

On Wednesday, February 5, the Feast of St. Agatha, Monsignor Michael D. McCarron made some observations about his saintly first pastor, Father Frank Quinn. Father Quinn taught that what is important are not answers that close minds, but questions that open minds. As an encouragement to the Monsignor and as a sign of how prepared at least some of the Faithful are to hear the word, I am sending a hard copy of these Personal Notes to him on Monday, February 10. As is my custom, in due time I will also send these to the parish Poor Clare monastery and other religious and Faithful locally and throughout the country. In line with the Monsignor's presentation, these Personal Notes are designed to open minds and hearts to God. To me, for one, the title *scholar* means one skilled at asking questions that open minds. The questions scholars pose with regard to the Sunday readings are found in the titles to the articles they write. That is one reason for placing these titles in the documentation.

Before the scholars get to work, the Divinely inspired scripture writers do their work. The question on the mind of God through his writers is the meaning of the **covenant**. The **covenantal** relationship in the readings is far from evident. These notes will bring out the relationship.

The Agony in the Garden, the First Sorrowful Mystery suits these thoughts.

## **Hosea 2:16b, 17b, 21-22**

A scholar<sup>1</sup> compared Hos 2:23-24 with similar pagan passages in the same literary genre. Humans rebel against the gods, then form a **covenant** not to rebel again. This psalm follows that **covenantal** genre.

verse 21<sup>2</sup> I will espouse you **to me** forever:  
I will espouse you in right and in justice,  
in love and in mercy;  
verse 22 I will espouse you in fidelity,  
and you shall know the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard F. Batto, *The **Covenant** of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1987) 200.

<sup>2</sup> All verses indented like this verse, are taken from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

The *Nova Vulgata*<sup>3</sup> repeats **to me** after each *espouse*. This is the **covenant**, a **covenantal** marriage based on right, justice, and fidelity, resulting in knowledge of the Lord. The beatific vision is too esoteric. As Saint Paul writes below in 2 Corinthians, knowledge of the Lord is something derived from knowledge of the Faithful. *Knowledge*, here may carry the earthy implication of *knowledge* associated with holy wedlock.

## Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

Because of what is omitted, as it reads, this Psalm is unclear about the **covenantal** relationship about which it sings. This psalm is part of a style of writing. As a scholar observes,<sup>4</sup> growing peace is the metaphor at work in this psalm. Tending such growth brings out the meaning of the whole Psalm reading, well illustrated in the antiphon.

verse 8a      The Lord is kind and merciful.

About verses 8-9, a scholar writes that the meaning is that “God does not keep his anger forever and delights in steadfast love.”<sup>5</sup>

verse 1      Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
                  and all my **being**, bless his holy name.

Saint Jerome uses **being** in a more Platonic than metaphysical Aristotelian sense. The Latin is *omnia, quae intra me sunt*, that I would translate from the Latin as *everything that is in me*, that *New Jerusalem*<sup>6</sup> translates *from the depths of my being*.

A scholar looks to Psalm 103:18 to write, “‘**Covenant**’ often appears in synonymous parallelism with some word representing law.”<sup>7</sup> My translation of verse 18 from the

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<sup>3</sup> *Saint Jerome, the Latin, and the Vulgate, also refer to the Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita Iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera* (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

<sup>4</sup> Bernard F. Batto, *The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1987), page 189.

<sup>5</sup> Sue Gillingham, *From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 471.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).



A scholar<sup>10</sup> observes that 2 Cor 3:6 rests “among the early Christian, messianic-Jewish references to the **new covenant**.”

verse 6                      who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a **new covenant**,  
not of letter but of spirit;  
for the letter brings death, but the spirit gives life.

## James 1:18

No comment

## Mark 2:2:18-22

Mark has some more questions, but not questions that open minds and hearts and souls, but questions that reveal hearts of stone, with minds already made up. The question is:

verse 18                      “Why do the disciples of John and the Disciples of the Pharisees  
fast,  
but your disciples do not fast?”

This reminds me of the place in Matthew 11:16-24 where Jesus says that the cities in which he worked miracles respond like children who sing a dirge and passers-by do not mourn, play a song and they do not dance. The Gospel writes about the **covenant** as related to closed-mindedness. The **new covenant** is open to new members, the Gentiles, as the liturgy words it,

verse 22c                  Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.”

In conclusion, the reading from Hosea is about a marriage **covenant** between God and each individual soul. The Psalm is about God’s divine patience with sinners. My computerized pinochle game helps make the point. When my computer partner does something I do not understand, I tend to become angry; when I make a mistake, I tend to become embarrassed. The reality is that I make unintended mistakes in the spiritual life too. The message from the readings is that God understands and, like the computer-partner, keeps on showing the way, “kind and merciful.” As in pinochle, if I am to grow, a certain amount of embarrassment, repentance, is involved in the spiritual life, too. Paul proclaims that the new Ten Commandments are individually written for each of the Faithful on their own hearts by the Spirit. Paul is not much worried about the infallibility

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<sup>10</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001), pages 19-20.

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of Church dogma. Paul, thereby, prepares me for the continuing abuse-of-power scandal among the hierarchy. Mark rather offers the same type of preparation, this time in the person of **people**.

verse 18b    **People** came to him and objected

The **covenant** in Mark takes on the relationship between new cloth on an old cloak and new wine and old wineskins. The fundamental relationship is between doing penance and fasting and celebrating a wedding. Lent begins next week. Now is the liturgical time to celebrate the **covenant**.