

Personal Notes
080120 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 64A
© 2016
Raymond J. Jirran

The Lectionary readings model courage in the face of the unknown. Just as the ancient Jews had reason to question the credibility of institutional religion, so do modern Christians have similar reason. What unites the living Faithful with the ancestral Faithful is the courage Faith requires in the face of the unknown.

In the modern world, the credibility of the word of God and the credibility of the Church are linked. Both are apparently in deep trouble, but nothing deeper than what faced the authors of the Lectionary readings for today. These reflections begin with the latest insensitive behavior of the papacy.

On Saturday, December 1, Pope Benedict XVI called for more discussion of morality and the natural law at international organizations. Apparently he is concerned about family planning services by the United Nations. The Pope spoke before Catholic-inspired nongovernmental organizations, asking them to make the social teachings of the Catholic Church better known and accepted.¹

The problem with making the social teachings of the Catholic Church better known and accepted is uncovering hidden agendas. That part of Catholic social teaching, which confronts such modern issues as slavery, abortion, birth control, and general passivity in the face of suffering, has consistently shifted over the course of time since the 1789 French Revolution. What has not shifted has been papal insistence on its own authority to override civil decisions.²

Despite grandiose claims of the Papacy to authoritativeness, Catholics in the United States, like the Faithful remnant in the days of Isaiah, continue to support the Papacy, even when the Papacy sounds most unreasonable. Ministries such as JustFaith lend credibility not only to support of the Papacy, but also to the very credibility of the Papacy. I regard such support as good, rather than foolish.

The Prophet Isaiah was outside the teaching Magisterium of the Judaism of his day. When Isaiah 49 was originally composed, the Faithful were upset that returning to Jerusalem did not seem worth the effort. Isaiah was in Babylon. Despite the fact that Jewish authority lacked credibility, Isaiah urged the Faithful to remain steadfast and full of hope. Ultimately it was the teaching Magisterium of Judaism that preserved the prophecies of Isaiah and all of the writings of the First Testament.

¹ Daily Press, Sunday, December 2, 2007, page A 20, columns 2-6.

² Bernard Laurent, "Catholicism and Liberalism: Two Ideologies in Confrontation," Theological Studies, Vol. 68, No. 4 (December 2007) 808-838.

Personal Notes
080120 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 64A
© 2016
Raymond J. Jirran

The Responsorial antiphon Psalm 40 catches the spirit, *Here I am Lord, I come to do your will*. That seems similar to what the United States inscribes on its currency, *In God we trust*. That means we do not trust politicians, whether civil or religious.

I do see a consistency of courage in the face of the unknown throughout the readings. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul exhibits mixed emotions, on the one hand praising the Corinthians for what they were when he was present among them, on the other hand finding fault with the direction they took after he left. The reading the Lectionary uses hides the misgivings Paul relates later in his epistle.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul begins by praising the Church in Corinth, which is sanctified in Christ Jesus. The Lectionary omits verse 5, *in him [Christ Jesus] you have been richly endowed in every kind of utterance and knowledge*. Knowledge is the coin of the academy. I would not be surprised to see Benedict approach the United States in a manner similar to how Paul approached the Corinthians.

Benedict will arrive in the United States in April to inspect the seminaries, the chief of which is at The Catholic University of America (CU). The administration, meaning the Pope, of CU is currently censored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) for its treatment of Father Charles Curran. The AAUP and the Papacy are both about truth overriding politics. The way for Catholic social teaching to receive a better hearing is to make it plain that Catholic social teaching is not a ruse for increasing Papal authority in the secular world.

Referring to *knowledge*, the Catechism holds that *Wisdom . . . grants us the long range view of history*.³ The long range view of history in this instance is that the papacy has used Catholic social teaching in an attempt to regain lost papal authority. The Pope is trying to regain a place at the table of reason, based on his authority as the apostolic successor of Peter, rather than on his ability to give a reason for the Faith that is in him. The Pope might do this by demonstrating the courage required either to meet the generally established standards for the treatment of professors incurring administrative disapproval or challenging the standards as inadequate.

The Gospel also touches upon courage in the face of disconcerting knowledge. The Gospel is about John the Baptizer recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah. Basically, John is placing the truth of the Divinity of Jesus before his own authority as a prophet. Jesus is the broker between humanity and God, especially in

³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) 208.

the sense that authority of God remains upon Jesus (John 1:32) whereas the authority of God is only a passing phenomenon for others.

Annotated Bibliography

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some of the fun stuff scholars are digging up.

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Isaiah 49:1-6

Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives"⁴

Clifford writes that for Second Isaiah, who wrote chapter 49, the time of punishment was over and the time of restoration was at hand. Clifford goes on, "in the large-scale typology that the prophet used, exiled Israel was far from their homeland like the Hebrews in Egypt in olden times; the wilderness was like the Red Sea, and the servant who will lead them was like Moses (49:1-6)."

Isaiah 49:1-6

Gregory J. Polan, O.S.B., review of John Goldingay, The Message of Isaiah 40—55: A Literary-Theological Commentary⁵

Isaiah 49:1-6 is one of four Servant Songs, so that the Messiah is coming to serve, rather than dominate.

Isa 49:1-4 +5c

Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship"⁶

Stuhlmueller develops the circumstances in which Isaiah wrote, as mentioned above the double line.

⁴ Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 744.

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 3 (July, 2007) 544.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980) 23.

Isaiah 49:3

John Paul Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13"⁷

Heil writes that the servant of God is both a corporate entity, Israel, and a distinct person. Heil concludes, "Thus, Jesus as both the individual "Servant" and "Son of God" represents or embodies Israel as both the corporate "Servant" and "Son of God."

Isaiah 49:6

Steven L. Bridge, review of Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (eds.), Isaiah in the New Testament⁸

Bridge explains, "In the epistles, Isaiah is used to confirm and clarify the situations experienced and the questions faced by the early Christian communities. His words thus speak to ... the missionary outreach to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6) ..."

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

Psalm 40:2

J. Ross Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer"⁹

And he stooped toward me and heard my cry Psalm 40:2). Wagner writes that the Hebrew for *cry* can also refer to inaudible or incomprehensible speech as *voice*.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

1 Cor 1:1-11

"William O. Walker, Jr., "1 Corinthians 15:29-34 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation"¹⁰

Walker writes, "Verses 1-28 proclaim the fact of Christ's resurrection 'as the common ground of all Christian preaching and faith' (vv. 1-11) ..."

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 71-72.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2007) 190-191.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1999) 251.

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2007) 85, 87.

1 Cor 1:1-2

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹¹

This is Barker at her best.

The duties of the Levites could well have described early Christian worship: invocation/remembrance, thanksgiving, i.e. Eucharist, and praise. Since breaking bread was the Sabbath ritual for the priests in the second temple, and the Christians described themselves as saints, literally holy ones, and identified themselves as the royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9), it is more likely that their worship was modeled on that of the angel priests in the temple, than derived from the synagogue. They worshipped in song (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19) and the song expressed the unity and harmony of the community (Col. 3:16). None of the elements of early Christian worship was out of character with temple worship: prophesying was a priestly activity, as was the interpretation of Scripture and the receiving of revelations. They also sang psalms, understanding the LORD as Jesus, another continuation of the temple cult.

1 Cor 1:5

John Fotopoulos, "Arguments Concerning Food Offered to Idols: Corinthian Quotations and Pauline Refutations in a Rhetorical *Partitio* (1 Corinthians 8:1-9)"¹²

Fotopoulos writes that "Paul praised the Corinthians for their knowledge in the *Exordium* of 1 Corinthians (1:5) ..."

John 1:14a, 12a

¹¹ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 141-142, 336 fn 121.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 624.

John 1:29-34

John 1:29

Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., "'I Am the Door' (John 10:7, 9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel"¹³

Neyrey develops the notion of *broker* mentioned above the double line.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

After-action Report

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2007) 282, 285.