

Personal Notes  
050911 Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 130A  
© 2017  
Raymond J. Jirran

Anger trips up most of the Faithful. Anger is one form of dealing with frustration. Anger reveals itself in many ways. Anger is always wrong when it causes the Faithful to look away from God. God himself is a healing balm, the ultimate source of relief the focus of attention here. Saint Ephraim (+373), the Deacon, Confessor and Doctor warns, "Because of the things that distress thee thou hast abandoned prayer."<sup>1</sup> Because they abandon prayer, wrath, and anger are themselves hateful things.

Sirach 27:33 begins by observing, "wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight." Such hugging is a danger for these Personal Notes, engendered by disconcerting sloppy scholarship in the Lectionary. The Lectionary identifies the verse quoted above as 30, whereas the Nova Vulgata, promoted by the Vatican as the standard, identifies verse 30 as verse 33. These Personal Notes do go into detail about sloppy scholarship in the Lectionary. My prayer has to be in the context of Sirach 28:1, whereby the Lord will not remember my "sins in detail."

The knack must be in light of Sirach 28:3, not to "*nourish* anger against another." Sirach 28:9 (identified by sloppy scholarship in the Lectionary as 28:7) is specific, "remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults." When faults are painful, how does one deal with the pain? The covenant is the worthy anesthetic against pain.

Though Psalm 103 is used in the Lectionary, verse 13 is not. Psalm 103:18 is not used anywhere in the Lectionary, though it does identify the Covenant with the Law. The Law, then, helps deal with pain. Paul, however, neither compels nor despises obedience to the Law.<sup>2</sup> Psalm 103 carries great impact on the prayer life of the Church, dissuading the Faithful even from *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, and that is all, only an eye and only a tooth.

Psalm 103:8, the Responsorial antiphon, reminds the Faithful "the Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion." Though Psalm 103:18 is not used

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Ephraim, Deacon, Confessor and Doctor, *On Oppression and Calumny* in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 291, Lamy IV, 218. To comfort those who suffer oppression and calumny. Lamy abbreviates Sancti Ephraem Syri, Hymni et Sermones, Lamy. Malines 1882.

<sup>2</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) 291, 299.

anywhere, the Liturgical Cycles do use other parts of Psalm 103 six times, twice in each of the three Cycles, A, B, and C. The Faithful are now in Cycle A. The Order for Christian Funerals uses Psalm 103 in prayer twice.<sup>3</sup> Pastoral Care of the Sick uses Psalm 103 in prayer twice more.<sup>4</sup> Psalm 103:8-9 also influences the Prophet Micah 7:18.<sup>5</sup> Psalm 103:11 offers the Faithful hope. “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.”

Saint Paul helps the Faithful anesthetize their anger at Romans 14:8, “whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” The Lectionary translates Romans 14:9b

Romans 14:9b

Lectionary (1998):

that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The Vulgate (circa 410):

ut et mortuorum et vivorum dominetur.

Douay-Rheims (1582-1610)

that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

King James (1611):

that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Jerusalem (1966):

so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

New American (1970)

that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

New Jerusalem (1985):

so that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

---

<sup>3</sup> 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) 40, 226.

<sup>4</sup> 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) 60, 296.

<sup>5</sup> Sue Gillingham, “From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 471.

My difficulty with the translation arises from the lack of parallel grammatical construction between *dead* and *living*. The problem arises out of the Greek that uses the aorist tense that English does not have. The aorist expresses an action begun and finished in the past, but continuing into the present.

Saint Jerome uses nouns to express the Greek verbs, but nouns in parallel construction. The original Greek aorist verbs are in parallel construction, using the third person plural (they).

*Be Lord* is also a difficult translation from the Greek for *establish his lordship*<sup>6</sup> or *be master, rule*.<sup>7</sup> In the final analysis, there is no better translation of Romans 14:9b than the Lectionary. Even the Jerusalem Bible, after making a change, changed back to the King James Version and Douay-Rheims version. Such frustration does cause pain and anguish against the legitimate sophisticated standards of academic rigor.

Romans 14:7-9 is about the unsophisticated frustration and pain of physical death. Other references to the death of Jesus also are not parallel to this reference. In Romans 14:7-9, the reference is to physical death, not the last things. Nor does this reference tie in with other scriptural references.<sup>8</sup> Trying to fathom the depths of the richness of Divine love can be disconcerting.

The Lectionary juxtaposes Sirach 27:33, "wrath and anger are hateful things" with Matthew 18:34, "in anger his master handed him over." The difference is that Sirach is advice the elders give to their children. Sirach 27 is part of a forty-two and a half chapter synthesis of Jewish wisdom and piety.<sup>9</sup> That synthesis is not entirely

---

<sup>6</sup> 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) 491.

<sup>7</sup> Sakac Kubo, Zondervan Greek Reference Series: A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament: Andrews University Monographs: Volume IV (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530 USA: Zondervan™, 1975 ISBN: 0-310-26920-2) 145.

<sup>8</sup> John Kloppenborg, "An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula 1 Cor 15:3b-5 In Light of Some Recent Literature," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July 1978) 361.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., "The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke's Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 220.

consistent. Vengeance is the Lord's and the Lord's alone insofar as the Faithful are concerned. That notwithstanding, the Lectionary translation continues to give me problems at Matthew 18:24.

While the Lectionary translation of Matthew 18:24 is not what I am used to, neither is it sloppy scholarship. In the Nova Vulgata, Matthew 18:24 refers to *decem milia talenta* where the Lectionary uses *a huge amount*. Matthew 18:28 has *centum denarios* versus *a much smaller amount*. Ten thousand talents amounted to one hundred million denarii.<sup>10</sup> The Lectionary equivalence, rather than literal, translation makes the point of the parable that is gracious forgiveness of God.<sup>11</sup>

Applying the standards of academic rigor to Sacred Scripture can help understanding. Aesop's Fables and other fables are comparable with the parables of Jesus. In both, the main character comments on the action. The similarity provides the context in which Mary Ann Beavis quotes R. Funk to observe, "It is not impossible that Jesus spoke Greek as well as Aramaic, and that the foundational language of the Christian tradition received its decisive imprint in Greek." Beavis expects the Synoptic Gospel writers to have "further shaped the parables of Jesus into a well-known Greek popular literary class: the fable."<sup>12</sup> Placing the parables within a context of fables, helps understand the parables and mitigate the frustration of difficult translations.

Matthew 18:34, "in anger his master handed him over to the torturers," is contrary to Christian non-violence, a result of forgiveness aborted in the parable. The difference is that Christian non-violence pertains to the present, whereas the comment in Matthew 18:34 refers to a final judgment by God almighty.

Barbara E. Reid, O.P. goes on to explain that the parable "can be read as saying that it is not God who actively punishes with violence; rather, human beings who choose to fuel cycles of violence instead of imitating God's gratuitous love cause violence to rebound to themselves." The Dominican Sister goes on, "images of powerful males operating in imperialistic modes are more unlike than like Jesus'

---

<sup>10</sup> Martinus C. De Boer, "Ten Thousand Talents? Matthew's Interpretation and Redaction of the Parable of the unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23-35)." the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No 2 (April 1988) 214.

<sup>11</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 71.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Ann Beavis, "Parable and Fable," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No 3 (July 1990) 483, 494.

Personal Notes  
050911 Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 130A  
© 2017  
Raymond J. Jirran

manner of exercising power.”<sup>13</sup> Anything that causes the Faithful to look away from God is contrary to their best interests.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7), includes an economic dimension, the literal sense of the unforgiving servant. The economic dimension does not deny symbolizing forgiveness of sins. In the broader sense, the Faithful are not only to extend mercy to themselves, but also to outsiders. Mark Allan Powell explains, “Virtue lies rather in the commitment to God’s rule that causes one to renounce ambitions to be regarded as great in worldly terms and to pursue a course that may cause one to be numbered instead among the weak and vulnerable people of the world (cp. [compare] Matt 18:25-28).”<sup>14</sup> In religious terms, if one finds oneself presumed between a Monsignor or a Vicar of the Clergy and their ecclesiastical ambition to be bishop; or between a bishop and his ambition to be an archbishop, the situation is not pleasant.

Anything that causes the Faithful to look away from God as the ultimate source of pain is a false anesthetic, the focus of attention here. Pain permitted by God works toward the good of the Faithful. The Faithful imposing pain either on one another or on outsiders takes away something that belongs only to God. Remembering the antiphon, *The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion* (Psalm 103:8) is the balm to use when tempted to anger and hatred.

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).

---

<sup>13</sup> Barbara E. Reid, O.P., “Violent Endings in Matthew’s Parables and Christian Nonviolence,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 253-254.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No 3 (July 1996) 471-473, 476.