

Personal Notes
080203 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 70A
© 2007
Raymond J. Jirran

The Church makes the Psalm and Gospel Lectionary readings for today available for Funerals.¹ The Gospel is also available for Pastoral Care of the Sick.² Zephaniah is about choosing to live in obscurity with God, rather than human adulation, without God. Corinthians takes the same tack. What matters is the decisions the Faithful make in order to keep God the focus of their lives.

In his Christmas letter this year, Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J., writes,

I have noticed many friends and relatives going to the Lord in death, and it has made an impression on me. Since Christmas is the celebration of new life, I thought it appropriate to focus on our eternal destiny of a new life in heaven. A recent newspaper article states that people are getting away from religious funerals and have celebration of the person's life without any reference to their spiritual life. We need to be rooted in our spiritual journey to eternal life. I trust this will be helpful to see Christmas in a Spiritual perspective.

Father DeGrandis expressed what Bette forcefully expressed at dinner, just the night before beginning to compose these Personal Notes. There is an aspect of life that Bette expresses as follows, "Life is hell, and then you die." To pretend that life is but one big toothy smile is unrealistic, especially for those of us who have reached old age. At its best, life is about making decisions. At its best, the love anyone shows us is a reflection of their love of God, rather than any love that stops with us only to be reflected back to the dearly departed. To think that the love the Faithful have for the deceased equates to the love of God, borders blasphemy. What to celebrate is not that the deceased made us feel good, but that the deceased tried

¹ 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) 307, 231.

² 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) 301.

to make God feel good, whether that particularly pleased us or the Magisterium or not.

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.

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 (Matthew 5:3)

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1 Cor 1:20-28

“William O. Walker, Jr., “1 Corinthians 15:29-34 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation”³

Walker argues that 1 Corinthians asserts “that Christ’s resurrection guarantees the future resurrection of believers and the final destruction of death (vv. 20-28).”

1 Cor 1:28

Jeremy Corley, “The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13”⁴

Corley translates *to reduce to nothing* as *to be made ineffective*. Corley then observes that this verb occurs twenty-two times in the undisputed letters of Paul and, therefore, is a sign of Pauline authorship.

1 Cor 1:30

Robert H. Gundry, review of Jung Hoon Kim, The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus⁵

Gundry has an interesting sidelight. “The interpretation of putting on Christ as being clothed with his righteousness labors under the difficulty that Paul never writes of Christ’s righteousness—always, rather, of God’s righteousness, and this in passages that distinguish between God and Christ (even in 1 Cor 1:30, where Christ

³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2007) 85.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 260.

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 148.

becomes `wisdom *from God*, even righteousness and sanctification and redemption’).” I think it is a stretch to write that 1 Cor 1:30 does not refer to the righteousness of Christ. In other words, Gundry is not convincing.

1 Cor 1:30

Frank J. Matera, "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John: A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology"⁶

Paul identifies the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus with *wisdom from God as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*" (1 Cor 1:30).

Matthew 5:12a

Matthew 5:1-12a

This is where the Beatitudes are found, the first one of which is *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God*.

Matt 4:17—16:20

Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the `Miracle Chapters' of Matthew 8-9"⁷

Kingsbury writes, "... it is in his capacity as the Son of God that Jesus Messiah both delivers the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5—7 and undertakes in Chapters 8—9 his ministry of healing." JustFaith and other parish ministries, thereby help the Faithful make decisions designed to please God.

Matt 5:3-16

Karen A. Barta, review of Charles H. Talbert, Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5—7⁸

Barta comments,

Are the Beatitudes entrance requirements, or are they promises of eschatological blessings? Are they to be understood in terms of a Marxist social analysis (political language) or in terms of the formation of character (virtue ethics)? ... "Matthew is a theological, not a political, document," Talbert asserts (p. 48), thus eliminating some of the most challenging and arresting commentary on the Beatitudes from the perspectives of liberation theology and the peace movement ..."

⁶ Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June 2006) 244.

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 565 ff.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2007) 376.

Personal Notes
080203 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 70A
© 2007
Raymond J. Jirran

In other words, Talbert skips over and obfuscates the most important modern issues of today.

Matt 5:3-12

Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., review of Robert L. Brawley (ed.), Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture⁹

Some scholars in this book maintain that the Beatitudes express “the values and virtues that should be most prominent in Christian character ethics.” Other scholars look elsewhere than the Beatitudes for moral guidance. For example, some postulate that the New Testament shows the way for moral guidance in the very search for wisdom.

Matt 5:3-10

James Swetnam, S.J., review of Luis Sánchez Navarro, “Venid a mí” (Mt 11, 28-30): El discipulado, fundamento de la ética en Mateo¹⁰

Navarro describes the Beatitudes as “the divine promise.” The Beatitudes are a matter of the hearts of the Faithful joined to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, rather than any singularly materialistic endeavor.

Matt 5:3

Charles L. Quarles, “The Use of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Research on the Historical Jesus of John Dominic Crossan”¹¹

Quarles argues that the first Beatitude, *blessed are the poor ...* is an unconvincing tool used to determine the independence of the Gospel of Thomas from the Synoptics.

Matt 5:5

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹²

Barker associated *inheriting the land* with the promised Jewish Jubilee.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2007) 857.

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 2 (April 2006) 347.

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 3 (July 2007) 519, 523.

¹² London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 38.

Personal Notes
080203 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 70A
© 2007
Raymond J. Jirran

Matt 5:5-9

Tony Chartrand-Burke, review of Thomas L. Brodie, The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings¹³

Brodie is looking for an unknown document upon which Matthew relies. Brodie stretches his argument beyond where scholars will engage him.

Matt 5:7

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults¹⁴

The Bishops summon Matthew 5:7, *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy* in Chapter 36, "Jesus Taught Us to Pray," in the section "Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us."

Matt 5:8

Khaled Anatolios, "Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis: Rereading Augustine's *De Trinitate*"¹⁵

Anatolios writes, "Faith and hope are consistently [sic] aligned with purification, which is also differentiated from sight, with reference to the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8)." I do not know what Anatolios means.

Matt 5:8

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹⁶

Barker writes,

To say that ... contemplation of the face of God is an element drawn from 'the vision of the mysteries, a Hellenistic literary touch' or that 'certain elements of (Clement's gnosis) undoubtedly derived from Hellenism, notably those of vision, contemplation and archetypes,' is known to have been associated with Jesus, who had himself said: 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8).

Barker is making a case that Christian virtue emanates from Jesus, rather than Aristotle.

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 4 (October 2006) 757.

¹⁴ Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006 488.

¹⁵ Theological Studies, Vol. 68, No. 2 (April 2006) 241.

¹⁶ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 6.

Personal Notes
080203 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 70A
© 2007
Raymond J. Jirran

Barker also points out what purity meant.

The question of ritual purity and the presence of the angels was a problem. None of Aaron's descendants who was in any way blemished could 'approach to offer the bread of his God' (Lev. 21:16-23). In the Mishnah these restrictions were defined even more closely and applied to all who served in the temple. A man afflicted with a turnip-shaped head, for example, was excluded, as were the bald, those with little eyes like a goose, and the knock-kneed. There was an extensive list of physical blemishes that rendered a man unfit for the company of the angels (*m. Bekhoroth 7:1-7*). It must have been this emphasis on the externals of purity which prompted Jesus' teaching about the purity required for his priests, those who would look on the Face: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8).

Matt 5:11-12

Daniel W. Ulrich, "The Missional Audience of the Gospel of Matthew"¹⁷

Ulrich uses Matthew 5:11-12 to write that "Jesus describes future emissaries as 'prophets' and emphasizes their continuity with the righteous prophets of the past."

Matt 5:11

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults¹⁸

The Bishops diverge, presenting verse 11 one way in their Lectionary and another way in their Catechism. The Lectionary lacks parentheses, *utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me*, where the Catechism uses parentheses, *utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me*. Such unexplained inconsistency damages the credibility of the hierarchy.

Verse 8 is also inconsistent. The Lectionary has *Blessed are the clean of heart*, where the Catechism has *Blessed are the clean of heart (or pure of heart)*. Ignoring the difference shakes the credibility of the hierarchy, again. When the Catechism again quotes verse 8, the parentheses are omitted.

¹⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2007) 79.

¹⁸ Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006 308, 446.

Personal Notes
080203 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 70A
© 2007
Raymond J. Jirran

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

After-action Report

For an after-action report on these Readings, see the After-action Report for Readings 28A for the Third Sunday in Lent, February 24, 2008.