

Personal Notes  
050814 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time 118A  
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In only one place in all of Sacred Scripture does anyone get the better of a discussion with Jesus.<sup>1</sup> That place is in the Lectionary readings for today, with the Samaritan woman, the Canaanite in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21-22). The Canaanite uses reason in support of her Faith. The point seems easy, namely to use the mind to think and reason. The question is how do Faith and reason affect one another?

An immediate problem is that for the past twenty-five years the papacy of John Paul II has discounted the use of reason in favor of Faith, especially Faith in the teaching Magisterium of the Church. As Father Charles E. Curran puts it, Pope John Paul II, "is also very negative about...the use of human reason" in his major encyclicals.<sup>2</sup> Again, for Pope John Paul II, "reason is always informed by faith, but reason can be a source of truth for those who do not have Catholic faith."<sup>3</sup> This teaching of Pope John Paul II can be misunderstood; from believe first, think second to only believe, never think. The Lectionary readings for today serve as a corrective to such misunderstanding.

The readings begin with Isaiah 56:1, *observe what is right, do what is just*. This exhortation implies what is required to enter Mount Zion or Mount Saint Francis or the inner sanctuary of the souls of the Faithful. Why bring in Saint Francis? Because, as Jotham Parsons of Duquesne University puts it, "what was unique to the Franciscans, though, was the vision they inherited from St. Francis, which included a highly sensual spirituality, a suspicion of hierarchy, and a messianic commitment to the perfection of Christian life."<sup>4</sup>

To enter one's own soul in the presence of God, one must be observing what is right and doing what is just. One must use one's reason in support of one's Faith. The Canaanite woman observes what is right, tells Jesus, and urges Jesus to do what is just. Isaiah 56:7, referring to observant foreigners, continues, "*them I will bring to my holy mountain*."

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 41-46.

<sup>2</sup> Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005) 15.

<sup>3</sup> Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005) 18.

<sup>4</sup> Jotham Parsons, review of Megan C. Armstrong, *The Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 3 (June 2005) 879.

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In the Lectionary the Canaanite woman prays, “*have pity on me*” (Matthew 15:22). Her argument has special significance in Matthew, because for Matthew, mercy is one of the weightier matters of the Law.<sup>5</sup> One aspect of mercy is standing up for what is right in difficult circumstances.

The Canaanite woman is not putting Jesus in a depressing position where he must turn his back on his own commitment to Juda over the Samaria. For Faithful Gentiles, her argument is that there is room enough for non-Jews even under the covering of the table of God’s salvation. The readings from Isaiah go on to consider *the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord* (Isaiah 56:6).

Matthew, by including Ruth, a Moabite, Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and two Canaanites: Tamar and Rahab, in the genealogy of Jesus is open to including Gentiles in the religion of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Matthew was probably written from a Greek-Gentile and Greek-Jewish, rather than an Aramaic-Jewish perspective alone. These Lectionary readings can be used to combat prejudices against the marginalized and unrepresented peoples of the world.

When the Canaanite woman calls Jesus, *Son of David!* (Matt. 15:22) she is paying the Jew a high compliment. Jesus ignored her, not wanting to be suckered in, until the disciples asked Jesus to speak with her, if only to tell her to go away. This is similar to what Pope John Paul II did with regard to Bernard Cardinal Law (1931-). The Pope ignored the laity, until the clergy asked for intervention.<sup>7</sup> This makes it a special obligation for the clergy to use reason in support of their Faith.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), the great German Protestant clergyman-theologian, argued in 1934 for the freedom of the church to stand by all victims. In the early 1930s, the gospel worship services of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York City had influenced Bonhoeffer. Abyssinian was the first time Bonhoeffer experienced the political and social engagement of a church. Bonhoeffer paralleled his Black Baptist Abyssinian experience with his German anti-Semitic experience. Bonhoeffer stood with the Jews in Hitler’s Germany as he had earlier stood with Blacks in the United States. His stand cost him his life. Bonhoeffer followed the

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 470.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 41-43.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.answers.com/”Cardinal%20Law”> July 24, 2005.

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command of Isaiah who states, “he who believes does not flee.” Bonhoeffer used his reason in support of his Faith.<sup>8</sup>

Isaiah 56:7 implies the courage to stand up for the Gentiles. “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” Mark tells the Faithful that when Jesus objected to what was happening in the Temple, with, “my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves,” he signed his own death warrant, because at that point the religious hierarchy sought to kill him. Jesus was not threatening to replace the Temple that he recognized as a valid, proper place of prayer.<sup>9</sup> Jesus was doing nothing wrong. As time went on, those who stood up for Jesus were themselves martyred, as are the Faithful today as they stand up for one another.

The Second Temple, where Jesus expressed his anger, had only been completed forty-five years earlier under Herod the Great who died in 4 B.C.<sup>10</sup> The massive rebuilding project included the royal portico, a covered place, where trading would have been taking place. The Faithful had to exchange money for payment of the temple tax, the purchase of sacrifices, and, perhaps, other things as well. Jesus was adamant. God lived in the Temple. The Temple was a house of prayer even for Gentiles, where business transactions had no place.<sup>11</sup>

Psalm 67 in the Lectionary is another example of sloppy scholarship there. The following chart shows how the Lectionary uses and documents Psalm 67.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	<u>Antiphon</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
18A	108	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	(2a)	Solemnity of Mary
57C	428	2-3 5, 6, 8	(2a)	6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter
118A	772	2-3 5, 6, 8	(2a)	20 <sup>th</sup> Ordinary Time

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<sup>8</sup> Kevin P. Spicer, C.S.C., review of the ninety minute documentary written by Martin Doblmeier, BONHOEFFER in The American Historical Review, Vol. 110, No. 3 (June 2005) 889-890.

<sup>9</sup> Francis D. Weinert, “Luke, the Temple and Jesus’ Saying about Jerusalem’s Abandoned House (Luke 13:34-35),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January 1982) 71.

<sup>10</sup> The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, sold and distributed by Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983, 1989, 1994) 388.

<sup>11</sup> P. M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997) 309.

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The chart shows that Reading 18A identifies verses 2,3, with the comma, whereas Readings 57C and 118A identify verses 2-3, with a dash. The difference is a sign of sloppy inconsistent scholarship, because the verses are the same in all three places. Sloppy scholarship is one sign of having discounted the use of reason.

Insofar as the use of reason is concerned, Saint Jerome translates the Lectionary nations with *populi* in the Responsorial Antiphon, *let all the nations praise you*. *Populi* carries a less political determination of truth than does *nations*. Politics and truth are in a type of death struggle between them, reflected in the faces of people devoted to studying truth and politics.

I think I see a difference in faces between religious scholars from the Judeo-Christian traditions and other scholars. Judeo-Christian scholars reflect the shining light of Psalm 67:2, *let his face shine upon us*.<sup>12</sup> Non-religious scholars, seeing how politics tortures the truth, tend to become depressed; whereas religious scholars have a knack of joy, sunshine and Faith that God almighty is in charge, after all. One of my personal goals from this Psalm is to try smiling more, something I do tend to learn from non-scholars. Isaiah 56:7 observes that joy is part of acceptable offerings to God.<sup>13</sup>

Romans is trying to use reason in support of Faith by figuring out the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles,<sup>14</sup> stressing divine rather than human initiative.<sup>15</sup> That notwithstanding, Paul recognizes in Romans the value of human agency. Paul is using his ministry of proclamation<sup>16</sup> to play upon the emotions of his fellow Israelites, *to make my race jealous and thus save some of them*.

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<sup>12</sup> Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scent," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 50.

<sup>13</sup> J. Ross Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1999) 260.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 412.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent M. Smiles, "The Concept of "Zeal" in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul's Critique of It in Romans 10:2," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 294, 312-313.

<sup>16</sup> Hendrikus Boers, "2 Corinthians 5:4—6:2: A Fragment of Pauline Christology," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 540.

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What Paul means by *race* is better described as *ethnic group*, especially for those involved with the Black Apostolate in the United States. Brad Ronnell Braxton, of Wake Forest University, believes “that Paul underestimated the role of ethnicity in configuring social existence.”<sup>17</sup> For those in the United States, racism is an element of spiritual life.

The dominant view is that “all Israel” does not separate the Christian blood relatives of Paul from the remaining non-Christian Jews. The following translation of Romans 11:13-14 expresses another consideration. “Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in the hope that I may provoke my flesh (kinsfolk) to jealousy and that I may save some from among them (my kinsfolk).”<sup>18</sup> Despite what Paul is doing, in the final analysis, priority belongs to the action of God, not human jealousy.

In Romans, Paul is telling the Gentiles to use reason to understand that their Faith in salvation does not exclude the unbelieving Jews. This passage is a strong antidote to other Biblical passages from which anti-Semitism is drained. In Romans 11:15 Paul explains, “If their (the Jews) rejection is the reconciliation of the world (the Gentiles), what will their (the Jews) acceptance be but life from the dead?”<sup>19</sup> The Jews remain the Chosen People of God.

Romans 11:29 reveals difficulties translating the Greek.

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	sine paenitentia enim sunt dona et vocatio Dei!
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.
<u>King James</u> (1611):	For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice.
<u>New American</u> (1970):	For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.

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<sup>17</sup> Brad Ronnell Braxton, “The Role of Ethnicity in the Social Location of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24,” in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 29.

<sup>18</sup> Murray Baker, “Paul and the Salvation of Israel: Paul’s Ministry, the Motif of Jealousy, and Israel’s Yes,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 472.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley B. Marrow, “*Κοσμος* in John,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 95.

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New Jerusalem (1985): There is no change of mind on God's part about the gifts he had made or of his choice.

The *call of God* means *vocation*. For in the NAB is different from the Lectionary because of the omitted verses just before verse 29. I like the KJV.

Verse 30 presents more difficulties:

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	you once disobeyed God
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	vos non credidistis Deo
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	you also in times past did not believe God
<u>King James</u> (1611):	Ye in times past have not believed God
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	You changed from being disobedient to God
<u>New American</u> (1970):	you once disobeyed God
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	you were in the past disobedient to God

For *disobeyed*, the Greek has *disbelieved* throughout verses 30-32. *Obey* and *believe* relate differently to the teaching Magisterium of the Church. Implications of the distinction are beyond my scope. The Lectionary is reflecting on the Canaanite woman that she not only believed, but she also used her reason in support of her belief.

Since Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P. writes that "Rom 11:31 can only be translated 'with mercy towards you'"<sup>20</sup> a look at how the various translations do it is in order.

Verse 30

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	of the mercy shown to you.
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	nunc autem misericordiam consecuti estis
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	now have obtained mercy
<u>King James</u> (1611):	have now obtained mercy
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	now enjoy mercy
<u>New American</u> (1970):	have now received mercy
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	now you have been shown mercy

Since none of the above translations used exactly what Murphy-O'Connor claimed, Murphy-O'Connor overstated his case. There are other legitimate ways to translate verse 30.

Of course, humans make mistakes when using reason; they also make mistakes when using Faith, as the case of Galileo demonstrates. In Matthew 15:24, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Jesus takes his place with sinners,

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<sup>20</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986) 94.

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*lost sheep*.<sup>21</sup> When Faith absolutely supplants reason, the resulting Faith becomes irrational.

The question is how do Faith and reason affect one another? These readings are about the use of reason in support of Faith, something different from Faith supplanting reason. Isaiah 56:1 begins by apparently setting out *observation* as a requirement for entering the holy mountain.<sup>22</sup> Psalm 67 continues asking God to let those who must begin with reason, namely *all the nations*, see the light and praise God.

Paul continues in the same vein, telling the Gentiles to use reason to understand that their inclusion in salvation does not exclude the unbelieving Jews. Finally, the Gospel is about the thinking woman, who engages Jesus in conversation to argue with him about why he should heal her daughter. Incredibly, she wins the argument and Jesus does heal her daughter. This means that reason and argument are legitimate means for reaching Divine ends.

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

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<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 521.

<sup>22</sup> 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 ) 16.