

Personal Notes
050731 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 112A
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What will separate us from the love of God? (Rom 8:35) My concern is with what stress can do to the heart, mind, and soul. To begin, Isaiah and his followers demonstrated how to deal with stress.

Isaiah 55:1-3 begins with a happy note, proclaiming that things will get better. Through trials and tribulations, Isaiah sees the love of God coming through. The ultimate vision for Isaiah is Mount Zion,¹ understood in the New Testament as the individual souls of the Faithful joined even in Eucharistic union with the Triune God.

Isaiah 55:3, *I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David, you* is plural, not singular. This *you* is a sign of democratization of royal witnessing.² The Lectionary, however, is not pandering the public. Psalm 145 is very intellectual in content.

Psalm 145 is alphabetical acrostic,³ in other words based on thought, rather than feeling. Pastoral Care of the Sick uses Psalm 145.⁴ Psalm 145:17 is especially dear to those in the intellectual apostolate. *The LORD is near ... to all who call upon him in truth*. In the Latin, Saint Jerome begins Chapter 55 with what sounds like *hey you!* namely, *Heu!* The point is to pay attention to the love of God, even in hard times. For emphasis, the Latin repeats the Lectionary *heed me* at Isaiah 55:2. *Heu!* Is the Latin for *heed me*.

Romans 8:35, 37-39, delivers the highly rhetorical⁵ message of union with the love of God. This is some of the most upbeat writing in Paul.⁶ When Paul writes that he

¹ 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) 5.

² 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) 15 .

³ Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, "Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 444.

⁴ 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) 328.

⁵ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 258.

is *convinced* of this union (Rom 8:38), in the original Greek,⁷ *convinced* is in the passive voice. In other words, something happened to Paul to make him convinced. Paul is not the actor of convincing. When Paul writes of the trials and tribulations that will not separate him from the love of God, he does write in the future tense.

Romans 8:37-39 is fundamental to Pauline theology. In this instance, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit,⁸ as distinct from the law.⁹ The lists that Paul mentions make sense as things that have happened to him. Paul realizes that if these things will not shake him, nothing ever will. When Romans 8:35 mentions the sword, the reference may be to the sword of the executioner.¹⁰

Matthew 14:13-21, about the loaves and fish, is a Messianic,¹¹ Eucharistic, public ministry¹² sign of love. The Liturgical message is how much God loves the Faithful, through all the stresses of life. Saint Bede (672-735) estimated that a year passed between the beheading of John the Baptist and the crucifixion of Jesus.¹³ Jesus

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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) 365.

⁸ 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, 566.

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.

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) 478.

¹¹ W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 583.

¹² Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 565.

¹³ Bede, *in Mark 5*, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 103.

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himself must have suffered the stress that Romans exposes. St. Leo the Great (+641), Pope and Doctor, writing about trials and tribulations, observes, *There hate rages against us; here the false friend cheats us; so that it is easier to avoid discord, than to shun deceit.* I take that to mean the stress associated with speaking out against outrages against human rights.

In the United States, the Black experience is especially full of stress arising out of the conflict between hierarchy and democracy. Matthew 14:21, *not counting women and children* gives evidence of the hierarchy and lack of democracy at the time of Jesus. Childhood is part of human rights. When was the age of majority? Twenty, according to both Origen¹⁴ (185-253) of Egypt in Africa and Theophylactus¹⁵ (765-840), Patriarch of Bulgaria. Both Origen and Theophylactus cite the Book of Numbers 1:3.

At the time of his public ministry, Jesus was well into his majority. Where Matthew 14:13 writes that upon learning of the murder of John the Baptist, Jesus *withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself*, Mark Allan Powell observes that Herod the Tetrarch was perceived as a threat to Jesus as well.¹⁶ Majority brings responsibility and risk.

Marxist scholars look at class conflict. Class conflict is real, though not necessarily all embracing. Non-Marxist scholars are able to present the Land of the Free still conflicted with the residuals of slavery. Such conflict causes stress, stress that the God soothes with his love. Along these lines, Saint Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo in Africa, writes that "the government of the world is a greater miracle than feeding five thousand men from five loaves; yet at the former no one wonders, the latter astonishes all men...the Lord is ...not now...lightly to be passed over."¹⁷ The stress of governance is greater than the stress of providing bread to eat.

¹⁴ I. Origen, Priest and Confessor, "A Mystical Exposition of the Gospel," PG 13, 902, in Matt. xiv. ¹⁵ "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 111-112, 128.

¹⁵ Theophylactus, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 105-6.

¹⁶ Mark Allan Powell, "The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 469.

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The Gospel parallel to Matthew 14:13-21 is in John 6:1-15 that points out that the loaves were made of barley. I wonder about the relationship between this barley and the wheat required for licit Eucharistic bread. The Fathers of the Church find various symbolisms in the barley. Saint Bede observes that barley “is the nourishment of beasts of burden, and the food of slaves; and the Old Law was given to slaves and to beasts of burden”¹⁸

The Fathers of the Church do enjoy playing with numbers. According to Augustine, the five barley loaves represent the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.¹⁹ According to Chrysostom²⁰ (354-407), Confessor and Archbishop of Constantinople, the twelve baskets represents the number of the Apostles. The stress is joining the First with the New Testaments.

These readings are about keeping the Faith during times of stress, the stress of exile from places the Faithful love as expressed in Isaiah 55:1-3; the stress associated with finding the truth required to call upon God in Psalm 145:17; the whole litany of stresses found in Romans 8:35, 38-39; and the stress associated when authorities execute one’s cousin (John the Baptizer) for doing the same thing you (Jesus) are doing.

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

¹⁷ Augustine, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 107.

¹⁸ Bede, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 108.

¹⁹ IV. St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor, “Exposition of the Gospel,” PL 35, Tr. 24, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 123, 128.

²⁰ Chrysostom, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Two: From the First Sunday in Lent to the Sunday after the Ascension, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 106.