

During the week of January 12-16, the sexual abuse scandal reached Richmond. Father Leonard resigned from his priesthood after his plea in court. Without admitting guilt, Fr. Leonard admitted that there was sufficient evidence to convict him of sexual abuse. Members of the diocesan abuse committee had earlier resigned when Bishop Sullivan prematurely exonerated Father Leonard.

With the sexual abuse scandal in mind, the following readings are pertinent. Jeremiah begins by naming priests and kings as abusive of the law and, thereby, God. Through it all, both then and now, the Faithful remain a harbor of hope. Intellectual abuse is further present in that the Lectionary is less than forthright identifying which verses of the Psalm it is using.

The readings from Saint Paul are helpful. In 1 Corinthians, Saint Paul goes on about the worthlessness of honors and power without charity. Those honors and that power make possible both the cavalier attitude toward the sexual abuse scandal, the correct citation of verses used in the liturgical books, and every other abuse in between. Charity is the point with the hierarchy, toward the victims and priests involved. In the Gospel, Jesus gathers the abuse scandal in, when the authorities at Nazareth try to kill him as he begins his ministry.

The net result is in the Faithful as they continue to love their pastors in the midst of turmoil. The characteristics of love toward the hierarchy exhibited by the abused Faithful are amazing. The anger also present in the Faithful is expected but often ignored.

Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli would do well to note the difference between Psalm 71:6 in the Lectionary on page 541 and Care of the Sick on page 291. There is another difference between the citations for the same readings for this and last Sunday. The citations are different, the readings, except for an *and*, are the same. See below for more on both problems.

## **Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19**

Jeremiah lambastes not only kings and princes but also priests, people and cultic prophets for not listening to the word of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Such deafness exemplifies prioritizing politics over truth. The reading is about picking up truth in the midst of overweening countervailing politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 666.

Jeremiah is a reflection on Deuteronomy. When Jeremiah writes that God has placed his own words in the mouth of Jeremiah, Jeremiah reflects the promise in Deuteronomy, where God promises to place his words in the mouth of a prophet like Moses.<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah expands the nationalism of Deuteronomy to include a universalism in the love of God for the people. Verse 5 points out that God appointed Jeremiah as a prophet not only to Israel but also to the nations.<sup>3</sup>

Other prophets, besides Jeremiah and Moses, with the words of God in their mouths, are Amos and David. The readings from Jeremiah bring inward-looking administrators, concerned about their own administrative status, up short. Power is not an answer to the spiritual life, truth is. The truth is that God gives his grace where he will.

The Matthean genealogy of Jesus begins with Abraham, Luke with Adam. Why not David, for Jesus is of the House of David? Because the Messiah is meant for everyone, not just the Chosen people. Psalm 71, which follows, makes the same truth that the Messiah is for everyone.<sup>4</sup>

## **Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15, 17**

This is the only place the Lectionary uses Psalm 71. Pastoral Care of the Sick, Part III: Readings, Responses, and verses from Sacred Scripture, page 290, Responsorial Psalm H also uses this psalm.

Bishop Serratelli: the Care of the Sick index does not indicate the verses, viz., 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15. Both the Lectionary and Care of the Sick cite verse 6, but Care of the Sick adds another line, as does the Nova Vulgata on page 807. The Lectionary and Care of the Sick are self-contradictory and no one seems to care.

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<sup>2</sup> William L. Holladay, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 32.

<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Polzin, review of Elizabeth Achtemeier, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Walter E. Rast, Joshua, "Judges, Samuel, Kings," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980) 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 21.

## 1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

In the sixth verse, Saint Paul proclaims that love rejoices with the truth. Within the context of the sexual abuse scandal, the unwelcome truth is that Father Leonard admitted there was enough evidence to convict him of a crime. The knack, then, is for the Bishop and the Faithful, if not to rejoice, then at least to accept the truth. This is not to celebrate that either Father Leonard, the Bishop, and the victim may have been hurt, but just that the truth is out. Letting truth cheerfully determine politics sometimes requires Divine intervention.

### Verse 3

|                                  |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):        | ...            |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):  | cibos          |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610): | to feed        |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):        | to feed        |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):         | piece by piece |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):      | ...            |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):     | ...            |

The thought in verse three is pertinent to those taking a vow of poverty. Poverty, even voluntary poverty, without charity is nothing. All too often, those who climb to positions of power, do so without the true rock of charity. Such a climb is an abomination before God.

## Luke 4:18

Bishop Serratelli: last Sunday identified this verse with a “cf.” The only Lectionary difference between this Sunday and last Sunday is that last Sunday used the word *and*. Nova Vulgata only uses two of the six verse 18 lines, meaning that 18 is incorrect in the Lectionary.

The only requirements to hear the Gospel in this verse are either to be poor or captive or both. After all the admonitions about how to compete, verse 18 is Glad Tidings.

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):        | bring glad tidings  |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):  | evangelizare        |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610): | preach the gospel   |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):        | preach the gospel   |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):         | bring the good news |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):      | bring glad tidings  |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):     | bring the good news |

Bishop Sullivan titles his article in The Catholic Virginian Tidings. The Bishop may be equating his words with those *glad tidings* of the Gospel. Certainly, his words reflect the Gospel, as should the lives of all the Faithful.

## **Luke 4:21-30**

With the question about being the son of Joseph, this reading is about the messiahship of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> When Jesus replies about Elijah and Elisha, he is explaining the role of Joseph as a cover for his messiahship. The reason the people on the hill, Nazareth was built on a hill, wanted to kill Jesus was because they did not want Jesus to convince anyone else that Jesus was the messiah. The people of Nazareth had a stake leaving the status quo alone, something far from the interests of the poor and the imprisoned. When Jesus points to the widow in Sidon and the Syrian, he points to the Gentiles, away from the Chosen People, something else the people of Nazareth were disinclined to hear.

Where Matthew and Mark portray Joseph as an artisan, Luke is silent. Luke implies that Joseph and Mary were poor. The shepherds, not the establishment, recognize the birth of Jesus. In Luke, Jesus is the hope of the poor, not the powerful.<sup>6</sup>

In order to pass through the midst of the people with whom he grew up in Nazareth, Jesus must have been a master of disguise. The unwritten message from Evangelist to listener is that it takes a sharp eye to find Jesus, even when he is in the midst of the Faithful, should the Faithful turn on Jesus enough to make him hide himself.

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<sup>5</sup> Brendan Byrne, S.J., "The Problem of Νόμος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 86. On January 17, 2005, I noted that this article is only over pages 294-309 and was unable to justify the documentation.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 73

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Verse 22

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):                        | gracious words |
| The Greek means attractive sayings. <sup>7</sup> |                |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):                  | verbis gratiae |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):                 | words of grace |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):                        | gracious words |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):                         | gracious words |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):                      | gracious words |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):                     | gracious words |

Verse 23

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):                               | proverb       |
| The Greek means simile, proverbial saying. <sup>8</sup> |               |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):                         | similitudinem |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):                        | similitude    |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):                               | proverb       |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):                                | saying        |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):                             | proverb       |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):                            | saying        |

Verse 25

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):  | Indeed           |
| <i>Indeed</i> is limp making the contrast between power speaking to truth and truth speaking to power. |                  |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):  | veritate         |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):   | In truth         |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):  | of a truth       |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):   | I can assure you |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):  | Indeed           |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):   | I can assure you |

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<sup>7</sup> Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 15.

<sup>8</sup> Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 187.

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Verse 26

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <u>Lectionary</u> (1998):                         | ...      |
| The translators do not like a <i>woman</i> widow. |          |
| <u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):                   | mulierem |
| <u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):                  | woman    |
| <u>King James</u> (1611):                         | woman    |
| <u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):                          | ...      |
| <u>New American</u> (1970):                       | ...      |
| <u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):                      | ...      |

Women are central to verses 25 and 26. That is Luke.<sup>9</sup> Luke offers something of a feminine perspective, plainly drawing from female experiences. With the male hierarchy in high command, in charge of covering up priestly sexual abuses of the Faithful, Luke offers consolation. Luke helps explain why many women want nothing to do with anything approaching Holy Orders. The risks of seeking the power rather than truth are realistically high. A holy, humble route may be the way to get the Faithful to their God.

Paul writes of jealousy and pomposity, basic accoutrements of power, the lack of which can make people feel inadequate. Nonsense. Jeremiah warns about honoring people rather than truth. The Psalm in the Lectionary and Care for the Sick points toward an unacceptable approach to the truth for its own sake in the holy books of the Church. Jesus himself gets into trouble with authorities in his hometown, a place where he is best known, a place where he should feel comfortable, if anywhere. The meaning of the readings is to follow the truth wherever it may lead, despite whatever penalties there may be for political incorrectness.

For more on sources, besides the footnotes, see the Appendix file.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 190.