

The Greek for this Sunday impresses me that God sent his only-begotten Son to humanity (1 John 4:9). Up to this point, I mainly thought of *only-begotten* as no big deal. I am the only begotten me, just as Jesus is the only begotten he. Such is the wrong point of view. The correct point of view is from that of the Father, who might beget many sons, but only has one. That sense of someone special carries through the Lectionary.

Here the Faithful can become tangled up in theology. I am not denying that God, as Creator, is also Father of the Faithful. I am asserting that the Faithful are not members of the Holy Trinity, as is Jesus. God is Father to Jesus in a way that differs from the way in which God is Father to the Faithful. The exciting note, however, is that the Faithful can and do participate in the Trinitarian love life of God.

The most interesting feature of the Lectionary is joining the household of God (John 15:9, 10),¹ part of the family, living the very Trinitarian life of the Creator. The notion is especially Eucharistic, with the physical presence of Jesus. If the Creator is anything, he is practical.

In "Letter on the Eucharist," Pope John Paul II wrote,

The Spirit and Heaven

17. Concerning the Eucharist, St. Ephrem [the Deacon] wrote that Jesus "filled it with His Spirit. He who eats it with faith, eats fire and Spirit." At Mass the Church prays, "Grant that we who are nourished by His body and blood may be filled with His Holy Spirit." Eucharist increases the Spirit Who has already been given in Baptism and Confirmation.

18. Because the Eucharist strains toward eternal life and is a foretaste of heaven (Jn 15:11), the assembly cries out, "Until you come in glory." In the Eucharist, the first fruits of man's future fullness, Jesus promised that He would raise up those who eat His flesh and drink His blood (Jn. 6:54). The pledge of heavenly glory is true because the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is His glorious risen body. With Eucharist we digest the "secret of the resurrection, a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death" (St. Ignatius of Antioch).

19. Our liturgies (East and West) honor Mary, the angels, apostles, martyrs and all the saints. In celebrating the liturgy of the Lamb, we

¹ Mary L. Coloe, P.B.V.M., "Welcome into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 2004) 412.

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share in the heavenly liturgy and join those who shout “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb” (Rev. 7:10). The Eucharist is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem.²

What John Paul II wrote is pious and offers me no problem. The practical aspect of love, however, means that I have all sorts of trouble with Benedict XVI, “Deus Caritas Est.” The Pope notes that the starting point of his encyclical is 1 John 4:8, “God is love.”³ From a practical point of view, charity and love now demand a different type of respect for women, a respect I find all too infrequent in the encyclical. Contrary to the approach of the current Holy Father, feminist scholarship questions the extent of sexism in the early Church.

Richard Bauckham, after carefully laying out the literary setting, writes,

If the references to witnesses in Acts 10:41 (skipped in the Lectionary) and 13:31 are not restricted to the twelve, then there is no reason why they should not include the women (whom Luke has taken pains to portray as among the most important founding members of the earliest Christian community: 1:14).⁴

The Acts of the Apostles differs from the Gospel by Luke, because the ruling elite have more important roles (Acts 10:1-48). One of those important roles is that of the wealthy widow, Johanna.⁵ Johanna had a practical role to play, sharing her material wealth with the early Church.

² “Letter on the Eucharist: Pope John Paul II,” A Simplified Version by Rev. Msgr. Vincent M. Walsh (Merion, PA 19066: Key of David Publications, 2003) 10-11.

³ Benedict XVI, “Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love,”
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclixals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_2..._1/30/2006 8/25.

⁴ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 306-307.

⁵ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 120.

To his credit, Benedict does write, “[God] encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence.”⁶ What angers me are the many places in which *human* or *humanity* might replace *man*. The reference to *men and women* is rare, if not unique in the encyclical.

Practicality also offers a Christian dimension for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Peter Paris in The Social Teachings of the Black Churches explains.

The black Christian tradition has exercised both priestly and prophetic functions, the former aiding and abetting the race in its capacity to endure the effects of racism, the latter utilizing all available means to effect religious and moral reform in the society at large.⁷

The issue is abuse of classes and groups of people. While Benedict XVI recognizes Marxism,⁸ he does not seem to recognize the legitimate role Christianity has changing the way society organizes. Benedict even seems to neglect possibilities for local churches, when he only recognizes “The Church’s charitable organizations ... (at diocesan, national, and international levels),”⁹ all the while passing over the

⁶ Benedict XVI, “Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love,”
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclixals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_2..._1/30/2006 9/25.

⁷ Peter Paris, *The Social Teachings of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 11 as cited in Demetrius K. Williams, “The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience,” in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 53.

⁸ Benedict XVI, “Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love,”
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclixals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_2..._1/30/2006 18/25.

⁹ Benedict XVI, “Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love,”
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclixals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_2..._1/30/2006 18/25.

role of the local parish church, out of which everything else begins. Despite the importance of the local parish church, Sacred Scripture is readily adaptable to a hierarchical structure of organization.

The Lectionary readings begin with the Acts of the Apostles preserving how Peter preached.¹⁰ That notwithstanding, Peter preached in such a way as to change the way in which the new Christian religion would be organized. William O. Walker, Jr., points out that Peter was the “pioneer missionary to the Gentiles.”¹¹ The Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, continued what Peter started. In the reading, Peter proclaims that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Acts 10:34 is one of the “building blocks of equality for African Americans.”¹²

Cornelius falls at the feet of Peter. Cornelius was a Roman centurion, one of the first Gentile converts, and, traditionally, the first bishop of Caesarea.¹³ Falling at the feet of anyone symbolizes worship that Christians reserve to God. Peter objected to such adulation.¹⁴

Psalm 98 portrays God as a victorious King, worthy of worship.¹⁵ The Gospel of John, contrary to the Synoptics, treats Jesus as king, as the Good Shepherd-King,¹⁶

¹⁰ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 305.

¹¹ William O. Walker, Jr., “Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 570.

¹² Demetrius K. Williams, “The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience,” in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 51.

¹³ <http://www.answers.com/topic/cornelius?method=22> 060423.

¹⁴ Dennis Hamm, S.J., “What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17:11-19,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April 1994) 284.

¹⁵ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 119.

¹⁶ Mary L. Coloe, P.B.V.M., “Welcome into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 3 (July 2004) .415.

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laying “down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13), rather than as servant or slave. A royal priesthood is present for the Faithful to relish.

1 John 4, in the Greek, is a hymn, with a lot of alliteration. I am struck with Greek, as the language of the intellectuals. The New Testament begins with the language of the Greeks, but is handed down to the Faithful in the language of power, Roman Latin.

1 John says that the way to cope with the political and power vicissitudes of life is through love. As part of the healing ministry at my Newport News parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, I bring Communion to people in the throes of death and in serious pain. These people cope best through love, love of their God and love of those around them. This is the love of which 1 John writes.

Occasionally the grammarian, Max Zerwick, S.J., shares his spirituality. About 1 John 4:8, “Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love,” Zerwick writes, “Note how the knowledge of God is always practical and personal with the object of assimilation which however is only attainable through a rebirth enabling man to participate in the nature of Him who is love.”¹⁷

Overall, it is one thing to be a member of the family of God, it is something else to reduce that familiarity to loving the marginalized, whether women or Blacks, and the like. The Gospel of John identifies obedience to the commandments of Jesus with divine love (John 15:12-17).¹⁸ Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus, as the only-begotten Son, reveals a teaching that is not his own, but comes from the one who sent him, namely God.¹⁹

Before sending these Personal Notes out the first time, I review them about sixteen times. First, I do the research, and then comes the first draft. After the first draft, come about ten more drafts, one for each of the documentations, as I place the footnotes. Then I go over the material about three more times, trying to smooth transitions and clarify ambiguities. Then Bette goes over the finished product with a

¹⁷ Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 731.

¹⁸ C. Clifton Black, review of George Keerankeri, S.J., The Love Commandment in Mark: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Mk 12:28-34 in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 717.

¹⁹ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 462.

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special eye for required assumptions readers may not make. After that, I first incorporate the suggestions from Bette, then review the results again, for about the sixteenth time. If the results are still bumpy, I may revise it again. Sometimes Bette wants to see my changes. After that, the Personal Notes rest about two weeks. For example, these Personal Notes for May 21 are being composed April 16 for distribution May 5th. Before sending out the material May 5th, in both hard copy and on the internet, I make another revision. Up until April 23, this had been standard practice. Now a change is taking place.

Beginning Easter, April 16, I began systematically preparing for Sunday Mass by praying over the Personal Notes just before Mass begins. Again, I revise the Personal Notes, for about the eighteenth time. My reason for calling attention to the process is that I am beginning to upload changes to the website made on the Sunday itself. This means that the hard and virtual copies distributed about two weeks before each Sunday are subject to further revision on the Sunday in question.

I intend to include the above two paragraphs in the Personal Notes for the next two weeks. After that, I intend to incorporate the paragraphs in the Appendix.

For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes where I intend to add the above paragraphs May 7.