

Personal Notes
050626 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 97A
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At this time, some Personal Notes, including those for 97A, June 6, 2002, are already on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes. The 2002 material focuses on Romans, which I had not, then, translated for myself from the Greek. What I translated in 2002 was the Matthean gospel. Translating Romans informs these Notes.

In 2002, the resurrection superseded the death of Christ as the instrument freeing the Faithful from sin. According to Romans, Christ died to, rather than for, sin. Romans expects the Faithful to do likewise. For Christ, death to sin meant proclaiming the truth even when the human repercussion meant crucifixion as the segue to the final resurrection.

Less abstract considerations inform the following 2005 comments. Proclamation of truth in the United States can be associated with standing up to racism and other violations of human rights. The matter of human rights is an issue for church and state, both. Sometimes the proclamation of human rights includes psychological death, in the sense of going crazy and becoming imprudent over injustice.

In the Lectionary reading from 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a, Elisha seems to recognize that infertility is more probably due to the male than the female; *her husband is getting on in years*. The human rights issue is age discrimination. Elisha tells the Shunem woman of influence not to worry, "*This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.*"

In a broader context, 1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 13:25 finds the presence of God more in prophets and truth than in armies and politics. The Books of Kings are finding true regal power in the Word of God.¹ The New Testament finds the presence of God in the ultimate prophet, Jesus Christ. No one ever suffered human rights violations in the spirit of the resurrection as much as Jesus. Jesus both shows and is the way.

During his lifetime, Elisha was not a part of mainstream Judaism. Elisha "was destitute, badly housed, and poorly fed,"² as are many Black, Latino, and other Catholics. Political favor is immaterial.

Mentioning *singing forever, the joyful shout, and the Holy one of Israel*, Psalm 89 stresses death to sin. Sin is incompatible with joy in the Lord. There is a racial

¹ Sonya Quitslund review of Thomas L. Brodie, O.P., The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis—Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels in *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No 2 (April 2001) 307-308.

² John R. Levison, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 511.

Personal Notes
050626 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 97A
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connection with *shout* (Psalm 89:16). *Shout song* entered the American language in 1925 as a rhythmic song, sung at religious services, especially by Black Americans and characterized by responsive singing or shouting between leader and congregation.³ The Shout is a way of singing “Hallelujah, anyway,” in spite of human rights violations.

Psalm 89:16 also refers to walking with the Lord as a sweet companion and friend.⁴ Psalm 89 is part of celebrating the Exodus.⁵ Psalm 89:19-37 reveals a bias against the politics of the regency in favor of a bias toward the truth of prophecy. Psalm 89 is at the seam, between Books III and IV, a type of reminder of past political grandeur in the hope of a future messiah proclaiming everlasting truth.⁶

The Lectionary omits Psalm 89:39-52, a complaint that God has broken the unconditional promises of the Covenant. Psalm 89 portrays David as chosen by God from all eternity, without human involvement. Despite the complaints, Psalm 89 is insistent upon the unconditional, everlasting nature of the Covenant.⁷ This means that God stands by the Faithful as they stand up for human rights. Psalm 89 is a song of joy for the Exodus through the waters of the Red Sea.⁸

Romans 6:3-4 suits a baptismal setting.⁹ Such a setting would have intensified the scrutiny of the Early and Primitive Church. Romans 6:3 requires careful listening,

³ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate* ® *Dictionary: eleventh Edition* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2003) 1153.

⁴ John S. Kselman, S.S. and Michael L. Barré, S.S., *Psalm 55: Problems and Proposals, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No 3 (July 1998) 451.

⁵ Richard J. Clifford, S.J., *The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and Its Cosmogonic Language, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January 1993) 3-4.

⁶ Sue Gillingham, *From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 477, 487; also see Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., *The Use of “Panels” in the Structure of Psalms 73—78, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No 4 (October 2004) 540.

⁷ Melody D. Knowles, *The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 238-240.

⁸ Richard J. Clifford, S.J., *The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and Its Cosmogonic Language, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January 1993) 4.

we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. Romans does not mean death to self or physical death, but rather death to sin, regardless of the consequences. Because human rights violations violate the Christian law of love, death to sin means unwillingness to participate in human rights violations.

The Greek for Romans 6:4 uses the preposition $\delta\iota\alpha$ twice in an instrumental way. The first time, “*through* baptism into death,” is clear enough, but the second time, “*by* the glory of the Father,” is not so clear. The glory of the Father is the instrument that raised Jesus from the dead and is the same instrument that will raise the Faithful toward death to sin. As Notes for June 6, 2002 indicates, Romans is complicated here.

Romans 6:5, *we shall also live with him* (in this instance, not used by the Lectionary), is not a temporal sequence, but is a logical sequence, arising out of baptism.¹⁰ In other words, death to sin means life in grace. The Lectionary uses Romans 6:5 at reading 41ABC, Easter Sunday—Easter Vigil,¹¹ *For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.* The Lectionary for this Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time refers to the life of grace with Romans 6:11, *living for God in Christ Jesus.*¹²

⁹ John Kloppenborg, *An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula 1 Cor 15:3b-5 In Light of Some Recent Literature*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July 1978) 366-367.

¹⁰ 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) 471.

¹¹ 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).340.

¹² 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) 39.

Personal Notes
050626 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 97A
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Matthew 10:41, referring to *whoever receives a prophet* reaches back to 2 Kings 4 and the Shunem woman of influence. The verse, thereby, also refers to standing up for human rights. Reward and punishment is a major theme in Matthew.¹³

Where Matthew 10:37 refers to abandoning family, the greater reference is to abandoning the quest for human rights in the love of Christ. In Romans 6:4, Paul refers to God as Father, thereby enveloping all humanity in the love of God.¹⁴

Equating family values with Christian values, while politically correct today, does not suit the history of the Church, beginning with Jesus who has nothing good to say about family, exemplified in Matthew 10:37 about abandoning family. While questioning everything may be politically correct today, the Early Church did not like the Faithful questioning the Church Fathers. The Fathers fostered Church unity, instead.¹⁵

While the Early Church did strive to serve as a surrogate family,¹⁶ the nuclear family as known in modern U.S.A. was unknown then. As the Biblical scholar, Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., words it, "The myth of the American family, has no apparent ancient counterpart."¹⁷

Osiek continues,¹⁸

This is the fundamental tension of the biblical witness: does discipleship consist of the promotion of harmonious relationships within recognized social structures, even in the face of suffering, or does it

¹³ Louise Joy Lawrence, "For truly, I tell you, they have received their reward" (*Matt 6:2*): Investigating Honor Precedence and honor Virtue, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 700.

¹⁴ Joseph Plevnik, S.J., *The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 567.

¹⁵ Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., *The Family in Early Christianity: "Family Values" Revisited*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 22, 23.

¹⁶ Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., *The Family in Early Christianity: "Family Values" Revisited*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 20.

¹⁷ Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., *The Family in Early Christianity: "Family Values" Revisited*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 12.

¹⁸ Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., *The Family in Early Christianity: "Family Values" Revisited*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 7-8.

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consist in the jolting challenge that overturns and rejects our most cherished human relationships and structures, whether social or conceptual?

The tension described above by Osiek is illustrated by the tension between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Oscar Romero. Days before the Salvadorian government martyred Romero, the Pope told him to get along with the government. Because of atrocities to his people, Romero did not understand why. Romero thought the place of the Church rested more with the poor than with the political establishment. The Salvadorian political establishment martyred Bishop Romero March 24, 1980.¹⁹

The gist of my comments leans towards the jolting side of the tension. The first jolt comes when Elisha promises the Shunem woman of influence a baby. The second jolt comes with the shout in Psalm 89. Romans offers a jolt by turning the gaze toward God away from self-sacrifice associated with physical death and toward a life of grace associated with grace and good works. Matthew is about reward and punishment, jolting sensibilities by proclaiming a divine reward even for a cool one, as the 2002 Notes observe, generally understood as water.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

¹⁹ Marcel Miranda, "Arch Bishop Romero Should Be Pope and John Paul Condemned" page 2 of 15 at <https://www1.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/04/308383.html> on May 15 at 9:00 p.m., 2005.