identity anew, not in the sense of disrupting the Deposit of Faith, but in the sense of forming personal and group identities.

## 1 John 3:18-24

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<sup>13</sup> Reinhard Pummer, "New Evidence for Samaritan Christianity?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 1979) 99.

<sup>14</sup> Carroll StuhlmueLLer, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 114.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

What follows is the Lectionary translation followed by a fortuitous mistaken translation from the Gospel of John:

verses 19-20 Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth  
and reassure our hearts before him  
in whatever our hearts condemn,  
for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

By a slip of my indexing, a scholar made the following quotation from the Gospel, rather than the Epistle, of John 3:19-20. "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." For the benefit of Poor Clare [Light] nuns, I leave the mistake.

### **John 15:4a, 5b**

verses 4a, 5b            Remain in me as I remain in you, says the Lord.  
Whoever remains in me will bear much fruit.

John 13-20(21) is known as *The Book of Glory*. A scholar explains, "... the paschal mystery shows us something about Jesus, but unlike them [the six preceding signs], it effects the reality that it shows, like the exodus in Wisdom, which brings about the freedom signified in the other signs."<sup>16</sup> Expect further development of these signs in coming Sundays.

### **John 15:1-8**

Although non-Catholics can claim to be branches from the true vine, my pastor in 2003 always mentioned as Church discipline that non-Catholics are welcome to receive a blessing but not the Eucharist at funerals. My different pastor in 2006 no longer does that. Like the 2003 pastor, my own heart breaks on the Cross of the Eucharist used to divide, rather than unite Christians. The Holy Father has just published an Encyclical stating that the Eucharist is not a means to unity; unity comes first, as a means to the Eucharist.

verse 5            I am the vine, you are the branches.  
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,  
because without me you can do nothing.

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205.

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These readings are about the identity of the early Church accepting the Cross with **praise** for the Father. The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is about Paul taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, the *non-Chosen* peoples. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is about extending the reign of God from the Chosen to the non-Chosen peoples. The First Letter of John is about the interpenetration of grace through the souls of the Faithful. The Gospel is about not being able to do anything without Jesus.<sup>17</sup> What the Faithful are able to do is **praise** God sometimes as they carry their Cross and at some other, rarer times, *because* they carry their Cross.

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<sup>17</sup> Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001) 652, 656..