

Personal Notes
060730 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 110B
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This is a Sunday about the power of the Holy Eucharist. Power brings peace, in the sense that only the king can be at peace. Power links with Eucharistic peace in the readings for this Sunday.

The readings begin with 2 Kings 4:42-44, Elisha feeding the multitudes and end with John 9, Jesus feeding the multitudes. In between, Psalm 145 praises God for giving humans enough to eat, while Paul insists that everyone get along together in peace.

At 2 Kings 4:42-44, Elisha feeds a hundred people with “twenty barley loaves ... and fresh grain.” At John 6:9 Jesus has “five barley loaves and two fish.” At John 6:13 barley is mentioned again. Can one make the unleavened bread of the Eucharistic supper out of barley, rather than wheat? I think so. If barley, then, is acceptable matter for the Eucharist, can wheat be mandatory, especially for people allergic to wheat? Because of these verses, 2 Kings 4:42 and John 6:9, 13, I was surprised when the Holy See mandated that wheat is the only valid matter for the Eucharist.

Peace is a political act, which is sound if grounded in truth, but which is not sound if grounded in power alone. Surprisingly, the reading from Kings is about the Magisterium. John R. Levison demonstrates there are two types of inspiration, the type present in Kings and John that is confirmed by the people and is all-transforming and the other type, which supports the status quo from the center of religious organization. The inspiration of the elders following Moses is of this latter type,¹ as is the Magisterium.

While Elijah and Elisha produce food in seemingly endless abundance at no personal cost, Jeremiah only preaches the word at personal cost. The burning bush with endless fuel of Exodus 3:2 represented Jeremiah, consuming him.² The Faithful preach the Word from the Magisterial center and the prophetic periphery, sometimes consuming and sometimes consumed by the power of that Word.

Ephesians is about Eucharistic vocation to preaching the Word, a vocation that empowers people to live in the manner of their calling to the Gospel. The Greek I examined is that for humility (Ephesians 4:2). The Greek means lowliness, not puffed up. When the Faithful take unassuming attitudes towards one another, peace abounds, because of lack of tension.

¹ John R. Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 510-513, 521.

² Jon D. Levenson, “Some Unnoticed Connotations in Jeremiah 20:9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 2 (April 1984) 225.

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Psalm 145:18, “The LORD is near ... to all who call upon him in truth,” is dear to this retired professor, trying to elevate the truth in the swirl of political reality. By placing truth first, food for the mind becomes more important than food for the body. The Holy Eucharist is food for both body and soul, as Ephesians 4:4 words it, “one body and one Spirit.” I have never heard anyone preach about Eucharistic devotion as a means for fasting and, thereby, losing weight. Difficult truths, especially when denied by avoidance, can destroy humans and humanity.

For the Faithful, peace and lack of tension comes from Faith, Hope, and Charity, in being able to counteract difficult truths, something dear to Paul. Paul addresses the threefold virtue from the beginning, about 60 A.D., in his earliest epistles to the Thessalonians. Faith, Hope, and Charity also meant a lot to the first Christians, as their writing attests.³ Ephesians 4:2-5 brings Faith, Hope, and Charity into the picture for this Sunday.

Ephesians 4:5-6 in the Greek is in poetic form, meaning that it was probably a hymn of the early Church. The emphasis is on *one* with four of the seven *ones* in these two verses. By committing the message to song in passing along the message of Paul, the first Christians emphasized the relationship between their unity among one another and their unity with God.

I have as friend, Philip, who reads these Notes regularly. I identify my friend and myself with Philip in John 6:5-7. Philip sees problems that break up unity without corresponding answers. I mean my friend and brother, Phil, has left the institutional One, Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. A consideration of a well-known intractable problem helps understand the readings.

Andrew, probably about as smart as Peter (which is not very smart), his brother, mentions the barley loaves, admittedly as no solution. That is probably why Philip, the Apostle, just kept his mouth shut. There really was a problem that it took a miracle to solve, a miracle about which the Faithful are still talking, two thousand years later. I wonder whether solutions to the problems my friend Philip and I see will be marveled at two thousand years hence. That would not surprise either him or me.

These readings are about the power and peace that generates from food for both body and soul. Elijah (fl. 875 BC)⁴ and Elisha focus on the body, where Jeremiah, three hundred years later, focused on the soul. Psalm 145, written after Jeremiah,

³ Jeremy Corley, “The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 271.

⁴ <http://www.answers.com/Elijah> 060624.

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expresses gratitude for food. Ephesians only implicitly mentions Eucharistic food based on Faith, Hope, and Charity. John, about feeding the five thousand, is Eucharistic, putting meaning into both the First and New Testaments.

For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes