

Personal Notes
060115 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 65B
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How to be aware of the presence of God is the question I intend to examine during this Liturgical Cycle B. By analogy and metaphor, God is present in three encompassing ways: prophetic, liturgical, and wisdom. The prophetic way is historical. The Middle Eastern Jewish prophets find the presence of God in the large empires that affect them: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian. Among the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of Luke best follows the Isaian interpretation of the prophetic history of Israel from about 750 to 500 B.C.¹

The liturgical presence of God is in the historical presence of Jesus and the Faithful. The liturgy, in both the First and New Testaments involves sacrifice. In the Hebrew, *sacrifice* means *to make sacred*. This sacred sense, more than atonement, is the meaning of the liturgical presence of God. In the First Testament, this presence is around about the Arc of the Covenant and the Temple. In the New Testament, the presence of God exists in the sacramental lives of the Faithful.²

Wisdom, in the First Testament offers the presence of God as an attractive woman.³ To seek her is to find her. Such is the presence in these Personal Notes as both author and readers seek to find God through knowing the sacred word. In the Ancient Near East, Wisdom was a gift of the gods, concerned with practice, rather than theory.⁴ The Gospel of John is about the Word made flesh. The Gospel of John emphasizes the wisdom presence of God,⁵ as do these Personal Notes.

In the Johannine Gospel for today, the two disciples with John the Baptizer may include John the Evangelist, who realized that Jesus was the Messiah and decided

¹ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 739-769.

² Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 753.

³ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 741.

⁴ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 760.

⁵ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 762.

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to follow him. John the Evangelist was a passive soul. He, for example, was apparently more interested in breakfast than in telling the Good News of the Resurrection.⁶ Wisdom brings out the presence of God, even in passive souls, slowly, over time.

The reading from 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19 is about recognizing and listening to the word of God. God calls and the Faithful listen, vicariously through Samuel. Listening to God makes God present.

Psalm 40:2 points out that God has ears, in that God can hear, hear the voice of the psalmist and of the Faithful.⁷ In Psalm 40:4, God teaches the Faithful to sing as they renew his presence in their sight. More explicitly, Psalm 40:7 uses the word *ears* to urge the Faithful to listen for the holy word of God. For the ancients, listening was more important than reading, but Psalm 40:8 refers to *the written scroll*, as well. Beyond hearing and seeing, Wisdom comports good rule. The Hebrew for *justice* in Psalm 40:10 is not about weighing right and wrong against external criteria, but is about doing the will of God, the religious criteria for justice.⁸

In 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20, Saint Paul explains Christian wisdom as involving commitment to God. I am disturbed because Saint Paul privileges celibacy over any other lifestyle, yet the Lectionary uses none of these verses (1 Corinthians 7:7, 8, 25-35, 36-38, 40).⁹ If the Faithful accept celibate lives for the sake of the institutional Church, the institutional Church would do well to hold up praise for the celibate life in the Sunday readings.

Verse 13c is about the resurrection of the body. The Corinthians had a slogan about the stomach being for the body and the body being for the stomach, but that both would ultimately perish.¹⁰ As Jeffrey R. Asher words it, "According to ancient

⁶ Kelli S. O'Brien, "Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 298.

⁷ J. Ross Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1999) 251.

⁸ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 745.

⁹ Gregory W. Dawes, "'But if you can gain your freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 696.

¹⁰ William O. Walker, Jr., "Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 570.

psysionomics [sic], the size of one's belly was indicative of gluttony, slavery to one's sexual appetite, and lack of intelligence."¹¹ Paul, with his New Testament Wisdom, insists that the body, including the stomach, would rise again.¹² The resurrected body would be a new kind of body, but a body at that.

1 Corinthians 6:14 causes some trouble for the phrase that God *will also raise us by his power*. Since Paul did not expect to die before merging into his new resurrected body, some question whether Paul wrote this verse.¹³ It makes more sense to me that Paul wrote this verse because he could not have been absolutely positive that he was not going to die, like everyone else. Paul may have confused God's commitment with his hope for what and when it would happen.

The critical apparatus for the Greek for the Lectionary 1 Corinthians has at least nine variations in the original manuscripts, lending uncertainty similar to Paul's. I find the punctuation interesting. The Greek has a colon where the Lectionary and Saint Jerome use a semi-colon after *the Lord is for the body*, 1 Corinthians 6:13c. What the Lectionary labels 13c, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P. identifies as 13d.¹⁴ Looking at the Greek myself, the Lectionary labeling appears as another example of sloppy scholarship.

In 1 Corinthians 6:18, the Greek has a colon where the Lectionary uses a comma and Saint Jerome uses a semi-colon, after *every other sin a person commits is outside the body*. In 1 Corinthians 6:20, the Greek has a colon where the Lectionary uses a period and Saint Jerome an exclamation point after *you have been purchased at a price*. The point for this textual criticism is infusing some humility before the facts of the Word as the Church hands it down to the next generation.

Also in 1 Corinthians 6:14, the Greek for *will also raise*, mentioned above, is inconsistent from manuscript to manuscript. At least two other variations, besides

¹¹ Jeffrey R. Asher, review of Karl Olav Sandnes, Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 480.

¹² John Fotopoulos, "Arguments Concerning Food Offered to Idols: Corinthian Quotations and Pauline Refutations in a Rhetorical *Partitio* (1 Corinthians 8:1-9)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 621.

¹³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986) 85-87.

¹⁴ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986) 86.

the one accepted, are in the original manuscripts. The simple future tense, used by the Lectionary and accepted by the Greek scholars is easy enough to understand; but what about the future aorist tense that may be involved with the two variations?¹⁵ To me, future aorist would mean an act already completed, but in the future. My point is to be gentle with whatever Wisdom the Faithful may ascribe to the Word. God continues to make his presence known in mysterious ways.

In the broader scope, 1 Corinthians is very sexual in nature, readings that the Lectionary also exculpates from Sunday teaching. An article in The American Historical Review observes the following:¹⁶

In short, many medieval Christians believed, as so many other societies have done, that the transition from “other” to “self” (in this case, from infidel and alien to Christian and kin) would culminate in sexual union. Because of this, the entire process of spiritual identification and integration could be most powerfully represented in terms of the sexual act, a process bluntly described by St. Paul: “You surely know that anyone who links himself with a harlot becomes physically one with her (for Scripture says, ‘the pair shall become one flesh’); but he who links himself with Christ is one with Him, Spiritually.” [1 Corinthians 6:16-17] This is why medieval Christian anxieties about identification and, ultimately about the integrity of the self were so often expressed in sexual terms. It is also why, for Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike, the question was always where to draw the line to best interrupt this continuum. No matter where these boundaries were drawn, they were sexual in the sense that they justified themselves as safeguards against sexual danger. But they could be constructed in all kinds of places, and the place chosen could have a tremendous effect on intergroup relations. If, as in the Talmudic example, any and all associations were thought to lead to sex, then total segregation was necessary; if only wine drinking were dangerous, then anxiety could focus there.

Saint Paul carries high regard for the body as part of the means whereby the Faithful worship God.¹⁷ Just as God is present to the human body, so Saint Paul urges the Faithful to make their bodies present to God.

¹⁵ See <http://www.w3.org/People/cmsmcq/1991/ai1w02.html#ab2b3b3b3b4b5b2b1b2b1> for the future aorist.

¹⁶ David Nirenberg, “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain,” The American Historical Review, Vol. 107, No. 4 (October 2002) 1073.

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The Lectionary readings are also about who belongs to the Church.¹⁸ At John 1:42, Jesus says, “*You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas*”—which is translated *Peter*. Jesus gives Peter his name before he founds his Church. Jesus founds his Church on the very human Peter. The Wisdom of God is not the wisdom of humans. Just as humans are not human without their bodies, so the Church is not the church without its human components. In Late Antiquity, “Christian theologians insisted that it was a vital part of the salvific work of Christ to mediate knowledge of God in a human idiom through the Incarnation.”¹⁹

In summary, the readings for this Sunday are about divine Wisdom, listening for what God wants in 1 Samuel. Meanwhile, the Faithful recognize that not only does God listen to humans, but God also expects humans to listen to God. 1 Corinthians explains that the sexual nature of humanity, along with all of human nature, forms an acceptable offering to God. Finally, the Gospel of John triggers the Wisdom of discipleship as John the Baptizer observes, “Behold, the Lamb of God.”

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

¹⁷ Brendan Byrne, S.J., “Sinning against One’s Own Body: Paul’s Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Corinthians 6:18,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 4 (October 1983) 613-614.

¹⁸ Brad Ronnell Braxton, “The Role of Ethnicity in the Social Location of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24,” in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 29.

¹⁹ Richard Clifford, S.J. and Khaled Anatolois, “Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives,” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 764.