

Personal Notes
040905 Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time 129C
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To be a disciple of Jesus demands Faith to leave everything of this world below for the sake of heavenly things, above. The Faithful can do this as they fall asleep each night, entering a sort of Exodus, from which they may never arise in this life. Falling asleep is a type of death, a type of departure from earthly things. In falling asleep, the nightmares of both the conscious and unconscious mind, somewhat like the nightmares of the near-eastern storm clouds of the Promised Land, become a means to enter into glory with the Father.

The readings from the Book of Wisdom connect the worldly with the otherworldly. Wisdom values rhetoric, that is, a well-turned phrase. Wisdom regards such ability to communicate with other humans as an aspect of a sacred ability to communicate with the Almighty.¹ Communicating with God, as in the child's prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep, and pray the Lord my soul to keep ...," is a suitable endeavor into old age.

Psalm 90 is disappointing in that the Lectionary references are inaccurate, misidentifying verses 14, 17 as 14-17. Readings 143B do include verses 14 and 15, in Psalm 90, as documented. Pope Saint Gregory the Great, one of the Western Fathers of the Church (540-604) writes that if the Faithful cannot stomach the messenger delivering the invitation to the great supper, the Faithful should, nonetheless, accept the invitation. The invitation presented by the Lectionary in Psalm 90 is to worship the mighty storm God of Israel, the God quite capable of inciting nightmares in all who behold his glory.

Philemon leaves out verse 11 identifying Onesimus as a runaway, fugitive slave. The nightmare is of Paul directing Onesimus back to his former master, with only a human hope of freedom. The deeper freedom rests in the daily Exodus from the nightmares of this life through Faith into the eternal joys of union with the Father.

Luke again is about the need to ask some questions as Jesus turns toward the crowds following him to explain what discipleship means. The Greek, *hate* is a difficult translation of the Hebrew simply meaning priority of love.² The meaning is to love God more than the things of this world. In a parallel passage, Matthew 10:37 words it differently, "No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers son or daughter to me is worthy of me."

¹ Richard A. Horsley, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 2 (April 1977) 225, 236, 239

² Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 150.

Love, as expressed in these readings by Luke, is calculating. When Luke has the king calculating his chances for success against the other king, the Greek derivation contains the sense of moving pebbles around. Jesus is admonishing the Faithful to weigh the temporal advantages of this life with the advantages of Faith in eternal life, then to make a very rational, prudential choice. Humans have reason to subject the nightmares of this life to the light of Faith for the next life.

Just as with death, so sleep places the temporal things of this world in abeyance. Falling asleep on a daily basis is a type of the final falling asleep for eternity, a sort of Exodus from this life into the next. That is what Jesus means when he admonishes the Faithful to give up family, friends, and possessions to follow him for all eternity.

Wisdom 9:13-18a

The Lectionary shows 18b, but uses 18a.

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

The Lectionary uses this Psalm at three Sunday liturgies. This treatment concludes the trio.

Readings	Page in <u>Lectionary</u>	Verses used	
114C	893	3-4, 5-6, 12-13	(95:8) Ordinary 18 Bible Study040801_Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time_114C.doc
129C	820	3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17	(1) Today
143B	893-894	12-13, 14-15, 16-17	(14) Ordinary 28 Bible Study031012_Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.doc

Verse 4 that *a thousand years ... are as yesterday* takes on increasing meaning as archaeologists and astronomers continue to estimate the age of the earth in the area of four billion years and the age of the universe in the area of 16 billion years. This verse is an apocalyptic interpretation of creation as found in Genesis I.³

Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Apparently, the Lectionary leaves out verse a. That is not as disconcerting as the Biblical Quarterly article, "Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees,"

³ Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., "The Least in the Kingdom: Matthew 11:11, Its Parallel in Luke 7:28 (Q), and Daniel 4:14," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 42.

omitting any direct reference to the verses the Lectionary does use.⁴ Among all the Sunday readings, the Lectionary only uses Philemon here. For the weekday readings, the Lectionary also uses Philemon once, at 494 WII.

The 1985 Quarterly article concludes, "The epistolary expression of confidence is best interpreted as a persuasive technique rather than as a sincere reflection of the way the writer thinks the addressees will respond to his proposals or to himself."⁵ As persuasive technique, the admonition is even stronger than as a personal appeal. Combined, the readings from Wisdom and Philemon encourage the Faithful to bring their reason to bear on the anomalies of life.

Psalm 119:135

Psalm 119 is available for Funeral Rites, Part III: Texts of Sacred Scripture, 16 Antiphons and Psalms at Ant. 17, with a slightly different translation: *countenance* for *face* and *statutes* for *laws*.⁶ Pushing on to verses 38-39 and 77-89, the people felt the LORD responsible for protecting the pious from undeserved shame.⁷ I feel particularly shameful when I realize I have misused my reason to misinterpret what is happening around me. Faith in the Almighty can rescue such shame.

Luke 14:25-33

According to a television announcer at the North Carolina Panthers-Washington Redskins pre-season exhibition game, Saturday, August 14, 2004, in his two seasons as head coach, Steve Spurrier, the former Washington Redskins football

⁴ Stanley N. Olson, *Pauline Expressions of confidence in His Addresses, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 1985) 282-295. Olson does cite Phlm 21 on page 283, 287, and 288.

⁵ Stanley N. Olson, *Pauline Expressions of confidence in His Addresses, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 1985) 295.

⁶ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: 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 (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 286.

⁷ 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.

coach, never had a game plan. That helps to account for why Spurrier resigned before his three-year contract was up. The announcers were shocked at the revelation from a player. The point of Luke is that life itself, though not a game, deserves a game plan, a strategy for seeking holiness. The point for Luke is that everything is on the line, for all eternity.

Making less of material things than Mark, Luke ties the matter more closely to human love. Mark 10:29 prioritizes possessions to include farms, fields, and houses.⁸ Luke is less expressive about the material things.

Saint Paul and Saint Matthew are also involved. 1 Corinthians 13:3, "and if I dole out all my possessions," may reflect Luke 14:33, giving up everything, as part of the traditional teaching of Jesus. Matthew 19:21 with the rich young ruler has a similar bent.⁹ The vow of poverty in many religious orders finds a home in this section of Luke.

Total abnegation, total surrender to the Father, full acceptance of the plan of God can happen daily as one falls asleep. Sleeping is a type of death. Like death, sleep requires a letting go of earthly possessions, a type of Exodus from being tired at the end of a day into a new exuberance of morning life.

Wisdom demands such surrender; the psalms assure the Faithful of the holy, protective hand of God. Philemon reduces conforming to the will of God to the misappropriated efforts of humans to conform one human to another. Finally, Jesus, in Luke, requires the Faithful to give everything up in order to follow him. Such a requirement is a sort of falling asleep, putting trust completely in the Lord, even daily.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 468, 475.

⁹ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 265-266.