

A Catholic Bible Study: Personal Notes
050710 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 103A
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Raymond J. Jirran

My Greek focus is on Romans, exemplified in the proclamation, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us" (Romans 8:18). In the Greek, *consider* carries a sense of counting, calculating, pondering, and the like.¹ The Greek sense is cold, calculating conviction, something valuable in difficult times.

Pastoral Care of the Sick links suffering with glory in its liturgical use of Romans 8:18-27.² Verses 18-27 in Pastoral Care of the Sick include four verses additional to what the Lectionary uses here at Mass. The idea in both readings is that the Faithful give up their lives in order to attain eternal life, somewhat as a seed gives up its life in order to attain new life.

The imagery through these readings is planting, whereby a seed dies in order to bring forth new life. Not all seeds and not all plants are good in the sense of desirable. Racism and other violations of human rights are like evil weeds crowding out the beauty of the human flowers of God.

God himself waters his human flowers with his holy words, so that in honoring the rights of others, the Faithful are able to express the love of God. Isaiah regards the word of the Lord as rain and snow falling down from heaven and not returning without nourishing what God has planted. Isaiah recognizes the word of God as giving bread (Isaiah 55:10), something that Christians recognize as the Holy Eucharist, the Bread of Life, the very physical presence of Jesus himself. The readings today are from Second Isaiah,³ written during the evil time of exile, but full of hope for things to come.⁴

¹ William D. Mounce, Zondervan Greek Reference Series: the Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House: A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 302.

² The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983).

³ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 94.

⁴ 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) 4-5.

The royal psalm,⁵ Psalm 65, invokes harvest imagery, reminding the Faithful of the Josephite Harvest in the Black Apostolate. Psalm 65:10 announces that God has “prepared the grain,” that is vocations both to and from Black and other misrepresented and unrepresented Catholics. Psalm 65:14 returns to the Eucharistic theme, with “the valleys [are] blanketed with grain.”

More realistic than remembering the bygone glory of Psalm 65, Romans relates to present suffering, “that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption” (Romans 8:21). Romans then takes on a feminine identity, “that all creation is groaning in labor pains” (Romans 8:22). The fact that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died a horrible death of crucifixion mesmerizes Paul as he writes Romans. Pauline theology, at its most mature in Romans, requires the Holy Spirit, the law of the spirit of life,⁶ to placate and understand the meaning of Jesus in the lives of the Faithful.⁷

Romans turns the mystery of evil into a debt theology, whereby humanity owes something to God for sending his Son to die for the Faithful. The splendor of the salvation exhibited in the life of Jesus excites Romans, especially at the bookends of grace at Romans 5:1-21 and here at 18-23, continuing through 39 outside the Lectionary. While Romans is demanding of the Christian life, Romans more importantly loves the God who makes that Christian life possible.⁸

What about the role of crowds, that Matthew 13:2 mentions? Crowds are notoriously misrepresented and unrepresented. The American Historical Association only in 2005 published a web site trying to understand the crowd in the French Revolution.⁹

⁵ 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.

⁶ Brendan Byrne, S.J., “The Problem of Νομοϛ and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 308.

⁷ Joseph Plevnik, S.J., “The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 562-563.

⁸ Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 73-74.

⁹ An On-Line Collaboration Organized By Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, “Imaging the French Revolution: Depictions of the French Revolutionary Crowd,” The American Historical Review, Vol. 110, No. 1 (February 2005) 38-45.

Jesus himself distains the crowd in Matthew 13:11, saying, “knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ... to them it has not been granted.”

Matthew 13:2, switching between crowds and crowd, is characteristic of what Matthew does with his source materials. Here the back and forth is relatively insignificant, but the characteristic of what Matthew does causes scholars problems comparing Mark, Luke, and Matthew over the denials by Peter of Christ during Holy Week. The denials are more understandable once the editing technique of Matthew is understood.¹⁰ Writing style also helps scholars understand what belongs directly to Paul and what may be a derivative of Paul.

Matthew 13:11 proclaims “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” The plural, *mysteries* appears only here, Luke 8:10 and at 1 Corinthians 4:1, 13:2, and 14:2 of Paul.¹¹ One of those mysteries is the presence of evil before an all powerful, loving God. While Romans deals with these mysteries, Matthew is more explicit.

The “evil one” in Matthew 13:19 is the devil.¹² Where Matthew declares the presence of evil; Romans explains how to deal with that presence, namely as an unfathomable mystery.

Matthew 13 presents those religious administrators who do not recognize that Jesus is the Messiah as “blind.” In the words of Jesus, Matthew cites Isaiah 9:6-7 to explain that one can look without seeing.¹³ I think that, somehow, that also happens with not accepting the fact that one does not understand how God can, at the same time, be both good and permit evil.

Accepting Jesus as Messiah as a fact has a special reference to sight, which, in the ancient world, requires primary observance, distinct from hearing that sometimes can offer only secondary attribution. In other words: in order to see, one oneself must see, but in order to hear, one can listen to what another has heard, without oneself hearing first hand. For the ancients, sight is more important than hearing, in

¹⁰ Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P., “Peter’s Denials—How Many? To Whom?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No 3 (July 1990) 468.

¹¹ Jeremy Corley, “The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 261-262.

¹² 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) 60.

¹³ W. R. G. Loader, “Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 577.

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the Gospels bearing special significance for the women who actively serve as eyewitnesses to everything, but especially the Resurrection. See Matt 27:55; Mark 15:40; and Luke 23:49, 55.¹⁴

In the words of Jesus, Matthew presents the parable of the sower, indicating that not everyone who hears the word of God takes that word to heart to let it grow. The issue is that the word requires not only sending, but also receiving. When the word is successfully received, it bears fruit “and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold” (Matt 13:23).

These readings for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time are about incorporating evil into how the Faithful accept their Lord. Isaiah wrote in exile, an evil time, outside the Holy Land. Psalm 65 recalls better days, when the People of God flourished in the Holy Land. Romans breaks down what is happening, namely that Jesus overcame evil with good and the Faithful are able and obliged to do likewise. The Gospel of Matthew warms the heart of this retired history professor, as Jesus shows his disciples how to learn from what they see and hear.

I continue to struggle to place these [A Catholic Bible Study: Personal Notes](http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes/Personal%20Notes.htm) and some others already on the web site at <http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes/Personal%20Notes.htm>

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, [Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels](#) (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 297.