

Personal Notes
050206 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 73A
© 2017
Raymond J. Jirran

In academic circles, debate is fruitful for better understanding of anything. 1 Corinthians waives that aside in verses 4 and 5 *with a demonstration of Spirit and the power of God*. Politics determines truth legitimately, when the politics rests on the power of God, Almighty. The problem with which the Faithful must contend is discerning what is Divine and what human. The Church and her representatives are useful as guides, but, as the recent sex-related scandals attest, not always as trustworthy guides. In other words, God gives the Faithful minds that God expects the Faithful to use.

Isaiah begins the readings by directing the Faithful to be good towards those they can reach. Isaiah promises Divine Justice, as does Psalm 112. Judging behavior in the light of the holy God is challenging, yet necessary.

1 Corinthians presents a further challenge for understanding the readings in the light of justice. Paul, who himself is very educated, tells the Faithful two things; to imitate him and not to value education. Matthew goes on to admonish the Faithful to be the salt of the earth, something relatively impossible without education, which leads to debate.

By saving and passing 1 Corinthians down from generation to generation, the Christian community first accepts the uncertainty and tension between honoring the education of Saint Paul and, second, accepting the limited value of education toward understanding the Word of God. Courage in the face of this uncertainty is required. All five readings for this Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time combine courage with uncertainty associated with human knowledge. In 1990, the President of the Catholic Biblical Association, Emil A. Wcela, exhibited this combination of courage and uncertainty in his presidential address.

The Catholic Biblical Association devotes itself to knowledge of the Bible. Wcela spoke at the fifty-third general meeting of the Association. Wcela observed that, in the United States, college graduates do not know the Bible any better than non-graduates do. That notwithstanding, there was a difference. Non-graduates read the Bible more frequently than graduates did and nothing better predicted participation in parish life than such frequency. Frequency of Bible reading and belief in the inspired nature of the Bible decreased with education.

Involvement in Bible and prayer groups, however, increased with education. In 1978 almost twenty percent of the Faithful, whether Catholic or not, in the United States claimed involvement in Bible study groups within the previous two years. By 1983, the percentage increased to 26 percent, reversing to 22 percent in 1988. Wcela saw a problem. "The self-absorbed Bible reader is pulled inside out if called to judge self

and world not according to standards of personal development but in light of the holy God.”¹

On January 11, 2005, Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, Inc. (FADICA) issued a survey showing that twenty-five percent of those attending Mass at least twice a month spent four hours or more at parish activities per month. In 2002, that percentage was fifty-seven percent. FADICA is an association of grant makers that donates more than \$200 million annually to Catholic concerns.²

Accepting courage in the midst of uncertainty is required, therefore, to make judgment of behavior possible in the light of the holy God. The readings today call for such judgment.

Isaiah 58:7-10

Where Isaiah writes of bestowing bread upon the hungry in verses 7 and 10, Christians add the Eucharistic Bread of Life. Where Isaiah writes of your light breaking forth like the dawn in verse 8 and 10, Christians add the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the true Light of the Word. Third Isaiah wrote this chapter Fifty-eight, after returning to Jerusalem. This is the time of the Second Temple.³

In verse 7, the Vulgate uses a question mark.

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	do not turn your back on your own.
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	vagos inducere in domum?
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	despise not thy own flesh
<u>King James</u> (1611):	and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	and not turn from your own kin?
<u>New American</u> (1970):	and not turning your back on your own.
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	and not to turn away from your own kin?

Evidently, Isaiah is asking a rhetorical question that the Lectionary turns into a statement.

¹ Emil A. Wcela, *Who Do You Say That They Are? Reflection on the Biblical Audience Today, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 6.

² Cathy Lynn Grossman, “Poll finds ‘growing uneasiness’ among Catholics over church finances,” *USA Today*, Tuesday, January 11, 2005, page 2 A, columns 1-6 and http://www.fadica.org/Donor_Survey2004.htm January 13, 2005.

³ Sue Gillingham, *From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 474-475.

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

This is the only place the Lectionary uses Psalm 112. Psalm 112 is one of the acrostic psalms, following a rhythm of two to five accents.⁴ Because it is acrostic, Psalm 112 is a wisdom psalm, not overly given to emotion. The Responsorial antiphon, *the just man is a light* is a call to think as well as emote. Facing the reality of death does require wisdom when emotion offers no rationale.

Verse 8b does not seem to jibe with the Vulgate.

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	he shall not fear
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	donec despiciat inimicos suos.
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	he shall not be moved until he look [<u>sic</u>] over his enemies
<u>King James</u> (1611):	until he see his desire upon his enemies
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	in the end he will triumph over his enemies.
<u>New American</u> (1970):	till at last they look down on their foes.
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	till he can gloat over his enemies.

The Lectionary should refer to 8a, 9, rather than 8-9. The Lectionary omits the second half of verse 8, 8b. Sloppy scholarship. Judging the scholarly behavior exhibited in the Lectionary in the light of the holy God is challenging. The challenge affects how the Faithful are able to understand the Holy Word of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1 Corinthians 2:1 begins with a reference to the *mystery of God*, which is something not to be understood by human learning. The death of Christ is foundational.⁵ *Mystery* appears seven times in the undisputed Pauline letters plus 13 in the disputed letters.⁶ A sense of mystery and need for Faith in the midst of a high level of education is special to Paul. Sloppy scholarship translating the Word of God is no way to develop the context in which Paul presents his Faith before the Mystery of God as something to be imitated.

⁴ Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, "Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 441-443.

⁵ Hendrikus Boers, "2 Corinthians 5:4—6:2: A Fragment of Pauline Christology," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 537.

⁶ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 261.

Paul says, *I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom* as those who study his epistles can attest. Paul directly disclaims eloquence.⁷ When in 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul resolves *to know nothing*, he does not mean he is devoid of human learning. Paul only means that the mystery of God overwhelms human knowledge. Paul consistently honors Jesus Christ crucified at the core of his theology. There is such a thing as “the mind of Paul.”⁸

Paul here reminds the Faithful of the cousin of Jesus, John the Baptist, saying he does not know who Jesus is and that John ought not to be baptizing Jesus. A mystery. What John really means is not that he does not know his cousin, Jesus, by name, but only that he does not know his cousin, Jesus, as the Son of God. John means the mystery of God is unfathomable.

Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians Paul relates himself to Apollo, his fellow evangelist. Paul is not particularly warm towards Apollo, yet Paul and Apollo do get along. Paul uses himself as an example for the Corinthians to get along with one another.⁹ Paul brings to the Corinthian community a highly acclaimed education, so, in using himself as an example,¹⁰ Paul is not denouncing education. Paul is placing the cross before human respect¹¹ and is not using his education to compete for that respect. Paul only respects the cross of Jesus Christ—and his resurrection, as well. The Cross without the Resurrection makes no sense. Paul regards the duality of Cross and Resurrection as the only respect worth having.

The readings stop before 1 Corinthians 2:6—*But still, to those who have reached maturity, we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will not last long now.*¹² 1 Corinthians 2:6 is not sarcastic.

⁷ Richard A. Horsley, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 2 (April 1977) 224.

⁸ Joseph Plevnik, S.J., "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 561.

⁹ Benjamin Fiore, S.J., "'Covert Allusion' in 1 Corinthians 1—4," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1985) 85-102, especially 96-100.

¹⁰ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 272.

¹¹ Benjamin Fiore, S.J., "'Covert Allusion' in 1 Corinthians 1—4," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1985) 85-102, especially 87, 101.

Paul does present wisdom, the wisdom of the Cross. Judging behavior in the light of the holy God is challenging.

John 8:12

Jesus proclaims himself the light of the world. He expects the Faithful to do likewise through his cross and resurrection. The ability to accept suffering as expiatory of sins is a gift of grace.

Matthew 5:13-16

In verse 13, Jesus begins by saying that his disciples are the *salt of the earth* to which he adds, in verse 14, *the light of the world*. Jesus is casting the Christian religion as a communal religion, destined to influence society.¹³ The point is that students in the United States do not go to college to learn about God, though that ought to be their reason. When students learn about creation, students have an opportunity to learn about the Creator. The point of these readings is not to stop short, but to keep looking until one finds the Creator.

In verse 15, the *lamp...set on a lampstand* can also be translated as *they light a candle and set it on a candlestick*.¹⁴ General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) indexes *candles* in eleven paragraphs. Some of the Latin translations appear unreasonable, for example *in spiritu humilitatis* for *Lord God, we ask you to receive us*. Even *Et cum spiritu tuo* for *And also with you*.¹⁵ GRIM lists neither an author nor a translator. Problems translating GIRM from contemporary Latin to American English reflect badly upon the problems translating ancient Sacred Scripture.

¹² Richard A. Horsley, "Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 8—10," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 576.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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) 153.

¹⁵ na, General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Liturgy Documentary Series 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002) ISBN 1-57455-543-X, 59, 61.

The following sentence makes me wonder whether the Deacon is supposed to incense the cross and altar. “Lastly, if incense is used, he [the Deacon] assists the priest in putting some into the thurible and in incensing the cross and the altar.”¹⁶ The lack of parallel construction around the conjunction, *and*, makes this professor wonder about the competency in written English of whoever wrote and proof read that sentence. More sloppy scholarship.

My concern for academic rigor in the Lectionary is expressed in the various comparisons between the Lectionary and other translations. The whole offers a level of uncertainty that does require courage both to face and to keep Faith in the Church. Judging behavior in the light of the holy God is challenging.

Verse 16, *your light must shine before others* does not seem to jibe with the Vulgate.

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	Just so, your light must shine before others
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	So let your light shine before men
<u>King James</u> (1611):	Let your light so shine before men
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men
<u>New American</u> (1970):	Just so, your light must shine before others
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	In the same way, your light must shine in people’s sight

The imperative associated with *must* seems more suited to less stable emotional evangelism than to more stable rational evangelism.

These 173A readings for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time suggest the need for academic rigor, which is the same thing as humility. Isaiah 58, now returned from exile to Jerusalem, is more concerned about gaining human respect by passing out bread through love than by superior political power through fear. Psalm 112 takes an acrostic academic approach to the spiritual life. Paul abandons education in favor of the Cross of Jesus Christ. In Matthew, Jesus urges his disciples, implicitly to accept his Cross and Resurrection, explicitly to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, for all to witness. All of this means that judging behavior in the light of the holy God is challenging yet necessary.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

¹⁶ na, General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Liturgy Documentary Series 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002) ISBN 1-57455-543-X, 69, paragraph 173.