

Courage in the face of the uncertainties associated with funerals, suits these readings. Isaiah is uncertain about how to react to the loss of two geographic places, Zebulun and Naphtali, but he faces that uncertainty with hope in *the seaward road*. At a funeral, the seaward road would be the road that lies ahead of the surviving Faithful. Stoutheartedness is required.

Psalm 27 would look for light and salvation only in the LORD, thereby illustrating courage in the face of uncertainties. As Psalm 27:14 puts it, *stouthearted* waiting for the LORD, waiting for whatever else may, for example, follow a funeral. Widows, of whom there are demographically more than widowers, particularly, are in such disruptive situations.

1 Corinthians would have the Faithful remaining united in the face of disruptions caused by death, for example. While, admittedly, Paul was unconcerned about physical death, physical death does disrupt the social order of which the recently-deceased had been a part. Imagine the loss the Church felt when Paul died. Corinthians urges the Faithful to remain in the fold so *that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning* (1 Cor 1:17).

The reading from Matthew continues the theme. Once the Faithful recall the lack of success in the ministry of Jesus during his earthly lifetime, then the courage Jesus must have had in the face of uncertainty becomes known. Matthew is careful to begin with establishing who Jesus is, before Matthew goes on to describe the ministry of Jesus. The ministry of Jesus goes forward, putting his hand in the hand of the Lord, to paraphrase the hymn.

### **Isaiah 8:23—9:3**

As will be seen, the reading references are tortuous, calling for courage in the face of uncertainty before the authority of the Magisterium as expressed in the Lectionary. The places mentioned at the beginning probably refer to the western border, along Syria.<sup>1</sup> *The seaward road* is a recent translation.

Verse 23: seaward road	
<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	seaward road
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	omitted
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	omitted
<u>King James</u> (1611):	omitted
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	omitted
<u>New American</u> (1970):	seaward road
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	omitted

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart A. Irvine, "The Southern Border of Syria Reconstructed," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 1994) 40.

Verse 23: District of the Gentiles

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	the District of the Gentiles.
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	Galilaeam Gentium.
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	has <i>the Galilee of the Gentiles</i> in 9:1
<u>King James</u> (1611):	has <i>in Galilee of the nations</i> in 9:1
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	Is not all blackness where anguish is? 8:23 has <i>province of the nations</i> in 9:1
<u>New American</u> (1970):	the District of the Gentiles
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	the territory of the nations in 9:1

Verse 23, below, is confusing. The word *anguish* illustrates the confusion.

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	Anguish has taken wing ...
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	Non erit enim amplius caligo, ubi erat oppressio.
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	... weakness and distress ... distress
<u>King James</u> (1611):	And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	Is not all blackness where anguish is?
<u>New American</u> (1970):	Anguish has taken wing...
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	For is not everything dark as night for a country in distress?

The Lectionary includes the following between verse 23b and 9:1, which I do not find in the Vulgate, but which is described above.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:  
For there is no gloom where but now there was distress.

Verse 9:1 is easier. Verse 9:1, *have seen a great light*, is the light of the Poor Clares and others. *Light* means *knowledge* and knowledge is something that should not be assumed, because light plays tricks, tricks evident in the very translations of Isaiah 8:23—9:1. Facing the differences between what the Lectionary offers and the various sources, requires the courage of Faith in uncertainty. Turning to funerals, sometimes only in death does a difference of perception appear for the recently deceased. The uncertainty associated with the difference requires courage and faith that the Almighty, at least, understands.

## **Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14**

Psalm 27 is one of the readings Funerals uses at a Vigil for the Deceased and in Funerals for Adults.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, above, in focusing on the light, brings the Beatific

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<sup>2</sup> International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican

Vision of God in the afterlife into focus. The Responsorial antiphon for Psalm 27, *The Lord is my light and my salvation* focuses in the same direction. In verse 4, dwelling in the house of the LORD, can be taken as a reference to heaven. Those in monastic life, such as the Poor Clare nuns, might take the house of the LORD as their monasteries. *Contemplating his temple* can refer to the temple that the Faithful are, Temples of the Holy Ghost, to use pre-Vatican II language.

Verse 13 brings the situation back to earth, *in the land of the living*. Verse 14 refers to the courage before uncertainty required by the Faithful at funerals. *Be stouthearted and wait for the LORD*.

The Lectionary uses Psalm 27 as follows:

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	<u>Antiphon</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
27C	167	1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14	(1a)	Lent 2
59A	465	1, 4, 7-8	(13)	Easter 7
67A	517	1, 4 13-14	(1a)	Ordinary 3
668#	1190	1, 4, 7, 8b, 9a, 13-14	(1a)	All Souls, November 2

## **1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17**

Paul is beginning to let his Corinthians know what he thinks. He does not want the Corinthians fighting among themselves over inconsequential things such as prestige associated with whose convert they may be, how much they know, or how well they speak. In verse 17, Paul even goes as far as insisting, “eloquent speech is not an appropriate expression for the gospel (1:17; 2:1-5, 4:20).”<sup>3</sup> These Corinthians included some people of worldly substance whom Paul wants to call to otherworldly substance.<sup>4</sup>

Paul consistently refers to the Pope as *Rocky* or *Cephas* in the Greek. Where Galatians refers to Peter as *Peter*, scholars begin to wonder whether Paul wrote the

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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) 29-30, 224.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 2 (April 1977) 224.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Fiore, S.J., “‘Covert Allusion’ in 1 Corinthians 1—4,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vo. 47 (January 1985) 86, 88, 94-98.

verse.<sup>5</sup> *Cephas* makes the point about not being too enthralled with worldly intellectual honors.

### **Cf. Matthew 4:23**

Interestingly, the Gospel of the kingdom in this Alleluia verse is capitalized, whereas in the later reading, Matthew 4:23, gospel is not capitalized. Visiting the terminally ill, I have found the Gospel of the Kingdom near at hand, as the Faithful bond with their Creator in a final testament.

### **Matthew 4:12-23**

In verse 13, Matthew mentions that Jesus went to live in Capernaum. Matthew is the only one making that mention of Capernaum, a fulfillment of Isa 9:1-2. Later, when Jesus denounces Capernaum, a certain poignancy takes hold. Capernaum, the place Jesus chose as his hometown, was not listening to him.<sup>6</sup> In a human sense, Jesus had failed.

Matthew 4:14 mentions Zebulun and Naphtali, just as did Isaiah some seven centuries earlier. The Atlas does show Naphtali bordering the Sea of Galilee, Zebulun does not. Zebulun is between Mount Carmel, on the Mediterranean and Naphtali.

The Greek for *what had been said* carries the sense of *as Isaiah used to say*, meaning that an exact quotation was not intended. The Greek for *said* is a participle, indicating something said repeatedly rather than something said once and recorded. Resources for the Greek are newly added in the Appendix.

Verse 15: Galilee of the Gentiles

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	Galilee of the Gentiles
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	Galilaea gentium verses Galilaea Gentium in Isaiah 8:23
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	Galilee of the Gentiles
<u>King James</u> (1611):	Galilee of the Gentiles
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	Galilee of the nations
<u>New American</u> (1970):	Galilee of the Gentiles
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	Galilee of the nations

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<sup>5</sup> William O. Walker, Jr., "Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 575, 581.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph A. Comber, C.F.X., "The Composition and Literary Characteristics of Matt 11:20-24," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 4 (October 1977) 499.

*Gentiles* is different from *nations*. The Greek uses the word for ethnic groups. The sense seems to be *outsiders*, such as most Faithful Christians today.

At verse 17, these readings cross a transition from establishing that Jesus is the Son of God, Israel's Savior<sup>7</sup> and Messiah, to his public ministry.<sup>8</sup> Verse 17, *repent*, is the first word Matthew has Jesus say, as Jesus begins his public ministry.<sup>9</sup> This gives the Faithful something to do; repentance is able to take on many forms. Matthew is keeping in place *thy will be done of the Our Father*.<sup>10</sup>

Doing God's will can be disruptive, rather than peaceful. *Peace* in the First Testament does not refer to order and tranquility, but rather commitment to justice,<sup>11</sup> something precious to Black Catholics in the United States. That the *Kingdom of heaven is at hand*, brings immediacy, easily missed in Western Civilization. The Greek has Kingdom of the *heavens*, plural.

Courage in the face of uncertainty holds the following four paragraphs, uncertainty illustrated with the following questions. Was not Jesus looking far into the future for the Kingdom of the Heavens? Is not voluntary poverty a good? Are the Faithful called to abandon their families? Was Jesus a failure because Capernaum did not listen? Even considering the legitimacy of the questions requires a certain amount of courage.

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<sup>7</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, "The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 705.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 66-67.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 526.

<sup>10</sup> Warren Carter, "Recalling the Lord's Prayer: The Authorial Audience and Matthew's Prayer as Familiar Liturgical Experience," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3 (July 1995) 529.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 474.

The West is oriented towards the future in a manner rare among the peoples of the world.<sup>12</sup> This orientation makes it easy for Westerners to slip by the immediacy with which Jesus preaches. Jesus is not preaching about some time in the distant future for the Kingdom of the Heavens. He is preaching about the here and now.

Matthew is setting up the Beatitudes, to be seen next Sunday. God does not want the Faithful to be poor, either in spirit or material needs. That is *good news*.<sup>13</sup>

In verse 21, when Jesus calls James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Jesus is pulling a financial resource away from the Zebedee family.<sup>14</sup> Today, Poor Clare nuns and anyone forsaking their families, can have the same effect. The honored response in Matthew is *immediately*. *Immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.*

Jesus first preached in Galilee, whose name means *passing over*, as readers might recall from Notes on the Baptism of Jesus. The idea is passing over from the darkness of worldly concerns to the light of otherworldly concerns. Jesus cured *every disease and illness among the people*. In Matthew, the first disciples, who would do the same thing, are not yet Apostles.

Verse 23, *teaching, proclaiming, and curing* summarizes the ministry of Jesus to the Faithful.<sup>15</sup> Verse 23 particularizes what the Messiah, the one who is to come,<sup>16</sup> as shepherd (Matt 2:6) will do. Jesus will save the Faithful by saving them from their sins, as his healing miracles attest (Matt 1:21 and 9:1-13).<sup>17</sup> The phrase, *he went*

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1989) 4-5, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996), 465, 470.

<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 468-469.

<sup>15</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 560-566.

<sup>16</sup> W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 583.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 4 (October 1993) 701.

*around ... among the people*, places the Kingdom of the Heavens in the present,<sup>18</sup> even while the Faithful pray for the completion of that arrival.<sup>19</sup>

These readings invite the Faithful to consider their last ends. Funerals are dress rehearsals for later funerals of the mourners. Isaiah registers hope in the face of uncertainty requiring courage. Psalm 27 is used at funerals, thereby calling to mind the need for the LORD to be *my light and my salvation*. 1 Corinthians is about the messiness of the Christian life, as the Faithful stick to the courage of their convictions in the face of uncertainty. Finally, the Gospel moves Jesus from who he is to what he is doing. At funerals, the Faithful tend to reconsider what the recently-departed has done, to move back to the core identities of the Faithful. In life, the Faithful need courage to face the uncertainties of the future, both material and immaterial.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 468.

<sup>19</sup> Warren Carter, "Recalling the Lord's Prayer: The Authorial Audience and Matthew's Prayer as Familiar Liturgical Experience," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3 (July 1995) 523.