

Personal Notes
040912 Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 132C
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While there is a lot of good to do, the Faithful are not obliged to do all of it. Just the same, one regrets one can only do so much. This sense of regret carries through the readings for today. The appropriate response to the regrets of life rests in God the Father receiving back his Prodigal Son, the Good Shepherd finding his lost sheep, and the good woman finding her lost coin. Repentance for missed opportunities to do good, becomes an act of gratitude for forgiveness in accord with human nature, rather than an act of submission contrary to human nature.

The readings begin with Exodus and the Jews worshiping the golden calf. Moses successfully intercedes for the People of God, who are not faithful. The basis of his intercession is the Akedah, as the sacrifice or "Binding of Isaac" (Gen 22:9) according to the Jewish tradition.¹ God the Father, then receives his people back into his embrace. Isaac prefigures Jesus, the Christ, in his relationship with God the Father.

Psalm 51, which the liturgy also uses in the Funeral Rites,² is a song of the sinful David, rejoicing at finding himself once again in the good graces of God the Father. David repents, and turns again to his God, the lodestar of life. David is his own intercessor, but Jesus, his son, intercedes for all.

Saint Gregory the Great (540-604), Pope (590-604), Confessor, and Great Doctor of the Western Church describes the repentance of David. First David lusts after Bathsheba. Later, at Bethlehem, David longs for a drink out of the cistern. When some of his best soldiers return with the water, David pours the water out on the ground as a libation in repentance for so risking the lives of his soldiers. As Gregory words it, David "punished the fault of his concupiscence by the penance of his self-rebuke."³ In Psalm 51 David rejoices at his ability and opportunity to repent and get back into the good favor of God.

¹ Robert J. Daly, S.J., "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 1977), 47, 53.

² 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) 271, 304.

³ St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, *Given to the People in the Basilica of the Blessed John and Paul on the Third Sunday after Pentecost: The Angelic Choirs*, PL 76, Homily 34, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From

The Prodigal Son, in the Gospel of Luke, is about coming to one's senses, like the people of Moses and David, and turning back to the Father. Jesus first responds to the politically correct believers, the Pharisees and scribes, with two other parables, parables about the Good Shepherd and the woman looking for her lost coin.

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

The prophet, Moses, in his restraint, represents the displeasure of God and a quality of divine revelation.⁴ In urging God to restrain himself, Moses exercises his own restraint. The revelation is that God is a God of compassion.

Moses mediates the covenant between God and Israel, not only in the original covenant, but also in its renewal. The renewal of the original covenant is contained in these readings from Exodus.⁵ Moses was a precursor not only of Jesus, bringing the Good News, but also of the Faithful, doing the same, even in the midst of sin.

In verse 11, Moses refers to the Jews as God's "own people." Similarly, the father of the Prodigal Son, sees himself in his son, and, thereby, is able to take him back. In a similar way, God the Almighty, God of the terrible, chaotic, mostly desolate universe of the astronomers, sees in the Faithful an analogy of the depravity (verse 7) of his own creation and, therefore, is willing and able to take back sinners. These readings are not about sinful people, but about the mercy of God receiving sinners back into his good graces. There is happiness in the readings that God will take back the Faithful, after they falter.

Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

Psalm 51 is one of the Christian seven penitential psalms. Psalms 32, 38, and 130 are special in complementing Psalm 51. These psalms all blend individual with communal piety with a view toward justice. "This interaction assures a strong, healthy spirituality, so that personal sincerity keeps a heart and soul within external activity, while the latter prevents individual piety from degeneration into navel gazing and selfish or even morbid subjectivism."⁶

Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 211, 213.

⁴ Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scent," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 40, 58.

⁵ Kathryn L. Roberts, "God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000) 635.

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The Lectionary uses this Psalm differently on four different occasions:

Verses	Readings	Page	Title of Sunday	
3-4, 5-6, 12-13,	17	22A	146	First Sunday of Lent A
3-4, 12-13, 14-15		35B	224	Fifth Sunday of Lent B
		Bible Study030406_Fifth_Sunday in Lent.docx		
12-13, 14-15,	18-19	41A	339	Easter Sunday—Easter Vigil
3-4, 12-13,	17, 19	132C	833	Today

While there is no mention of the problem of David with Bathsheba in the Psalm proper, the directions to the psalm do refer to that adultery. The translation of Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., “For the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba (Psalm 51:1-2).”⁷ Sin is portrayed in the Jeremiah-sense as something personal between God and not only individuals, but in the psalm-sense of the community.⁸

David had heart, as distinct from Saul who had form following cultic practices. David kept asking God for guidance and expecting God to help.⁹ Such prayer seems to be what the Faithful do with Bible Study.

The first verse in the Lectionary misses the *Miserere* of the former, pre-Vatican II Latin. The Latin for verse 3 bears repetition, interlinear with the Lectionary. After the Latin, on the third line, comes the translation Stuhlmueller¹⁰ uses.

⁶ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 156, 157.

⁷ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 168.

⁸ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 56.

⁹ Mark K. George, “Yhwh’s Own Heart,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 457-459.

¹⁰ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 142, 176.

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The first verse portrays David as having a relationship with the LORD unlike others.¹¹

verse 3 Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness
Miserere mei, Deus, secundum misericordiam tuam;
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

 in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense
et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam.
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions

I grieve the loss in the translation from the Latin.

After examining the Hebrew, Stuhlmüller concludes, “God therefore forgives in the loving, tender, slow, nourishing way of a pregnant woman.”¹² Stuhlmüller observes that unlike Psalm 38:18, “I am sorry for my sin,” Psalm 51 is a more personal admission of guilt. The Hebrew is much earlier than the Greek translation. Scholars prefer the Hebrew, when it is available.

The oldest Hebrew dates from the 11th or 10th century B.C.¹³ For purposes of comparison and historical context, the earliest Aramaic dates from the 9th to the 7th century B.C.¹⁴ Hebrew pre-dates Aramaic. Aramaic was a commercial language used in the Persian Empire (550-333 B.C.) and in Daniel 2:4b—7:28¹⁵ and Ezra. Jesus probably spoke a later version of Aramaic.¹⁶

¹¹ Mark K. George, “Yhwh’s Own Heart,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 459.

¹² Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 171.

¹³ March 16, 2003, 10:41 p.m., www.encyclopedia.com/html/h/hebrewla.asp that is the Encyclopedia Britannica.

¹⁴ March 16, 2003, 10:41 p.m., http://education.yahoo.com/search/be?lb=t&p=urlo/o3Aa/aramaic_language that is the Britannica Concise.

¹⁵ 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), page 52.

Verse 12 uses *visceribus* again, this time for *within me*.

verse 12 A clean heart create for me, O God,
 and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Verse 12 contains the psalm-sense of community. The verse is in a legal context of moral purity for forgiveness, expressed in verse 13, which the Lectionary uses, and in verse 15, which the Lectionary does not use.¹⁷ Verse 13 asks not to be “cast out from your presence.”

verse 15 I will teach *transgressors* your ways.

The Latin is *iniquos*, the stem for the English *iniquity*. This is not somebody slipping and crashing a red light. The Latin carries the sense of unevenness and disadvantage but with a strong connotation of unjust and unfair.

In choosing Luke 15:18, “I will rise and go to my father,” the Lectionary portrays David as the Prodigal. The Lectionary invites the Faithful to do likewise, to receive forgiveness for their sins.

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Paul portrays himself as having acted “out of ignorance in my unbelief,” as do so many of the Faithful. Paul goes on, however, “to the king of ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (verse 17) in gratitude for “the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (verse 14).

2 Corinthians 5:19

This verse uses reconciliation twice. Not only that, the verse urges the Faithful to extend such reconciliation, “entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” This is cause for the alleluias.

Luke 15:1-32

Eating with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus accepts them. The righteous Pharisees and scribes not only wonder why, they pre-judge the goodness of Jesus. In the

¹⁶ The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, general editor, Richard P. McBrien (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco: A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), page 82.

¹⁷ 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) 256.

gospel, Jesus goes on to explain with three parables of compassion:¹⁸ (1) the shepherd placing the lost sheep on his shoulders; (2) the woman finding her lost coin, and (3) the Prodigal Son. Raymond E. Brown observes, "Accurately Dante described him [Luke] as 'the scribe of the gentleness of Christ'—more than any other evangelist Luke has given the world a Jesus to love."¹⁹

In distinction from Luke, Mark only has one visit to Jerusalem. Luke frames many Jesus traditions into a journey, probably not made exactly, toward Jerusalem. Luke begins the journey and ends the journey with prophecies of the passion and the relationship of the Faithful to the passion.²⁰

In verse 1, Ambrose (339-397), Confessor, Great Doctor of the Western Church, and Archbishop of Milan (373) explains the scribes and Pharisees drawing near to hear Jesus that the Faithful may have hope in the Merciful Judge by also drawing near to Jesus."²¹ Raymond E. Brown observes that here Jesus is "correcting the Pharisees' attitude toward sinners."²²

In verse 2, Gregory the Great writes about the scribes and Pharisees placing themselves, in their own minds, above those subject to them. I think of a child in subjection to its parent. In this way, Gregory writes that parents "correct those subject to them, because of discipline, but through humility they keep a watch on themselves."²³ This is the self-discipline brought up by parents in the Bible Study

¹⁸ Vincent P. Branick, review of Arland J. Hultgren, The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2001) 342.

¹⁹ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Anchor Bible Reference Library: An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 267.

²⁰ Richard J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1981) 221.

²¹ Ambrose, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 190.

²² Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Anchor Bible Reference Library: An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 249.

²³ Gregory, *Hom. 34 on the Gospel*, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 191.

class in Saint Michael's Hall at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish on Saturday, August 21.

Moving right along, Gregory observes that often the just are rightly angry with sinners. Looking to motivation, Gregory explains, "For the just ... stir up trouble, but because they love: for though outwardly, and out of zeal for the law of God, they will heap up rebukes, yet inwardly they hold fast to charity."²⁴ Holding fast to charity becomes the essence of prudence in these affairs.

In verse 6, Gregory, observes that the Good Shepherd does not invite the Faithful to rejoice whether with the lost or the found, sheep, but with the Good Shepherd himself. This means that the Faithful are the joy of the Christ.²⁵ Saint Gregory of Nyssa (+394), Confessor, Doctor of the Church, Bishop of Nyssa (371), observes that the Good Shepherd neither punished the lost sheep, nor drove the sheep before him, back to the flock, but, rather placed the sheep on his own shoulders to give it a ride.²⁶ Ambrose suggests that "the shoulders of Christ are the arms of His Cross."²⁷

The parable of the lost coin is a rare, brief scene in Luke in which Jesus is not present, except as narrator. Luke is the only Evangelist to use this parable, causing

²⁴ St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, *Given to the People in the Basilica of the Blessed John and Paul on the Third Sunday after Pentecost: The Angelic Choirs*, PL 76, Homily 34, [The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost](#), tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 201, 213.

²⁵ Gregory, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," [The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost](#), tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 192.

²⁶ Gregory Nyssa, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," See Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, [The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost](#), tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 192.

²⁷ See Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, [The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost](#), tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 195, 213.

some to look for a special feminist source.²⁸ Gregory goes on in verse 8 to observe that the woman in the parable is God himself.²⁹ Other Fathers of the Church regard the woman of the parable as the Church.³⁰ For Ambrose, the Church, then, intercedes for the Faithful.³¹ Saint Peter Chrysologus (+450), Confessor, Doctor of the Church, Archbishop of Ravenna, observes that the woman did not call her friends and neighbors to grieve with her when she lost her coin, but rather, to rejoice, when she found it.³²

From the Greek, the coins in verse 8 are Greek, whereas the coins in Luke 10:35 with the Good Samaritan are Roman. The Lectionary chose the Good Samaritan readings nine Sundays ago, July 11, the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. For Ambrose the silver, for which the woman sweeps her floor and in some translations turns her house upside down, is the Faithful.³³

²⁸ Richard Bauckham, Gospel/Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 53, 190, 191.

²⁹ Gregory, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 193.

³⁰ See Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop and Doctor, *The Parable of the Lost Drachma*, PL 52, Sermo 169, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 195, 213.

³¹ See Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 195, 199, 213.

³² See St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop and Doctor, *The Parable of the Lost Drachma*, PL 52, Sermo 169, Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 199, 213.

³³ Gregory the Great, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop and Doctor, *The Parable of the Lost Drachma*, PL 52, Sermo 169, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth

Many of the Church Fathers regard the image on the coin as human, made into the image of God.³⁴ Gregory goes on to point out that, a lamp is a light in an earthen vessel, similar to the Divine light of Christ in his humanity.³⁵ Such is pertinent to the Poor Clare (light) Sisters. Gregory Nyssa further explains that in this parable, Jesus urges the Faithful to "light a lamp, that is, His Divine Word, which *makes manifest things hidden*."³⁶ Hidden things made manifest at the personal level, come forth at the time hidden unconscious elements of the soul reach into the manifest conscious level. This cleaning up of the unconscious is like the woman sweeping her house.

Verse 10 mentions the angels of God rejoicing over one sinner who repents. Gregory the Great took this verse to explain the angels. Anyone willing to memorize material on the angels would do well to find something here.³⁷

For verse 20, Raymond E. Brown, has the father,

Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 194, 199, 213.

³⁴ See for example, Saint Cyril of Alexandria (+444), Confessor, Doctor of the Church, Archbishop of Alexandria (412), Gregory the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," and See Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, *Exposition of the Gospel*, PL 15, in Luke, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 193, 193, 194, 196, 213.

³⁵ Gregory, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 194.

³⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 194.

³⁷ St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, *Given to the People in the Basilica of the Blessed John and Paul on the Third Sunday after Pentecost: The Angelic Choirs*, PL 76, Homily 34, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 200-213.

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running to the younger son and kissing him before he can give the prepared speech of repentance [which] could serve as an illustration of Rom 5:8: "God's love for us is shown in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," and I John 4:10: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us."³⁸

Verse 18, "Father I have sinned against heaven" is a circumlocution for what is expressed more directly in Exodus 10:16 where the Pharaoh says to Moses and Aaron, "I have sinned against Yahweh your God and against you."

Verses 25 and 29 show the older son out in the field and helping his father. This means that the elder son was contributing to the inheritance, not only in a way the Prodigal did not, but also in a way unexpected of daughters.³⁹ The Faithful fit this scenario in the role of Prodigal, truly with the sense of an ability to contribute to the Kingdom of God.

Like the Prodigal, Jesus and his disciples leave their families. Their families do not throw them out. Like the Prodigal, Jesus and his disciples do find relative poverty.⁴⁰ Sometimes the Faithful, such as Poor Clare nuns, do forsake their families for the sake of their God.

These readings are about the joy of David in his willingness and ability to repent. The three parables of compassion each seek out the Faithful, without a precondition of repentance. Repentance becomes an act of gratitude, rather than an act of submission.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

³⁸ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Anchor Bible Reference Library: An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 249.

³⁹ Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 468.

⁴⁰ F. Gerald Downing, "'Honor' among Exegetes," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 1999) 72.