

Personal Notes  
050605 Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 88A  
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Faith is a form of knowledge. Faith is readily recognized as essential for worshipping God. Faith is not so readily recognized as essential for any form of education, from something as fundamental as American Red Cross water rescue and life saving to something as esoteric as Pauline rescue theology. Another way of putting it is that the pursuit of knowledge is the basis for the readings for today.

The Lectionary readings for today are about Faith as a form of knowledge. The readings are sometimes misinterpreted as excluding the need for good works, so long as Faith is present. In reality, good (in the sense of Godly) works, emanate from Faith.<sup>1</sup> One of those good works in the United States is crossing racial lines in a spirit of justice emanating from love. The Lectionary, in the spirit of Matthew 9:13, repeatedly calls for *mercy*.<sup>2</sup>

The Faithful can learn from the Black Catholic experience how to learn about God through education, even so-called secular education. Statistics from the 1990 City University of New York's national survey of religious identification show that Black Catholics are as educated as White Catholics and more educated than national averages.<sup>3</sup> All education is about creation and all creation tells the Faithful something about their Creator.

Hosea 6:6 is blunt and specific, to paraphrase a little, "It is *knowledge* of God, rather than holocausts, that I desire."<sup>4</sup> Matthew goes on to hammer this idea repeatedly, once in the Gospel at 9:13, where Jesus tells the Pharisees, "Go and *learn* the

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent M. Smiles, "The Concept of 'Zeal' in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul's Critique of It in Romans 10:2," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 297.

<sup>2</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) 61, 68.

<sup>3</sup> Seymour P. Lachman and Barry A. Kosmin, The Evening Sun, *Baltimore, October 17, 1991* as reproduced in The Josephites and Leadership Development in the African American Catholic Community: Society Documents, Josephite General Chapters, Josephite Chapter of Renewal, Josephite General Conferences, Matthew O'Rourke, S.S.J. (ed.). (no publication data, but purchased from the Josephites March 24, 2005) 232-233.

<sup>4</sup> Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989) 250.

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meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'"<sup>5</sup> Matthew makes the same point at 12:7.<sup>6</sup>

Psalm 50:1 points out that God has creating everything "from the rising of the sun to its setting." Malachi 1:11 draws on Psalm 50:1-2 to mean to worship God all day long, in a cultic fashion.<sup>7</sup> The purpose was to renew the Covenant.<sup>8</sup> The Lectionary omits verses 10 and 11 that specify some animals God created.<sup>9</sup> Psalm 50:14 shows the Faithful how to react to knowledge about God gained through knowledge of creation: "Offer to God praise as your sacrifice."

The Responsorial antiphon urges the Faithful to accept what God shows with the proclamation, "To the upright I will show the saving power of God." God, in Psalm 50:15 invites those suffering to "then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me." Black Catholics follow this path.

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is written to Gentile Christians,<sup>10</sup> in other words, to the Faithful of today. Paul focuses on Abraham, who had no good works with which to begin, but only Faith that God would do what he promised. Romans explains that the Faith-knowledge of Abraham, justified Abraham. Similarly, what the Faithful learn about God through every form of education, can lead to justification, when used properly.

Sexual morality is an important component of religious living. Abraham accepts the reality that both he and his wife are impotent, yet capable, under God, to become

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 470.

<sup>6</sup> Mark J. Goodwin, "Hosea and 'the Son of the Living God' in Matthew 16:16b," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 273, 277.

<sup>7</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) 476.

<sup>8</sup> Kathryn L. Roberts, "God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 636.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Whitekettle, "Bugs, Bunny, or Boar? Identifying the Ziz Animals of Psalms 50 and 80," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 250-264.

<sup>10</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon, "Why the 'Weak' at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 79-82.

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“the father of many nations” (Romans 4:18). Faith and education can work to offset the temptations of immediate gratification and desolate living, as the Black Catholic educational experience demonstrates. Romans insists that the Faith of Abraham is grafted onto the Faithful of today through the ministry of Jesus Christ (Romans 4:24).

Biblical time is pertinent to social development. An attitude exists today that everyone is entitled to human rights both here and now. Biblical time, away from the *now* is imaginary, under the purview of God. That is what Romans means where Abraham was convinced that God would fulfill his promise, despite how things looked *now*.<sup>11</sup> Anyone involved with civil rights in the United States since 1893, like the Josephites, must marvel at how God answers their prayers, much as God answers the prayers of Abraham and Sarah.

In Romans 4:21, Abraham was “fully convinced,” in a way that the Gospel of Luke strives “so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received,” taken from Lectionary reading 69C, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.<sup>12</sup> Full conviction carries from Romans through Abraham across to the Gospel of Luke.<sup>13</sup> People often express this sense of conviction of the goodness of God, not only in the United States, but also in Africa, as the recent participation of African Cardinals in the election of the new Pope demonstrates.

Romans 4:25, “who was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification,” parallels the Good Friday readings from Isaiah 53:12, “he surrendered himself to death and he shall...win pardon for their offenses.”<sup>14</sup> This is something like what the Josephites do when they accept racial prejudice as part of their lot in expiation for sin. The point is that God is doing this through Jesus, his Son.<sup>15</sup> Romans 4:25 also parallels the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce J. Malina, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1989) 15.

<sup>12</sup> 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).530.

<sup>13</sup> Richard J. Dillon, “Previewing Luke’s Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1981) 211.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Corley, “The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 263.

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The Alleluia verse, based on Luke 4:18, uses the logic of theology to point out what God does for the captive poor, namely liberty and glad tidings. The effort to learn is worth the grace that follows, with all things falling into place for the glory of God. The Gospel for today is from Matthew.

In the Gospel today, Matthew 9:9-13 is part of the healing ministry of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Jesus is sent to heal "Matthew sitting at the customs post" (Matthew 9:13). Jesus then tells the Pharisees to "go and learn" not in any fancy esoteric sense, but in the plain secular sense of "the meaning of the words" (Matthew 9:13). In Matthew, Jesus teaches with Divine authority.<sup>18</sup> As Jesus testifies, secular learning appropriately applies to religious purposes.

The Venerable Bede applies Matthew 9:12, about the need for a physician, to Tobit and Sarah. As Anatheia Portier-Young words it, Tobit is the one who suffers due to his "unexpected encounter with twin birds whose impeccable fecal marksmanship render him blind for four years."<sup>19</sup> This is the type of blindness unable to recognize the need for love rather than sacrifice.

Today the Lectionary calls for knowledge, in Hosea, God desires the "knowledge of God" (Hosea 6:6). In Psalm 50:1, "God the LORD has spoken," which expects the Faithful to gain knowledge there. The Faith of Abraham in Romans 4:18 is knowledge based on the Word of God. In the Gospel, Jesus admonishes the Pharisees to "learn the meaning of the words" (Matthew 9:13). Knowledge begins with love of the Truth, is expressed in an effort to learn, and results in an openness to doing things differently in order to love better.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

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<sup>15</sup> 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, 566-567.

<sup>16</sup> Robert J. Daly, S.J., "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 1977) 48, 72.

<sup>17</sup> W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 571.

<sup>18</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the `Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 565.

<sup>19</sup> Anatheia Portier-Young, "Alleviation of Suffering in the Book of Tobit: Comedy, Community, and Happy Endings," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 47, 53.