

Personal Notes
060528 Seventh Sunday of Easter 60B
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Francis X. DiLorenzo, the new Ordinary, is not transferring the Ascension to Sunday. His Richmond Diocese celebrates the Ascension this year Thursday, May 25. The net effect is, this is my first time preparing the Seventh Sunday of Easter. I have done nothing with the Greek, but have translated the Latin in order to identify the exact verses used. This fact also tends to lengthen my explanation.

The parish bulletin announced last week that the Ascension transferred to this Sunday. My intention is never again to assume otherwise.

There is another problem, namely connecting truth, enhanced by faith, with love. The truth is: life is hell, then, you die. Such a grim outlook is not easily internalized. The grim reaper view, however, makes some sense, at least from a strictly rational point of view. That helps explain why psychiatry leads or almost leads the professions in suicides.

With Faith, the love of God can shine through the vagaries of life. Avoiding the harsh realities of life through various psychological defense mechanisms is one way to accept divine love. Accepting the pain of human existence, that is, the Cross, in the Spirit of Jesus, is the way preferred in these Personal Notes.

Research into religious experiences recognizes the human phenomena to which I refer. Agneta Schreurs explains,¹

Numinous Experiences, to which Rudolph Otto in his still famous study *The Idea of the Holy* has drawn attention, are experienced and recognized in all religions.² They determine the atmosphere of solemnity and reverence in worship, rites, and liturgies, as well as in architecture and other religious art. In them, the divine presence is encountered as 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' (a terrifying and fascinating mystery), as Otto put it. Such experiences may be profoundly humbling and disconcerting. Being perturbed by the realization of the insignificance, the fragility, the imperfection of one's

¹ Agneta Schreurs, Psychotherapy and Spirituality: Integrating the spiritual dimension into therapeutic practice (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002) 169.

² R. Otto (1924) Das Heilige. Gotha/Stuttgart: F. A. Perthes Verl. (The Idea of the Holy: An inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational, trans. J. W. Harvey. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, 2nd edn.) as cited in footnote 10, in Agneta Schreurs, Psychotherapy and Spirituality: Integrating the spiritual dimension into therapeutic practice (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002) 290.

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existence in the confrontation with God's majesty is in itself not a negative experience. But depending on the vulnerability of their personality and their faith people may be so much overwhelmed by such feelings of unworthiness that they become despondent. In that respect the consequences of such experiences then become therapeutically relevant

Psychological defense mechanisms are one form of political coping. Not only individuals, but also groups, such as church and state, can also use such defenses against facing unpleasant truths. Spiritual growth in the love of God accepts the Cross as part of the truth. Humility is the only virtue based on truth. Humility, rather than a defense mechanism against harsh realities, is a means for directly coping with such realities.

The focus of these Notes is on consecration to truth in the midst of countervailing politics and defense mechanisms. A balance between truth and politics is always difficult, but especially truths about sexism. Later, in these Notes truths about racism and history will be mentioned. The nature of the times requires some further mention of truths about the Gospel of Judas, as well as about obfuscating the Bible in the liturgy.

A word of explanation helps to understand what I mean by sexism and racism. Sexism and racism can be understood both in the abstract and in the concrete. In most cases, culture hides the realities of both from groups and individuals. Sometimes abstract sexism and racism are easier to recognize. The effort to find the truth reduces the abstract to the concrete and is the effort at work in these Notes.

The readings for today are about truth and justice winning out, in both concrete and abstract reality, even when truth and justice are not in the ascendancy. In the overview, the Acts of the Apostles deal with the betrayal by Judas. Psalm 103 is about the historical situation of Israel, probably after returning from Exile. 1 John explains that the love of God keeps the Faithful consecrated in truth and justice. The Gospel contains the final prayer of Jesus containing that consecration. That consecration is significant for incorporating greater love in relationships between genders and races.

Jesus consecrates his disciples to truth three times in the Gospel of John 17:17, 17, and 19. For this retired professor, the final³ prayer of Jesus in John 17:17, 17, 19 bears repetition.

³ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 461.

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“ ... Consecrate them [the disciples] in the truth. Your word is truth. ...
And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be
consecrated in truth.”

The issue is: does truth determine politics, including Church politics, or does politics determine truth. When truth is not politically correct, truth can bring martyrdom, that is, witness. The other readings for this Sunday put to work this Gospel principle of consecration in truth, self-reflecting back on the politics involved in the original writing and on subsequent Church traditions.

The first readings are from the Acts of the Apostles. Truths about women are particularly difficult. Understanding Mary in an age of women liberated from male dominance requires a rethinking of Church dogmatic theology. Quoting Elisabeth Grossmann, Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B. writes that Mary liberated from Christology [that is male dominance] is “the greatest challenge to the church dogmatic conception which Mariology has experienced in this [20th] century.”⁴

The most difficult truth to face in the One, Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is the tradition of sexism. Part of the difficulty arises from overlooking part of what is in the Bible. For example, the Acts of the Apostles, which Luke wrote as well as his Gospel, portrays women as some of the most important⁵ founders of Christianity. Acts 1:15 indicates “a [founding] group of about one hundred and [sic] twenty persons,” undoubtedly including the Blessed Virgin Mary and other women.⁶ Some of those present with Jesus, beginning with his Baptism by John to his Resurrection, were women. Scholarly commitment, some of which the footnotes document, examines what Luke has said and implied about women both in his Gospel and in the Acts.

⁴ Elisabeth Grossmann, “Mariologische Thesen in der feministischen Theologie,” in Maria—für alle Frauen oder über allen Frauen? Ed. Elisabeth Gossman, Dieter R. Bauer (Freiburg: Herder, 1989) 168-169.

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) 306-307.

⁶ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology.” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 550-551.

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The “Gospel of the Body” by John Paul II reflects sexism. As the book reviewer, Susan A. Ross, words it,⁷

... John Paul’s “essentialist” understanding of sexuality, in which male and female sexuality are distinguished by their unique features: for men, it is the initiation of love, and for women, it is receptivity to love. Although as humans, men and women are both receptive to God’s love and gift of self, this understanding results in women being seen as primarily receptive and men as initiators and therefore as more like God.

Luke broadens the twelve in Matthew and Mark.⁸ It makes sense that itinerant disciples extended beyond the twelve. In Acts 1:21-22 (used in the readings for today), Luke is making it clear that there were others besides the eleven who had the requirements of apostleship and whom Jesus consecrated in truth.⁹

When Acts 1:20c refers to “one of the men who accompanied us the whole time,” the likely implication is that women also made that accompaniment. Acts 1:17 and 1:25 both use the word *ministry*, derivatives of the Greek for *service*. In Acts 1:25, apostolic ministry, refers to a ministry well beyond the twelve.¹⁰ The point is that referring to Martha only as serving a meal (Luke 10:38-42) can also refer to Martha as participating in the ministry of Jesus.¹¹

⁷ Susan A. Ross, review of Christopher West, Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II’s “Gospel of the Body.” Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June 2006) 437-438.

⁸ Luke 6:17; 8:1-3; 10:1-20; 19:37; 23:29; 24:9, 33; Acts 1:15, 21-23 as found in Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 193.

⁹ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 282, fn. 57, 306.

¹⁰ William O. Walker, Jr., “Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 583.

¹¹ Warren Carter, “Getting Martha out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No. 2 (April 1996) 270.

In a spirit of scholarly commitment that serves to examine what Luke has about women, Richard Bauckham becomes exercised over the name *Justus* in Acts 1:23. Bauckham regards *Justus* as a Latin equivalent for *Joseph*.¹² While Justus was male, how his name translated into various languages also applied to females. Bauckham pays particular attention to Jewish-Roman equivalents for Joanna. Bauckham devoted an inch of his index indicating references to Joanna.¹³ Perhaps due to my personal aversion to change, I am generally uncomfortable with the feminist politics of Bauckham. My uneasiness notwithstanding, Bauckham does highlight points for consideration.

Bauckham writes, "... Luke's account of them [Joanna and the other women] makes them apostles according to Paul's use of the term, which includes himself [Paul], Barnabas, and the brothers of Jesus (alongside whom Luke places the women in Acts 1:14)." Verse 14 is not in the Cycle B Lectionary readings for today. That verse is isolated into Cycle A. This isolation is an act of power, political. The Magisterium is obscuring what is in the Bible; resisting a greater infusion of Christian love into the social mores surrounding relationships between people.

The liturgical politics determining both what and how to consider the Bible affects the status of women in secular and religious society. Effective Magisterial insistence on structural passivity and subordination for women begins with scholarly reconsideration of traditional approaches. Institutional credibility depends on a foundation of scholarly credibility.

The contemporary reality of status transformation for females does have meaningful Biblical parallels, to the extent that Bauckham titled his book, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels. The same reality of status transformation takes place in racial relations. Acts 1:26, about Matthias replacing Judas, contains an element of status transformation.¹⁴ Status transformation is the aim of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP also runs counter to the politically correct grain. Racism, rather than

¹² Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 184, 185.

¹³ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 315.

¹⁴ Kim Paffenroth, review of Nelson P. Estrada, From Followers to Leaders: The Apostles in the Ritual of status Transformation in Acts 1—2, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 2 (April 2006) 327-328.

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sexism, focuses the NAACP. Transference from issues of sexism to issues of racism overlap. The basic meaning of it all, despite the historical context, is that truth produces credibility, the very credibility that God is love.

Since Acts has the Judas story, the principle of facing unpleasant truths requires comment. A large area of difficulty for many Christians is the new scholarship about Judas, the focus of readings from Acts today. New scholarship is challenging what has entered the culture as “a Judas,” meaning betrayal. Such scholarship is shaky at best. The news media is making a great deal of new interest in the Gospel of Judas. April 21, 2006 John L. Allen, Jr. wrote, toward the end of his article,¹⁵

Immaculate Heart of Mary Sr. Sandra Schneiders, a Biblical scholar at the graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif., identified several factors underlying this trend [toward fascination with the “Gospel of Judas”], including general public skepticism about “official” accounts, the impact of the sexual abuse scandals in undercutting the credibility of the institutional church, the scientific naiveté of much of the American public, and the impact of new textual finds and new methods of literary analysis.

“People who have been disappointed by the religion and religious establishment they believe in ... hope against hope that something will come along to widen the boundaries, to create a little more breathing room, to suggest some alternative possibilities,” Schneiders told *NCR*.

“People want to believe there is more to the story, that it is more flexible, richer, less closed than they thought,” she said.

However legitimate such impulses may be, Australian Jesuit Fr. Gerald O’Collins, who teaches Christology at Rome’s Gregorian University, was emphatic that the “Gospel of Judas” won’t offer much help.

“It was junk then, and it’s junk now,” O’Collins told Catholic News Service.

I agree with O’Collins that the Gospel of Judas offers little, if any new insights. In contrast to the Gospel of Judas, for millennia, generation after generation has been

¹⁵ John L. Allen, Jr., *Rome*, “World: ‘Gospel’ sheds more light on early church than on Judas,” National Catholic Reporter, Vol. 42, No. 25 (April 21, 2006) page 9, col. 3-4.

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drawing new insights from the Psalms. My concern is not so much with what the Magisterium places in the Lectionary as with what is left out and why. Since the Magisterium does not identify the individuals making Lectionary choices, the Magisterium draws accountability to itself. I am more comfortable engaging Psalm 103, which the Lectionary uses on six different Sundays, than I am with the Gospel of Judas.¹⁶ The psalms suit history and historical reality better than the Gospel of Judas.

For all of the historical troubles within the Church, the Responsorial antiphon proclaims, “The Lord has set his throne in heaven (Psalm 103 19a).” In two verses not used this Sunday, God does not keep his anger forever and delights in steadfast love.¹⁷ Without explanation or accountability, verse 18 is not used anywhere in the Lectionary. Verse 18 ties in the law and the covenant.¹⁸ In other words, in the final analysis, God is providentially in charge.

In the practical order, a Catholic historian, like me, consecrated in truth, has to wonder where is truth and justice in such places as the history of Western Civilization and Black History. As an historian, I agree with Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979)¹⁹ for whom Christian faith was central. Butterfield and I agree that value-free non-interpretive form of historiography is impossible.²⁰ The difference between Butterfield and me is that Butterfield thought value-free non-interpretive form of historiography was necessary to avoid idolatry. Butterfield thought that whatever historians used to replace Divine Providence amounted to idolatry. I do not agree

¹⁶ 30C, 60B, 79A, 81C, 83B, 103A on pages 188, 459, 549, 589, 5998, 825 respectively in 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).

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Vincent M. Smiles, “The Concept of “Zeal” in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul’s Critique of It in Romans 10:2,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 291.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Butterfield April 30, 2006.

²⁰ Donald Wright, review of Keith C. Sewell, Herbert Butterfield and the Interpretation of History, The American Historical Review, Vol. 111, No. 2 (April 2006) 430.

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with Butterfield here. The idolatry issue for Butterfield is my issue prioritizing truth over politics and stating openly the relevant assumptions one makes. The Gospel consecration in truth makes my point as a professional historian.

To return to the psalm, the Church uses Psalm 103 on six different Sundays, during the Liturgical cycles. The Church also uses Psalm 103 in pastoral care of the sick²¹ and funerals.²² This is the only Sunday the Church uses Psalm 103:19-20. Divine Providence, if not evident at times of sickness and death, is evident not only in Psalm 103, but also in the life of Jesus.

One reason for writing Personal Notes is that Catholic homilists appear afraid to risk political incorrectness in their own pursuit of truth. Of course, thinkers are going to make mistakes. Such is the price of better understanding and, ultimately, of better love.

The Gospel identifies the Christian way with the way of finding the truth and then, sticking to it, regardless of the political consequences.

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 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

²¹ 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) 60, 296.

²² N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: 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 (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 40, 226.

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wants to see my changes. After that, the Personal Notes rest about two weeks. For example, these Personal Notes for May 28th are being composed April 30th for distribution May 11th. Before sending out the material May 11th, 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.

For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes

Appendix to this Seventh Sunday of Easter 60B

While what follows is pertinent in its relationship to the readings, its relationship to the Notes is more tenuous. Without pretending to incorporate what follows into the theme rendered above, I still want to share what follows.

While there is no scholarly work at hand to bear on the Second Reading, I would still like to comment. Since I am now in my second round of commenting on the Sunday readings, in the future, I intend to omit commenting on readings for which I have no new scholarship. For now, 1 John 4 is about love emanating from the life of Jesus. When love is limited to individuals or nations, love can be destructive. When love extends to all of creation, because the Creator loves what he makes, then love becomes far more than Karl Marx's "opiate of the masses," a defense mechanism. Love, in the form of Divine Providence, becomes the ingredient that enables truth to rise over politics, even when truth is not apparently politically advantageous. The love God has for the Faithful, at least, is not self-evident. 1 John 4:16 states it well, "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us."

John 17:11b juxtaposes the crucified and risen Jesus and the Faithful in their relationship with the Father. Just as Jesus is one with the Father, so may the Faithful be one with the Father. Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God writes that "in the relation of the 'Father and the Son' one has the exegesis of God." This means that the Gospel does not directly equate Jesus with God.²³

²³ Craig L. Blomberg, review of Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 3 (July 2005) 540.

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In the Gospel of John 17:13-16, 18, Jesus juxtaposes himself with the world, in a way similar to how he juxtaposes himself to the Jews earlier in the Gospel and during the Passion and Death.²⁴ Jesus, plainly Jewish, wants his disciples happy in the world. When I juxtapose both my own and others happiness in Catholic institutions of higher education to secular institutions, I find my home in the secular institutions.

The reason I feel more comfortable in secular institutions is that secular institutions have a greater commitment to truth determining politics than do Catholic institutions, at least the Catholic institutions in which I grew up and then worked as an adult. This fact is to shame Catholic institutions for being afraid to follow truth wherever truth may lead.

Such a consecration in truth is an exodus from political correctness. Douglas K. Clark links the notion of the Exodus in the Book of Wisdom with the death and resurrection of Jesus.²⁵ In turn, I link exodus from political correctness with finding the very love of God.

A final difficult truth to face is that the Lectionary hides, as best it can, difficult passages. To me, at least, this looks like an unacceptable psychological defense mechanism. The Gospel of John does have a head-scratching problem. As Neil J. McElaney, C.S.P. words it, "The risen Jesus, who apparently has already ascended to the Father so as to be able to confer the Spirit on his disciples (John 16:7-8), breathes on them and imparts the Spirit to them (John 20:22)."²⁶ The Lectionary uses John 16:7-8 during the week, but never on a Sunday and never in conjunction with John 20:22, the Ascension, celebrated this year, the previous Thursday.

²⁴ Stanley B. Marrow, "Κοσμος in John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 97, 98, 100.

²⁵ Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205.

²⁶ Neil J. McElaney, C.S.P., "Peter's Denials—How Many? To Whom?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No 3 (July 1990) 469-470.