

Personal Notes
050724 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 109A
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The Gospel is about the ministry of Jesus. The very purpose of Jesus coming into this world is raising up brothers and sisters to himself. My question is how well do the Faithful suit the brother-and-sister likeness of Jesus?¹

The readings in 1 Kings is about a good brain flowing out of a good heart. Solomon has a dream at Gagnon, a place left out of the verses in the Lectionary reading. The dream takes place at the beginning of the rule of Solomon.² Dreams are important because conscious defense mechanisms are down in dreams. Solomon really wanted wisdom.

Solomon brings a threefold turn of events to the Judaic monarchy. The explanation moves: (1) from the dream for and granting of wisdom, (2) to the exercise of wisdom determining to whom the newly born baby belonged, (3) to the building of the second temple on Mount Zion rather than on Mount Gerizim, the place the Samaritans chose.³ The question then is, where do the Faithful worship God? The answer is Mount Zion, the symbol for the hearts of the Faithful. To be like Christ is to seek to do the will of the Father in all things, but especially in the heart.

At Daily Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, a loving grandmother frequently prays for discernment for young people. The discernment for which she prays is the *understanding* of 1 Kings 3:9, 11, and 12. Saint Jerome translates *understanding* as *discernere*, *discernendum*, and *intelligens*. As an alphabetical acrostic psalm, Psalm 119 takes more of a cerebral than an emotional approach to the Lord.

Psalm 119 is about loving the law, *Lord I love your commands*, as the Responsorial antiphon relates. Psalm 119 is a long acrostic 176-verse psalm, sustained by force of argument rather than high emotions. Jesus has staying power because his knowledge of the Father carries him through the depressing disappointments of his crucifixion and death in order to reach his resurrection and eternal life.

As intellectual as Psalm 119 is, Psalm 119 does have a certain amount of bite. Psalm 119:38-39, 77-80 revolves about holding the LORD responsible for protecting

¹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 565.

² Moshe Garsiel, "Revealing and Concealing as a Narrative Strategy in Solomon's Judgment (1 Kings 3:16-28)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No 2 (April 2002) 231-232.

³ Moshe Garsiel, "Revealing and Concealing as a Narrative Strategy in Solomon's Judgment (1 Kings 3:16-28)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No 2 (April 2002) 231-232.

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the pious from undeserved shame. With the implication that compassion is missing, the Lectionary uses verse 77, *Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.*⁴ Psalm 119 goes on to compare the law with fine gold.

Psalm 119:127, *gold, however fine, fine* in the Vulgate Latin is a derivative of testing the gold for purity.⁵ Lady Poverty suits this verse, choosing the love of the Father over love of material wealth. Love of material things is a *false way*, whereas sometimes Christianity is known as *the Way*.

Saint Jerome seems to have a far different translation for *decrees* in Psalm 119:129, *wonderful are your decrees*. Saint Jerome uses the Latin, *testimonia*, a word I associate with *witness*. Cassell's has *witness, evidence, testimony, or a proof, evidence, indication.*⁶ Just as Jesus is a witness to and type of decree of the Father, so too are the Faithful a witness to and type of decree of the Father.

Psalm 119:130, *giving understanding to the simple*, Saint Jerome translates *simple*, with *parvulis*, a word that means childlike. The meaning for the verse might be something like *The Bible for Dummies*. The idea is that what the Father wants is not that hard to understand. The Faithful really can join their lives to Christ in their search for the will of the Father through whatever difficulties mortal life may bring.

The Lectionary draws a parallel between Psalm 119:72, *gold and silver pieces* and Psalm 119:127, *more than gold however fine* and Matthew 13:44, *a treasure buried in a field*. Using quite materialistic standards, Jesus brings the Faithful unto himself by showing them how to live. The meaning is that God is an active participant in human history, involved with such things as gold and silver.

⁴ 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) 693.

⁵ 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) 374 and 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) 585.

⁶ 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) 573.

Romans 8:28 brings out the activity of God. While there is an alternative Greek text that supports the translation that *all things work*, the standard Greek text has it that *God works*.⁷ This means that God is in charge. *All things* are not in charge.

Moving from Romans 8:28, *all things working for good* to Matt 19:26, *with God all things are possible* one arrives at the Ohio State motto, *with God all things are possible*. The Gospel of Matthew does have a secular historical impact. For example *the chosen few* and *the eleventh hour* may be traced to the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.⁸

Another interesting facet of Romans 8:28 is the Greek for *purpose*, προθεσιν that sounds somewhat like *prosthesis* but is not derived from the Greek for purpose, but from the Greek for *adding to*. As much as I might want to reach some devotion about the Faithful being prosthesis for Christ, the facts do not support such piety based on Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:29, however, does work, finding a place for the Faithful. The Greek for *image* carries the contemporary genetic sense of children being in the image of their parents. In this sense, Jesus is the *firstborn among many brothers and sisters*. Of interest is that the Greek and Latin both have *brothers* that the Lectionary in this instance chooses to translate *brothers and sisters*. It will be interesting to see what, if anything, the next Lectionary does with the new insights from feminism.

In Romans, Paul develops the Jewish law into the Christian law of love. The Chosen People become those predestined in Romans 8:29-30.⁹ Saint Paul expanded the notion of Chosen People, an expansion that continues to struggle, especially in its feminist context.

Romans, by referring to Jesus as *his Son*, proclaims Jesus the very Son of God. This identity of Jesus as divine is essential for understanding Paul, the author of

⁷ 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) 477.

⁸ Ben Witherington III, review of Howard Clarke, The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 4 (October 2004) 644.

⁹ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "The Problem of Νομος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 308.

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Romans.¹⁰ In the Gospel, Matthew has already identified Jesus as God, the Messiah, and is now into proclaiming the ministry of Jesus, part of which meant using the parables.

Matthew 1-52, used over the last three Sundays, contains seven parables, arranged in a chiasmic format.¹¹ This means that the middle, fourth parable, the one last Sunday (Matt 13:33), about the yeast leavening a whole batch of three measures of wheat flour, is the central key parable. The meaning, then, of the three parables for this Sunday, is to permeate all of the Faithful all of the time with the leaven of God's holy grace.

The treasure the Faithful are to find in their fields of endeavor is the Father. At the time of Jesus, owning a field must have been a common experience.¹² The pearl for which the Faithful are to sell everything, is life with the Father. Matt 13:47, *the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind*, that dragnet, unique in Matthew (Matt 13:47),¹³ is about what happens to those neglecting to find and treasure, the Father. Matt 13:48, *What is bad they throw away*.

Matt 13:50 goes on to mention the *wailing and grinding of teeth* (Matt 13:50). This *wailing and grinding* is also found in Matt 13:42 from last Sunday, in the analogy with the lot of the weeds. The parable of the Weeds and Wheat is also unique to Matthew.¹⁴

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 58.

¹² Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 472.

¹³ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 248.

¹⁴ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 237, 251-248.

The four parables unique to Matthew all have violent endings, one of which appeared last Sunday, another this Sunday, identified with the *grinding teeth*.¹⁵ While I am not sure how chiasm works, I suspect the *wailing and grinding of teeth* goes with the sown seed, some of which did and others of which did not produce fruit (Matt 13:3-23). The seed mixed with weeds (Matt 13:24-30) helps explain the merchant selling all that he has to purchase the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46). Finally, the parable of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32) helps illumine the parable of one finding a treasure in his field of endeavor (Matt 13:44).

The final verse, Matt 13:52, about the scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven being like the head of a household, is a metaphor or simile, but not a parable, other assertions notwithstanding. Recent scholarship assumes that Jesus told the parables in various settings, repeatedly. The Gospels then cast the parables in their final arrangement.¹⁶ That may be what Matthew 13:52 means when he writes about bringing *from his storeroom both the new and the old*.¹⁷

Unraveling problems found in Sacred Scripture helps discern what may be meant. Parables from last Sunday and this Sunday are two of eight in Matthew with the violent endings.¹⁸ Such violent endings cause problems when juxtaposed with the Beatitudes. There is another problem. Comparing the kingdom of heaven to things runs the risk of missing the sovereignty of the rule of God, the main theological point of Matthew.¹⁹

The readings for this Sunday are about the heart molding the brain to prefer the Lord to all things, a preference insisted upon by Psalm 119. Saint Paul explains that the treasure about which Matthew writes is the very Son of God, Jesus Christ. All of the

¹⁵ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 248-249.

¹⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 56-57, 75.

¹⁷ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 250.

¹⁸ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 237.

¹⁹ Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 465.

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scriptures explain that the heart can mold the brain to love God in every aspect of life.

At this time, some Personal Notes are already on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes

For more on sources see the Appendix file.