

Personal Notes
060924 Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 134B
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Readings for this Sunday contemplate accepting adult responsibility for friendship with God. The readings from Wisdom portray the Faithful as children, testing how far they may go against adult rules, inviting them to mature. Psalm 54 begs mercy from God for transgressing adult rules. The Epistle of James exposes the Magisterium for limiting the Faithful to treatment like children. The Gospel is about the disciples acting as adults by loving children, something the hierarchy scandalously has not done.

Avoiding scandal, Wisdom takes the posture of a wise man teaching his son how to act. Wisdom 2:12 is teaching the Faithful to expect testing from wicked people. Wisdom explains that the wicked find the Faithful obnoxious for exposing their transgressions. Relationship with God requires adult responsibility.

Wisdom 2:17 teaches the Faithful to expect political pressure to test the truths that they hold. Those able to exercise political pressure do not expect God to save the politically powerless. Wisdom 2:19 tests gentleness in times of trouble. Since I lack a copy of the Septuagint Greek, I do not know whether the gentleness of 2:19 is the same gentle of James 3:17. There will be more on the word *gentle* below. Wisdom 2:20 teaches the Faithful that political pressure may mean a shameful death in the face of hope that God “will take care of him.” It takes mature love to stand firm in the face of disaster.

As presented, the reading from the Book of Wisdom portrays the Faithful as children, unable to cope with political pressure. The reading encourages a pay, pray, and obey mentality in the face of religious politics. The reading does nothing to suggest anything like the current sexual scandal of the hierarchy, a scandal that forces the Faithful, including the lesser clergy and religious, to rethink their support of the scandalous behavior as it relates to God.

Psalm 54, probably begun after the return from Exile, rejoices at getting through the ordeal. Psalm 54:3 asks God, “by your name save me.” Psalm 54:5 recognizes political pressure, “the ruthless seek my life.” Despite the pressure, Psalm 54:6 insists, “The Lord sustains my life.” The Psalm avoids legitimate examination of anything done by the religious hierarchy. The Psalm readily suits treating the Faithful, lesser clergy, and religions as children.

Reading carefully through the Greek, the Epistle of James exposes the hierarchy treating the Faithful like children, rather than adults. In the Lectionary, approved by the hierarchy, James 3:17 identifies wisdom as gentle, where the Greek means considerate. One treats children with gentleness, but adults with consideration.

James 3:17 identifies wisdom with compliance where the Greek means compliance to truth, calling for adult judgment. Childlike compliance does not call for adult judgment. Finally, James 3:17 correctly identifies inconstancy and insincerity as

inappropriate attitudes. The Lectionary translation, however, hides the Greek root for judgment. In the Greek, inconstancy and insincerity are acts of adult judgment rather than youthful impetuosity.

In the Lectionary translation, James 4:1 goes on to demean the Faithful, “you kill,” where the Greek means, “you murder.” Killing takes no adult planning. The translation treats the Faithful as children, whereas the original Greek treats the Faithful as adults, expecting adult responses to the “wisdom from above” expressed in James 3:17.¹

In James, wisdom from above contrasts with wisdom from below. James contrasts loving earthly treasures, such as political power, with loving a relationship with God.² James can help explain the church’s current preferential option for the poor.³ Mark 9:30-37 brings out what it means to have a loving relationship with God. That is why Mark is suited for Pastoral Care of the Sick.⁴

At Mark 9:30 Jesus begins a journey with his disciples that he does not want anyone to know about.⁵ Mark dissembles much of the relationship between individuals and Jesus, especially the parts the Faithful do not understand, for example, about death

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Mirror of Remembrance (James 1:22-25),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 4 (October 1988) 634-635. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, review of Luke Leuk Cheung, The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of the Epistle of James in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2004) 642.

² Timothy B. Cargal, review of Patrick J. Hartin, James, in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2004) 649.

³ John H. Elliott, review of Luke Timothy Johnson, Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James in Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June 2006) 454.

⁴ 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) 59.

⁵ Harry Fleddermann, “‘And He Wanted to Pass by Them’ (Marc 6:48c),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 3 (July 1983) 390, 394.

and resurrection. Faith requires a certain amount of maturity and hiddenness to get through the parts one does not understand.

Mark 9:31, “three days after his death,” is a rephrasing of Mark 8:31, “after three days,” from last Sunday.⁶ The Lectionary is drawing the Faithful into an adult relationship with Jesus with a serious consideration of the meaning of life and death.

Mark 9:36 instructs the disciples to treat children as they would Jesus.⁷ It takes an adult to hug a child as Jesus did. Permitting child abuse is the essence of the current scandal of the hierarchy. Inappropriately treating the Faithful and lower clergy and religious as children is another, though unrecognized, scandal. Jesus is not telling the Faithful to act as children, but to act as adults in the way they treat children.

The readings are about adult love. The reading from the Book of Wisdom is about loving God; even though that means that, the wicked will attack. Psalm 54 begs forgiveness for not loving God. James calls for adult treatment among the Faithful. Mark does not encourage the Faithful to act like children, but to act as adults do when they treat children with love.

I intend to include the following comment in the Appendix, after revising it twice more here.

The Sunday Lectionary is organized into three-year cycles, A, B, and C. In general, the Lectionary numbers readings consecutively: 1A, 2B, 3C. The readings for this Sunday, 134B, therefore, are in cycle B.

The Lectionary readings usually divide into four parts: First Testament, Psalm, Epistle, and Gospel. The Epistle is the letters of Saint Paul, with an occasional letter from James, or Peter, or John. Sunday preaching is generally on the Gospel.

Cycle A follows the Gospel of Matthew, B Mark, and C Luke. John is interspersed for special occasions, like Easter and Pentecost. The Epistles follow their own pattern, with little, if any, regard for the accompanying First Testament, Psalm, or Gospel. These Notes, however, always find a relationship among all four readings.

⁶ 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) 363-364.

⁷ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 4 (October 1991) 600.

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These Notes annotate the Biblical index derived from the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. That means the Notes do not rest until every new reference finds a place, in one way or another. These Notes are currently working their way through the cycles a second time. This means that usually there is a set of Notes posted that already treat the readings. For example, Notes for 2006 already exist from 2003. In addition, each of Notes appears in both .htm and .pdf formats. Pdf is meant for reading; .htm for indexing. The various search engines read .htm more readily than .pdf.

These Notes repeatedly recognize passages that the Church uses at funerals and in pastoral care of the sick. The reason is so that readers will gain an appreciation for the liturgy available in times of bereavement and illness.

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