

Personal Notes
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The sin priests hear most in the confessional is anger. Dealing with anger, therefore, is an important aspect of Christian life. These readings are about dealing with anger. Ephesians deals with anger at the unconscious level.

Ephesians 4:31 uses the passive voice, meaning that one does not actively rid oneself of anger, but that someone else must do it. The task is beyond human ability alone. At a level of mental illness, a therapist relieves hidden anger by exposing defense mechanisms hiding unconscious drives. Sometimes a therapist can act as a messenger from God.

As for the rest of the readings, 1 Kings is about the angel telling Elijah not to sleep without eating. Psalm 34 is one of the outstanding Wisdom psalms. The Gospel of John is about hidden signs that need explanation in order to understand Jesus and the Christian life. Pastoral Care of the Sick uses all of the readings in this paragraph in eight different places.¹

1 Kings 19:4 reveals the anger of Elijah, when he says, "This is enough, O LORD!" and prayed for death. By offering him wisdom, the angel helped Elijah get over his anger. As a consolation, the broom tree under which Elijah sat in 1 Kings 19:4 may allude to the burning bush of Moses.² Mount Horeb in 1 Kings 19:8 is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. A Eucharistic metaphor relates to manna in the desert of Moses and the hearth cake Elijah ate.

The books of Kings are about organizing history. 1 Kings 19 divides into about five groupings, of which 1 Kings 19:4-8 is one. In other words, this episode of Elijah getting angry with God is a highlight and turning point of the relationship between God and the Faithful. The Church makes the efforts to bring all things together. At its best, Catholic Faith brings all of Sacred Scripture together in one understandable consoling whole.

Pope John Paul II concluded his encyclical on the Eucharist using 1 Kings 19:7.

¹ 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) 1 Kings, 252, 319; Psalm 24, 286, 324; John, 66, 239, 330.

² Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scent," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 55.

Food For the Ecumenical Journey

In recent years, the Church has chosen a path of renewed ecumenical commitment. The obstacles to this path cannot be overcome by human powers. However, in the Eucharist we hear the words addressed to Elijah, "Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you" (1 Kg. 19:17). The Eucharistic treasures impel us to seek a full sharing with all who are baptized. By respecting the demands that come from the Eucharist as the sacrament of communion in faith and apostolic succession we will not squander this treasure.

Mary

62. The saints are the interpreters of Eucharistic piety, and their theology of the Eucharist "warms our hearts." Mary teaches that the Eucharist is a mystery with transforming power. Contemplating her in her Assumption, we see "new heavens and a new earth," and we cry out to Her son, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

St. Thomas Aquinas

Let me end with the words of St. Thomas Aquinas:

"Come then, good Shepherd bread divine
Still show to us thy mercy sign;
Oh, feed us, still keep us thine;
So we may see thy glories shine
In fields of immortality.
O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best
Our present food, our future rest
Come, make us each thy chosen guest
Co-heirs of thine, and comrades blest."

Psalm 34: 2, "I will bless the LORD at all times," includes the times when one feels anger. Anger, in the sense of a temper tantrum, causes chaos. The 34th Psalm is concerned about bringing order out of chaos. Bringing order out of chaos, Psalm 34, uses an explicit alphabetic pattern,³ in the form of an amazing acrostic poem.

The three Hebrew letters for *wisdom* adorn the first, middle, and last lines of the poem. Further study finds these three letters in other places, to encase the whole

³ 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) 537.

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poem.⁴ The context for the ancient Jews is Greek secular wisdom as a rival for religious secular wisdom. Greek wisdom controls anger in order to be rational. Religious wisdom controls anger in order to love God. For whatever reason one controls anger, the result is beneficial.

The context for the Faithful today is the Enlightenment, which is a type of Greek secular wisdom. Psalm 34 means that the wisdom of God is holier and more profound than strictly human wisdom. Psalm 34:8, "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them," means deliverance from unwanted, angry, unconscious drives.

Margaret Barker thinks that the angel priests were the ones invited to "taste and see how good the LORD is" (Psalm 34:9).⁵ Psalm 34, then, raises the dignity of humans to that of angels. With such dignity in the created order of things, there is no good reason to be angry.

I looked at the Greek at 4:30, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." I wondered whether the Greek implies making God cry. It does not. The meaning is more in the sense of those who love one another being able to both cheer up and upset one another. The sense of *grieve* is to upset the Spirit "with which you were sealed for the day of redemption." Paul is calling for the Faithful to work out whatever may be making them angry, so that they do not upset God.

Ephesians 4:31 is specific, "All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice." Before Ephesians reaches malice, which must be conscious at some level, Ephesians is dealing with behavior that may arise from the unconscious, entirely hidden. I am not saying that malice cannot be driven into the unconscious; only that consciousness at some point is required for anger to be malicious.

Ephesians 5:2, "a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma," may mean that the unconscious anger stinks until exposed into a pleasant aroma. My understanding is that skunk oil is adjusted to make perfume. Getting at anger to be rid of it is what these readings concern. The methodology is Eucharistic.

⁴ Anthony R. Ceresko, O.S.F.S., "Endings and Beginnings: Alphabetic Thinking and the Shaping of Psalms 106 and 150," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 33-36.

⁵ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: A Continuum imprint, 2003) 134-135.

Jesus had reason to be angry when his disciples would not accept the fact that he is the bread of life. Jesus is offering life to his disciples and not everyone is accepting.⁶ The central claim of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is the incarnate Word, able to offer himself as the bread of life.⁷ In John 6:44, it seems that not everyone whom Jesus wanted was sent from the Father, so did not become a disciple. In John 6:51, Jesus is looking for disciples. His passion, death, and resurrection purge Jesus of whatever anger he may have had at not being more successful. The Faithful can expect a similar way of life.

Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller point out:⁸

To account for the presence of unbelief, the gospel [of John] never appeals to the inadequacy of the signs or of any other witness. Instead, it offers a variety of explanations, such as the unwillingness of some to do God's will (7:17). The narrator claims in 12:37-43 that those who failed to believe in Jesus in spite of the signs were hard of heart (thus, signs were ineffective for them). Jesus faults his opponents in 5:44 for preferring human honor over God's honor. Finally, some were simply not among those given to Jesus by the Father (see 6:44, 65; 10:25-30).

At work throughout the Fourth Gospel is a complex understanding of the legitimate and necessary, yet limited, role of signs and other evidence in the process of coming to believe.

In John 6:42, the Jews disparage Jesus because he is the son of Joseph. John 6:42 is one of three verses in John that mention the mother of Jesus. As an interesting aside, none of the known variants of this verse in the surviving original Greek documents affects the doctrine of the virgin birth.⁹ The other references to the

⁶ Richard Clifford, S.J., and Khaled Anatolios, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 762.

⁷ Frank J. Matera, "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John; A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology," Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June 2006) 249.

⁸ Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, "The Signs as Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel: Reexamining the Evidence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 1994) 534-535.

⁹ Alexander Globe, "Some Doctrinal Variants in Matthew 1 and Luke 2, and the Authority of the Neutral Text," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980), 67.

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mother of Jesus are John 2:1-6 and John 19:25-27.¹⁰ How angry that must have made Jesus to have his parents reviled so. John invites his readers to participate in getting to know God through Jesus. When John 6:45 writes, "it is written in the prophets," John is including his own writing. John regards his Gospel as Sacred Scripture.¹¹

Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B. offers some words of wisdom on reading Sacred Scripture.¹²

This approach raises the question of what the text reveals of the world that generated the text, the world of the narrative itself, and, finally, the text's rhetorical persuasion aimed at readers and listeners. The Gospel of John was written to persuade its hearers and readers. ... As always, it is the interplay between the sacred text and myself as its reader, enriched by a serious sharing with other readers who regard the same text as Scripture, that has led me to this surprising conclusion [part of the rhetoric of the Fourth Gospel is a desire to convince readers that the biblical narrative reached its perfection in the Johannine story of Jesus].

Jesus is not backing away from his Eucharistic gift. Jesus goes so far as to say, "Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died" (John 6:49). Jesus then proclaims that those eating his bread will live forever. What a concept. Considering that astronomers estimate the universe at 16 billion years old, eternal life is humanly incomprehensible. Eucharistic prayer, within a context of 16 billion years and waiting, is the ordinary way anger is removed from Catholics, whether at the conscious or unconscious level.

Douglas K. Clark identifies parallel signs of wisdom in the Book of Wisdom and John. In the Book of Wisdom, hail destroys the food of the Egyptians. Manna, then,

¹⁰ Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology." Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 534, 564.

¹¹ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 457.

¹² Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 468.

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takes the place of the Egyptian food. John shows that Jesus is the true manna,¹³ the ultimate resolution of anger.

These readings are about letting anger be removed from behavior. This requires openness to an angel, as exemplified by Elijah and the Psalm. Ephesians is explicit about having anger removed. John exemplifies how Jesus dealt with what made him angry, ultimately by accepting his cross and resurrection.

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

¹³ Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205, 207.