

The *Lectionary*¹ theme is a correct, though unsophisticated, “don’t worry, be happy” theme. The following reflections are designed to raise the level of sophistication with a purpose of engendering a look of peace, rather than anxiety, on my face.

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Verse 10: Jeremiah said: “I hear the whisperings of many

NV² uses *contumelias* for *whisperings*.

Contumelias is a root word for the English *contumelies*.

Verse 10: All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine.

NV has: *Omnes pacifici mei observabant lapsum meum:*

omnes pacifici mei is not exactly *friends*. *Pacifici*³ derives from *Pas* and *facio*, in other words, those peaceful towards me.

lapsum suits *lapse* as well as *misstep*.

Verse 10 “Terror on every side! ...” offers little cause for a peaceful visage.

Verse 11: “But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph.”

There is a connection here with the *weakness* of last Sunday. Where the *Lectionary* has “they will not triumph,” at Jeremiah 20:11, the NV has *et infirmi erunt*. That word *infirmi* was written up last week as:

[Romans 5] Verse 6: ...helpless... NV uses *infirmi*.

¹ 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).

² 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.

³ Cassell’s Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952), page 388.

The Gospel at Matthew 10:1 uses *curarent omnem languorem et omnem infirmitatem* for ... to cure every disease and every illness

Douay-Rheims⁴ translates Jeremiah 20:11 as "...and shall be weak..."

But, the KJV⁵ has "...and they shall not prevail..."

Verse 12: ...who probe the mind and heart

NV has *qui vides renes et cor* *Renes* is the word for *kidneys* where the ancients must have thought the mind resided.

Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

This is one of the troubling *curse* psalms. The part that is omitted, especially verses 23-29 is particularly difficult. Carroll Stuhlmueller writes:⁶

The question, "Why these curses in the Bible?" can be approached from the base of Psalm 69. This psalm not only includes one of the longest curses in the Psalter but it is also, as we shall see, one of the most quoted in the New Testament. Even some of the cursing lines (vv. 23-29) are included in the list:

- v, 4 in John 15:25: It is cited by Jesus in his Last Supper discourse, where he also prayed for peace (John 14:27);
- v. 9a in John 2:17: Here Jesus manifests anger at people who traffic in the Temple and profane the house of God;

⁴ The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate with Annotations, References, and an Historical and Chronological Table: The Douay Version of The Old Testament, First published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609: The Confraternity Edition of The New Testament: A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (New York. P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1950).

⁵ General Editor, The Reverend Cain Hope Felder, Ph.D., The Original African Heritage Study Bible: King James Version (Nashville: The James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1993).

⁶ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 144, 154-155, and 151-152.

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- v. 9b in Rom 15:3: Here Paul adds immediately: “For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me’”;
- v. 22, the first in the cursing stanza, in Rom 11:9-10: Here Paul is dealing with the failure of Judaism to recognize Jesus as their messiah. Romans 11 begins with the question: “I ask, then, has God rejected his people?” The answer is: “By no means!” (v. 1). Evidently, the curse is not the final word, nor is one to interpret this cursing too simplistically;
- v. 24 in Rev 16:1: Here one does not find a direct quotation but a very similar phrase and certainly the same idea, as angels pour seven bowls of plagues upon the earth.
- v. 25 is said to reach fulfillment in the death of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20).

The frequency of lines from Psalm 69, including lines from the cursing section, demands some explanation of the cursing or vindictive explosion of hate and revenge in the book of Psalms.

...

The curse psalms bring such a clash of goodness and evil immediately in God’s presence. Goodness, with anger and outrage, with “a whip of cords,” is driving evil out of God’s Temple. If we return for a moment to the example of a healthy human body that has been infected with poison, there is no “nice” way of expelling the foreign, destructive material. Neither was the cross “nice.” The agonizing, tortured, heavily bleeding Jesus on the crucifixes of Peru is far closer to the reality of Calvary than the jeweled or sanitized crucifixes of many other parts of the world. The curse psalms belong to the fierce reality of sin—holiness like the crucifixes of Peru. Good people participate in the reuniting of wicked people with God, and such is Jesus, goodness par excellence, the ultimate place in his sacred person for atonement and sanctification of all men and women, not by suffering as a substitute for sinful people but rather by being plunged into their midst. The curse psalms express such a movement with goodness in the midst of wickedness thoroughly expels all evil. Goodness is so intimately interlocked with evil that in time, in the curse psalms, all one sees on the surface is evil.

Liturgy for Dehumanized, Oppressed people

The cursing verses of the psalm are now missing in the readings of the Church’s liturgy. Since Vatican II, they cannot be found any more at Mass or in the Christian Liturgy of the Hours. The decision to delete these lines

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was wise. Even with explanation the lines remain baffling and disturbing. How much more perplexing will they be to people uninitiated in Bible study? Yet the Christian community cannot deny, and therefore should not completely bypass, the presence of curse psalms in the Bible. ... Let the shock impact the conscience of comfortable Christians.

...

While this theology of Jeremiah and Second Isaiah—that suffering can be transforming—does not show up explicitly in Psalm 69, still the influence of Jeremiah was impacting the psalm in other significant ways. It seems possible to assert, as least as a working hypothesis, that the curses of Psalm 69 are couched in a context that the suffering inflicted by sin on wicked persons can be purifying for them.

The notion of resurrection and reward in an afterlife was foreign to the Psalmists.

The Lectionary translation itself is difficult. The Responsorial (14c) differs from what appears in the body.

Responsorial:

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

The body:

Answer me, O Lord, for bounteous is your kindness.

The Lectionary has:

In your great kindness **answer** me
with your constant help.

Answer me, O Lord, for bounteous is your kindness;
in your great mercy turn toward me.

The NV has only one *answer me, exaudi me*. Bear with an examination of Psalm 69:14c, the Responsorial antiphon.

The King James Version, in verse 16, has:

Hear me, O Lord; for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

Douay-Rheims, Psalm 68:14:

But as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord; for the time of thy good pleasure, O God. In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

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The Catholic Study Bible,⁷ Psalm 69:14:

But I pray to you, Lord, for the time of your favor. God, in your great kindness answer me with your constant help.

The Jerusalem Bible, Psalm 69:13:⁸

For my part, I pray to you, Yahweh, at the time you wish; in your great love, answer me, God, faithful in saving power.

The New Jerusalem Bible Psalm 69:13:⁹

And so, I pray to you, Yahweh, at the time of your favour; in your faithful love answer me, in the constancy of your saving power.

Finally, the New American Bible, 69:14:¹⁰

But I pray to you, Lord, for the time of your favor. God, in your great kindness answer me with your constant help.

Psalm 69:9¹¹ is quoted by Saint Paul in Romans 15:3, which is not in the Lectionary. The NAB translates Romans 15:3 as "The insults of those who insult you fall upon me"

⁷ Donald Senior, General Editor, The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible: Including the Revised Psalms and the Revised New Testament: Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁸ Alexander Jones, General Editor, The Jerusalem Bible: Reader's Edition (Garden City, New York: Double Day * Company, Inc., 1968).

⁹ Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

¹⁰ Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible: Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources: Including The Revised New Testament and the Revised Psalms Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and Approved by the Administrative Committee/Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference: with many helps for Bible reading: Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, How to Read the Bible, Historical Survey of the Lands of the Bible, Bible Dictionary, Liturgical Index of Sunday Readings, Doctrinal Bible Index, and over 50 Photographs and Maps of the Holy Land (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992).

¹¹ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 144. This is also cited above.

and Psalm 69:10 as “I am scorned by those who scorn you.” The NV follows similar suit in numbering the verses. Comparing the Latin might be interesting:

Romans 15:3:
“Improperia impropertium tibi ceciderunt super me.

Psalm 69:10:
et opprobria exprobrantium tibi ceciderunt super me.

The Lectionary for Psalm 60:10 has:
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.

Romans 5:12-15

These verses are also used for the First Sunday of Lent at Readings 22A.

Verses 5:1-21 are part of “bookends of grace,” the other end of which is 8:18-39. In between is a certain amount of Pauline harshness.¹²

John 15:26b, 27a S

Matthew 10:26-33

First, an overview of how Matthew organizes his Gospel helps place the Tenth Chapter in perspective. The order follows the Lord’s Prayer. Verses 32 and 33 are about “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”¹³

The Lectionary has:

Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.”

As one scholar puts it:

¹² Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000), 73.

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), page 529.

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By encountering this familiar prayer in the gospel's text, the audience is enabled to recall, and thereby renew, its liturgical experience of the prayer's gifts of order, community, and transformation, realities which are also central to the gospel's narrative.¹⁴

Another sense of the overview:

Having presented Jesus in the first main part of s the Messiah, the Son of God, Matthew depicts him in the second main part (4:17—16:20) as discharging his public ministry to Israel (cf. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 11:1-6).¹⁵

“Because of the failure of Matthew's Christian Jews to win many Jewish converts (the unifying theme of the missionary chapter, Matthew 10, is *pessimism* concerning the mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel), Matthew believes that the church's future is intimately bound up with the mission to the Gentiles.¹⁶

There are three references relative to anxiety on the face:

1. verse 26. “Fear no one.” The NV has [my translation] “do not therefore, fear them.”

The meaning is that the Twelve will be persecuted in the future, but they should not fear that persecution.¹⁷

2. verse 28. “rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Max Zerwick, S.J., notes that the implication is that the Twelve already do have this fear.¹⁸

¹⁴ 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), page 530

¹⁵ Jack Dean Kingsbury, “Observations on the ‘Miracle Chapters’ of Matthew 8-9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978), page 565.

¹⁶ Douglas R. A. Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?”, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000), page 276.

¹⁷ 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, page 80.

¹⁸ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 31

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Saint Catherine of Siena misunderstands when she has Christ saying, “don’t be afraid of human beings, who can destroy only the body, but do fear me, for I can destroy both soul and body.”¹⁹ The Lectionary has:

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. ... So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Catherine is correct to recognize that the curses are present in the Bible; she is incorrect to say that Jesus is here telling us to fear him; in fact Jesus is saying not only not to fear Jesus, but also not to fear God the Father, either. Catherine is stressing the fallen nature of humanity in the Augustinian sense, rather than stressing the higher nature of humanity, that seeks God like deer seek water, to paraphrase the same African, St. Augustine. We are worth much in God’s eyes, so we ought not fear or feel threatened—that not fearing and not feeling threatened is the gist of the passage cited by Catherine and used in the Lectionary.

3. verse 31. “So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

So far so good, except that verse 34, the very next verse to that used by the Lectionary, has in the NAB, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword.”

Verse 27 which the Lectionary translates as “What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light” Zerwick notes that *in the light* means *in broad daylight*.²⁰

Verse 29, “Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin?” There is a problem with a *small coin*. The NV uses *Nonne duo passers asse veneunt?* *Asse* does not appear in

¹⁹ From the Letters of St. Catherine of Siena, Vol. I, Suzanne Noffke, O.P., Tr. © 1988 Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, State University of N.Y., Binghamton, Used by Permission. page 325 as cited in *Magnificat* ®, Vol. 4, No. 4 (June 2002), pages 325 and 423.

²⁰ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 31.

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Cassell's where *coin* is translated as *nummus*.²¹ The *Latin Lexicon*²² does not show *asse*, except as an adjective for *roasted*, which does not make sense in this context. The *Lexicon* translates *small coin* as *numuli*. According to *Cassell's*, *veneo* does mean *to be sold*. I observe, a root word for the English *vendor*.

The King James Version has *farthing*.

Douay-Rheims uses *farthing*.

The NAB has *a small coin*.

JB uses *a penny*.

NJB has *a penny*.

The Catholic Study Bible, following the NAB, uses *a small coin*.

The Greek²³ is ἀσσαριου, which must be where Jerome derived his *asse*. Zerwick says that ἀσσαριον is the diminutive of Latin *as* = 1/16 denarius, generally of price. *Denarius* is in neither *Cassell's* nor the *Lexicon*. The *Tables of Measures and Money* on page 2079 of the NJB offers no help.

verse 32, "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father ..." The NV uses *confiteor* for *acknowledge*; the Greek uses ομολογεω as a translation of an Aramaic idiom, *declare (oneself) for*, German *sich bekennen zu*.

²¹ *Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin* revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952), page 660.

²² F. P. Leverett, ed., *Enlarged and Improved Edition. A new and Copious Lexicon of the Latin Language: compiled chiefly from the Magnum Totius Latinitatis Lexicon of Facciolati and Forcellini, and the German World of Scheller and Luenemann: A New Edition, embracing the Classical Distinctions of Words, and the Etymological Index of Freund's Lexicon* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1850)

²³ *Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine: Textum Graecum post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle communiter ediderunt Barbara et Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger: Textus Latinus Novae Vulgatae Bibliorum Sacrorum Editioni debetur: Utriusque textus apparatus criticum recensuerunt et editionem novis curis elaboraverunt Barbara et Kurt Aland una cum Instituto Studiorum Textus Novi Testamenti Monasterii Westphaliae* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1999) Editio XXVII.

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The pre-Vatican II Mass used to have the *confiteor* that the altar boys recited in the prayers at the foot of the altar. That *confiteor* did not bear the Aramaic idiom cited here, but had the sense of to confess one's sins.

When all is said and done engendering that look of peace is something I must do for myself, as a sign of my hope in the mercy of God.