

Personal Notes

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Reading 64A, January 19, 2014

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Members of the Roman Catholic Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops developed a *Preparatory Document*, more popularly known as a Survey, for the *Pastoral challenges of the **family** in the context of evangelization* scheduled for next October. The Catholic Church in the United States of America deserves better than “the flaccidity of Church leadership in our times”—to use the inimitable words of Paul Lakeland.¹ The Curia can be expected to resist the changes Pope Francis is bringing about. Rather than analyze the whole Survey, consider just this first statement/question. What makes sense is that Vatican bureaucrats, the Curia, sabotaged the Survey in order to render it meaningless or produce a pre-determined result.

Describe how the **Catholic Church’s teachings** on the value of the **family** contained in the Bible, *Gaudium et spes*, *Familiaris consortio* and other documents of the post-conciliar Magisterium **is [sic] understood** by **people** today? [sic]

As originally written, without the sic’s, this sentence is thirty-three words long, requiring more than six years of post-graduate work to understand, according to the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Scale. Like the illiterate 2011 Missal, both this sentence and the rest of the Survey appear translated by people whose first language is not American English. This Survey is an insult to the intelligence of thinking people.

This is a declarative statement, rather than a question. The question mark is insulting, in the same pattern as the 2011 illiterate Missal. I spent an hour on the internet trying to find Latin from which this sentence may be taken, without success.

Teachings . . . is understood . . . a plural subject and a singular verb? Perhaps *teachings* does not mean teachings, but means whatever the Magisterium produces this time. *Teachings*, then becomes singular, because coming from a singular source. I guess we are not supposed to expect good grammar.

Next, consider vocabulary.

What does **Catholic Church** mean? the Teaching Magisterium? the clergy? some of the clergy? the hierarchical clergy? the domestic church? all Christians? some Christians? Catholics only? fallen-away Catholics? non-Catholics? The responses might be different for each.

¹ Paul Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End: Lumen Gentium and the Church Today* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013), 107.

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What does **people** mean? those *some* for whom Christ died in the liturgy? educated? non-educated? committed, non-committed? informed? uninformed? males? females? mothers? fathers? heterosexuals? bi-sexuals? homosexuals? married? singles? ordained? African-Americans? Anglo-Americans? Latin Americans? Baptists? Confirmed? Except for the fact that Pope Francis wants parish level feedback, the ambiguity of the Survey makes it meaningless.

Finally, consider what the Survey omits. The Survey simply skips over what it means by **family**. Do single-parent families count? stepfamilies? homosexual families? religious order families? church families?

Personal Notes presents these comments to be helpful. **Survey** and **Synod** appear in bold print below. These comments separate politics and truth. I propose that the **Survey** needs clarification, at the behest of good grammar and clear American English.

Among others, Personal Notes is being sent to Monsignor Brian Bransfield, Associate General Secretary, Office of the General Secretary, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.² *[Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.](#)*

Readings

First Reading	Isaiah 49:3, 5-6
Psalm:	Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10 (8a and 9a)
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:1-3
Alleluia Verse	John 1:14a, 12a
Gospel:	John 1:29-34

Annotated Bibliography

Musings above the solid line draw from material below. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting details.

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

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Isaiah 49:6

Frank J. Matera, The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life³

Matera explains,

They [the disciples of Jesus] are not the light of the world because of their merits and deeds but because of Jesus, the Servant of God who brings the light of salvation so that God's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6). So long as disciples do what Jesus has done, therefore, they will be the light of the world, freeing the world from the darkness of sin and death.

Surveying what the disciples of Jesus are doing, therefore, will free the world from the darkness of sin and death. This is not democracy in action. This is a test, however, of how the Faithful are able to live with pronouncements of the Papal Teaching Magisterium.

Isaiah 49:1-6

John T. Carroll, review of Jaroslav Rindoš, He of Whom It Is Written: John the Baptist and Elijah in Luke⁴

Carroll reports,

R. employs a synchronic method of narrative analysis that privileges the assumption of literary, ideational, and thematic coherence and also probes intertextual connections between Luke and an array of OT (and other Jewish) texts (such as . . . Isa 49:1-6 [used here] . . .

The primary argument is for the most part convincing, that is Luke's coloring of Jesus' ministry employing an Elijah palette . . . does not attenuate the evangelist's portray of the baptizing prophet John as the promised Elijah . . . –congruence in mission, that is, not identity in person. John prepares the way of the Lord (Jesus) by forming a people for the LORD (God).

Since Jesus worked with a people already formed by John, it is appropriate for the Papal Teaching Magisterium to examine those people. Interaction between the Papal Teaching Magisterium and the Faithful **Survey** is helpful for determining Church governance.

³ Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013, 45.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January 2013) 171.

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Isaiah 49:6

Erik M. Heen, review of James P. Ware, Paul and the Mission of the Church: Philippians in Ancient Jewish Context⁵

Heen reports that Ware asserts

In interpreting his own mission work in terms of the envisioned ingathering of the gentiles, Paul was no respecter of the original *Sitz im Leben* of the LXX material he appropriated.

We may thank W. for this reading of Paul against such a comprehensive and nicely drawn background of the history of interpretation of texts in Second Temple Judaism. It helpfully contributes to our knowledge of the tradition history of, for example, Isa 49:6 [used here]: “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (RSV), as well as the manner in which Paul thought through his calling to be an apostle to the gentiles (Rom 11:13).

The coming family **Synod** has potential for using such social sciences as psychiatry to reflect back “a light to the nations.”

Isaiah 49:6

Joseph B. Modica, review of James A. Meek, The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts: Text, Hermeneutic and Purpose⁶

Modica reports that Meek assigns Isaiah 49:6 to one of four New Testament quotations in Acts that pertain and allude to the gentiles. The Isaianic Servant is the theme Acts develops. Meek argues that “Luke did not disregard or distort the original sense of the Hebrew text (even when the words of the citation appear to come from the LXX) (p. 132).”

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10 (8a and 9a)

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:14a, 12a

John 1:29-34

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 2013) 383.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 2 (April 2011) 401.

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John 1:29

John David Ramsey, A Precarious Faith: The Tri-Une Dynamic of the Christian Life⁷

Father John David, my Pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, in Newport News, Virginia, offers a beautiful Eucharistic explanation based on work by the artist Andrei Rublev (1360-1430).⁸ This explanation is:

At the center of the temple stands an altar: Rublev's icon of the Trinity, venerated by the gathered community, is fundamentally a *Eucharistic* image, built around the altar of the Lord's Supper. The three angels representing the three persons of the Trinity surround the altar. Jesus Christ is at the center, pointing to his own body, himself the eucharistic [sic] sacrifice, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" [this translation is the same as the Lectionary] and makes it possible for the world to participate in the dynamic life of inter-relatedness that he shares with the Father and the Spirit. The circular arrangement of the three persons displays the perfection of their relations: the house in the background reminds the church that the Father and the Son with the Spirit dwell among those who love them, in the fullness of their ordinary, everyday lives, and invite those drawn to them to participate in the hospitality and fellowship which they offer. The icon is constructed in such a way that the viewers are drawn into participation in the fellowship of the sacrificial meal to which Christ invites them.

May the family **Synod** also draw viewers into participation in the fellowship of the sacrificial meal to which Christ invites them.

John 1:29

14 "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).⁹ So far, I have not identified just where the 2011 Missal uses this verse.

⁷ Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 2002, 377.

⁸ <https://www.google.com/search?q=Rublev&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&channel=fflb> (accessed November 18, 2013).

⁹ Sacred Scripture in the Missal

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John 1:29

Stephen Finlan, review of Christian A. Eberhart, The Sacrifice of Jesus: Understanding Atonement Biblically¹⁰

After highly recommending this short (170 pages), inexpensive (paper \$9.99) book for college classrooms and churches, Finlan reports,

The introduction makes two points that are in some tension with each other. The first is that many Christians are uncomfortable with notions that seem to speak of a cruel and sacrifice-demanding God who allows one person to substitute for all others; they find that such concepts make no sense in a postmodern world. In tension with this is the statement that the saving sacrifice of Jesus is central to theological reflection in all Christian denominations, that “atonement is a nonnegotiable component of Christianity,” and that to abandon atonement would be to abandon the “roots and essence” of the Last Supper (pp. 8-9).

While the book of Acts presents theological tension, psychiatry presents family tension. Both are suitable for the **Synod** on the family. Psychiatrist John Caffaro points to the tensions of the times. “The structure of the American [he means in the United States] family is changing dramatically. Stepfamilies are increasing rapidly because of high divorce rates and the number of children born outside marriage.” To my mind, it will not do for institutional religion to respond, “we keep telling them not to do that.” Greater sophistication and use of the social sciences is in order.

Caffaro continues,

Stepfamilies are currently the most prevalent type of family in the United States: more than half of Americans today have been, are now, or eventually will be in one or more step families during their lives. . . and it is projected that one-third of the siblings in the United States currently live in a stepfamily. . . .The great majority of residential stepfamilies are stepfather families because of the high percentage of children who live with their mothers after birth or divorce.

This means including a feminine perspective to the family **Synod**. Psychiatry is not necessarily the enemy of religion. Psychiatry, like other forms of medicine, can be the handmaid of religion.

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 3 (July 2013) 572.

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If anything, Caffaro respects and supports institutional religion in his second edition of Sibling Abuse Trauma: Assessment and Intervention Strategies for Children, Families, and Adults.¹¹ He offers two case studies that merit special consideration: (1) “Elena, a 6-year-old Mexican child, was removed from her home by Child Welfare Services and temporarily placed in a group facility for sexual “acting out” behavior, which led to a suspicion that she had been molested. She was the eldest of five siblings . . .” (2) “This African American family consisted of Kenneth and Sharon Green, 9-year-old Samuel, 7-year-old Charles, 6-year-old Erica, and 5-year-old Afeni.” The family was stressed because Kenneth could not find work. Is there any relationship between what the Papal Teaching Magisterium presents as legitimate family planning and stress from unbearable burdens?

The Faithful can only pray that the **Synod** on the family will develop what the likes of Caffaro have to offer, by way of understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and personal growth.

John 1:33

Daniel B. Wallace, With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes: Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament¹²

Wallace is explicit.

the one who sent me to baptize

This text illustrates (1) that the controlling verb of an infinitive is not necessarily the main verb of the sentence (in this case, a substantival participle); and (2) that the gloss *in order to* is for testing purposes only, as it would be too clumsy if [sic] made the translation (“the one who sent me in order to baptize”).

¹¹ John V. Caffaro, Sibling Abuse Trauma: Assessment and Intervention Strategies for Children, Families, and Adults, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2014 [sic]. Caffaro mentions unindexed religion on pages 132, 135, 137, 161, 173, He includes “Catholic” on page 58. Elena begins on page 198. The African-American family begins on page 212.

¹² Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 478, 586, 591-592.

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John 1:33-34

Personal Notes cites members of the Protestant Revolt in the spirit of Gerald O'Collins, S.J., writing,¹³

In fact, by allowing the liturgy to be celebrated in the vernacular, by stressing “the table of God’s word” along with the importance of the homily (no. 52), and by granting to the laity—although restricted to certain circumstances—communion “under both kinds” (no. 55), Vatican II conceded the demands of Martin Luther and other 16th-century Protestant reformers, albeit in the 20th-century. In short, while SC [Sacrosanctum concilium [sic]] did not use explicitly the language of “reform” or “reformation,” what it enacted can and should be described in those terms.

Johannes Brenz (1499-1570), “Explanation of Galatians”¹⁴

The Protestant revolutionary, Brenz, uses John 1:33-34 to explain,

There is, however, another kind of knowledge of God, and this is the kind that the gospel proclaims. It says that God is a merciful Father through Jesus Christ and that he forgives the sins of those who believe in Christ. He counts such believers righteous not because of the merits of their works but only because of Christ by faith. This alone is the true knowledge of God, which is not known to us by nature but is learned through the gospel, whose author is the Holy Spirit.

For context, Saint Ignatius Loyola lived 1491-1547. The Jesuits, whom Ignatius founded, are among the intellectuals of the Church. Pope Francis is a Jesuit. Incorporating the insights of Caffaro into presenting God as a merciful Father would be a useful exercise for the coming **Synod** on the family.

¹³ Theological Studies, Vol. 73, No. 4 (December 2012) 772.

¹⁴ in Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament X: Galatians, Ephesians, (ed.) Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2011) 143.

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John 1:31-34

Michael Peppard, "Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship"¹⁵

Peppard argues,

Paul and John are the closest examples we have to [for?] ideal types of understanding divine sonship in earliest Christianity, but dogmatic theologians they were not. Their metaphorical sketches of the divine-human relationship often leave us without conclusive interpretations of divine sonship.

Peppard goes on to cite John 1:32-34 to make his case. The Papal Teaching Magisterium is under no divine obligation to present conclusive interpretations of divine sonship. Developing moving conclusions, as with family life, is appropriate.

Personal Notes gave up systematically examining the illiterate 2011 Missal November 25, 2012. On April 7, 2013, with Reading 045C 2nd Sunday of Easter_A Catholic Bible Study 130407, Personal Notes systematically began to incorporate material from A Commentary on the Order of Mass of *The Roman Missal: A New English Translation: Developed under the Auspices of the Catholic Academy of Liturgy*, Edward Foley (ed.) (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011). The hope is that this approach will help pray with the new Missal, despite itself.

Catherine Vincie, "The Mystagogical Implications"¹⁶

Vincie writes,

Eucharist urges us to make the connection between the cross of Christ and human suffering. Both the death and resurrection of Christ and human suffering are in the mode of "mystery," only grasped with the eyes of faith. Simplistic "explanations" will not do; nor will ideas of an impassible God respond adequately to the crisis of faith that radical suffering brings. The eucharistic [sic] liturgy invites reflection on divine "pathos," God's impassioned "suffering with"—not because of some

¹⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2011) 110.

¹⁶ in A Commentary on the Order of Mass of *The Roman Missal: A New English Translation: Developed under the Auspices of the Catholic Academy of Liturgy*, Edward Foley (ed.) (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011) 146.

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deficiency, but through overflowing love born in solidarity with us and all of creation.

One wonders whether simplistic explanations of human sexuality account for family stress and sibling abuse trauma.

For more on sources see the Appendix file. A complete set of Personal Notes, dating from the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 14, 2002 to the present, is on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes.

The Responsorial Antiphon for this Sunday is *Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will* (Psalm 40:8a and 9a).¹⁷

In the gobbledygook prayer at Sunday Mass immediately following the *Gloria*, the Faithful hearing the 2011 Roman Missal can listen for “*bestow your peace on our times.*”¹⁸

This is a call for grace that some Black Baptists call to mind with *For whosoever exalted himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11).¹⁹

¹⁷ 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 the Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1988) 808. Personal Notes refers to this book as the Lectionary.

¹⁸ n.a., The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II: English Translation According to the Third Typical Edition: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (Washington, DC, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011) 462. Personal Notes refers to this book as the Missal.

¹⁹ UMI Annual Sunday School Lesson Commentary: Precepts for Living @: 2013-2014: International Sunday School Lessons: Volume 165: UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.), a. Okechuku Ogbonnaya, Ph.D., (ed.) (Chicago, IL 60643: UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.), office@peninsula2013) 230, 231.