

Personal Notes
061008 Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time 140B
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These readings make sense out of death and suffering as a sacrificial offering to God. Genesis is not only about building the unity of the marriage bond,¹ but also about breaking that same bond through physical death. Spouses are to cling to God during this life and life eternal as they cling to one another during this life.²

Psalm 128 is about family life, family life that the New Testament extends from earth in this life to include God in heaven in eternal life. Hebrews is about identifying the sacrificial offering of Jesus with similar sacrificial offerings of the Faithful. Hebrews is also about establishing a new order of life, disruptive of the old order of death.³

In the Gospel, Jesus explains the sanctity of the marriage bond, a sanctity based not only on human spousal love, but also on vowed celibate love. Death and suffering make sense as a sacrificial gift to God in honor of his goodness.

To elaborate, Genesis 2:18-24 is part of an upheaval in feminist studies.⁴ The Faithful have understood Genesis to mean that man is the head of the household. The Faithful have also understood Genesis to mean that woman is the equal of man, made of the same flesh that he is. Genesis supports the old order of the First Testament that the new order of the New Testament disrupts.⁵ Today the Faithful look at the xy chromosomes of women and wonder about the xx chromosomes of men and how the biblical writers would pontificate. "x" is a lack of chromosome.

¹ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., review of Marianne Blickenstaff, 'While the Bridegroom Is with Them': Marriage, Family, Gender and Violence in the gospel of Matthew, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 534.

² Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 112.

³ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 264.

⁴ George M. Landes, review of Joseph Abraham, Eve: Accused or Acquitted? An Analysis of Feminist Readings of the creation Narrative Texts in Genesis 1—3, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January 2005) 104-106.

⁵ Demetrius K. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 46-47, 58-59.

The most recent issue of CrossCurrents sheds light on this concept of a new order. Tissa Balasuriya⁶ is a proponent of a new global order. He is a prominent Asian liberation theologian. He was born in 1924. The Holy See excommunicated Balasuriya from the Church in 1997 for insisting that the institution had reason to examine its collective conscience.⁷ In 1998, the Holy See reinstated Balasuriya.⁸ He still thinks the Church should examine its collective conscience.

Balasuriya is mainly concerned with the relationship between the institutional Church and colonialism. As a Syri Lankan, Balasuriya recognizes European colonialism as foundational to Europeans enslaving others. For Balasuriya, the issue is race. Sexuality is also involved.⁹

Compared with my previous personal comments on the lack of spirituality in Benedict XVI, Balasuriya is relatively gentle and not personal. In "Deus Caritas Est," at no. 11, Pope Benedict XVI uses Genesis 2:23 and 2:24 that the Lectionary also uses this Sunday. Balasuriya writes that "The Encyclical is rather simplistic in ignoring the long history of Christian spiritual arrogance."¹⁰ Ignoring history in order to justify the arrogance of power appalls this historian.

More to the point, Balasuriya writes, "The link between the celebration of the sacraments, ministry, and action for justice is not noted." Ignoring the historical

⁶ http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1252/is_n2_v124/ai_19279932/pg_1 (accessed August 27, 2008);

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1252/is_n2_v124/ai_19279932/pg_2 (accessed August 27, 2008).

<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1449&C=1283> 060827

<http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/97/0207/letters.html> (accessed August 27, 2008).

<http://www.highbeam.com/library/docFree.asp?DOCID=1G1:20232885> (accessed August 27, 2008)

⁷ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 252.

⁸ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 281.

⁹ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 244.

¹⁰ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 234.

sexism of the Church is like ignoring science. Life goes on, bypassing the Church. Again, Balasuriya observes, "the ongoing de-churching of Christians coincides with the period after 1968."¹¹ With the publication of Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI condemned artificial means of contraception in July 1968. By reexamining Church practices, Balasuriya upsets the Holy See. The Holy See, however, need not be upset. Balasuriya is a breath of fresh air for truth.

In the contemporary era, truth is an issue about weapons of mass destruction. Psalm 128, which the Lectionary uses, has an ancient history justifying war. Eventually the English war about which John Wycliffe (1330-1384) grew concerned, became colonialism. For that reason, a consideration of Wycliffe is germane.

Wycliffe first upset the Holy See by translating the Bible into English.¹² After that (bypassing the translation), his thoughts on Psalm 128 become important. Wycliffe was an historical theologian. According to Ian Christopher Levy, Wycliffe used Psalm 128 that "the peace promised to Israel by the Psalmist (Psalm 128:6) was in fact meant for England, the true inheritance of God."¹³ Of such is the arrogance from the quotation from Balasuriya above. There is additional spiritual arrogance.

Psalm 128:3, by proclaiming that "your wife shall be like a fruitful vine," and that is all, infuriates modern feminists. The implication is a hierarchic structure from father to wife to children. To the contrary, in Hebrews 2:11, God calls the Faithful "brethren"¹⁴ that the Lectionary translates "brothers" not simply with one another, but also with God. In this case, the primary brother is Jesus, under whose feet God will eventually place all things.¹⁵

Balasuriya has more to say, this time about "Deus Caritas Est" by Pope Benedict XVI. Looking back to Genesis, Pope Benedict XVI writes, "eros is somehow rooted

¹¹ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 232.

¹² <http://www.answers.com/topic/john-wycliffe> (accessed August 29, 2008)

¹³ Ian Christopher Levy, "John Wyclif: Christian Patience in a Time of War," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2005) 338.

¹⁴ Scott W. Hahn, "A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15-22", the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 2004) 421.

¹⁵ Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 1990) 669.

in man's very nature."¹⁶ Somehow? Benedict patronizes the Faithful. I respectfully disagree, therefore, with Balasuriya where he writes that Benedict "displays a personal understanding of the value and meaning of love in all its multifarious, interconnected complexity, as *eros*, *philia* and *agape*: of love as physical and sexual expression; of love as friendship, and as other-centered in care and service of the other."¹⁷

I do not know whether Benedict's patronizing attitude toward earthiness has anything to do with the "wild animals" translation of Genesis 2:19, but that Richard Whitekettle translates as "land animals."¹⁸ I checked the New Jerusalem and King James Bibles and found "wild animals" both times. I do like to pay as much attention to the technical aspects of language as I am able.

In the Greek, quotation marks are not used for *brothers* at Hebrews 2:11. In the 1963 edition of the best Greek available, *brothers* appeared in bold print. Without either explanation or notification, however, the 1979 edition removed the bold print. David Holly has written a whole book noting differences between 1963 and 1979, differences that I always check but, up to this point, except for four other times,¹⁹ have never mentioned. I do not know what to make of the change in text.²⁰

With Hebrews 2:9, the Lectionary brings in the death of Jesus, a death that requires careful interpretation. In the liturgical model of Christian salvation, Saint Athanasius

¹⁶ Benedict XVI, "Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love,"
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclixals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_2..._1/30/2006_7/25.

¹⁷ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God is Love,'" CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 229.

¹⁸ Richard Whitekettle, "Bugs, Bunny, or Boar? Identifying the Ziz Animals of Psalms 50 and 80," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 253.

¹⁹ 050925 136A 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
051009 142A 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
060205 074B 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
060216 080B 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

²⁰ David Holly, Comparative Studies in Recent Greek New Testament Texts: Nestle-Aland's 25th and 26th Editions (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983) 45. I use the 27th edition, here unchanged from the 26th.

(293-373) implies a Pauline atonement theology.²¹ Balasuriya writes, “ ... the mythical presupposition of original sin ... gives an explanation of his death as due to need to make amends to the Father for original sin, rather than his stance against the social-religious injustice and struggle for the liberation of the oppressed of his day.”²²

In this vein, Andrei A. Orlov examines the Adamic interpretation of the origin of evil. The apocalypse known as *3 Baruch* disputes the role of Satan in Genesis 2—11.²³ Original sin aside, standing up for justice ought to be a Christian imperative. The readings for this Sunday explain the value of the suffering and death sometimes associated with standing up for justice.

The Church uses Mark 10:2-16 twice for funerals²⁴ and once for pastoral care of the sick.²⁵ The passage is about testing Jesus in ways that also test the faithful not only at times of sickness and of death, but also when they become complicit in the

²¹ Richard Clifford, S.J., and Khaled Anatolios, “Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives,” Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 2005) 758.

²² Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., “Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on ‘God is Love,’” CrossCurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 257.

²³ Andrei A. Orlov, “The Flooded Arboretums: The Garden Traditions in the Slavonic Version of *3 Baruch* and the *Book of Giants*,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 184.

²⁴ N.a., 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) 143, 257.

²⁵ 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) 52.

structural injustices of social organization.²⁶ At Mark 10:10, the disciples explain that they did not understand how Jesus had dealt with his test from the Pharisees. While honor was an important attribute in the ancient Roman empire, applying that relationship between Jesus and his disciples here is problematical.²⁷ Questioning Jesus and his disciples is a legitimate religious practice.

Mark 10:9 and 11 may have existed before Paul wrote, that is, early enough to have influenced 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, prohibiting divorce.²⁸ Here at Mark 10:9 and 11, Jesus is using love to return to the old order of Genesis.²⁹ Love legitimates those changes resulting from questioning.

The Pharisees had asked Jesus about the legitimacy of divorce. Jesus had answered that divorce had been a concession from Moses, a concession no longer allowed in the new order. Mark has many difficulties,³⁰ including the difficulties the disciples have understanding Jesus.³¹ Scholars regard Matthew and Luke as clarifying and correcting Mark. The message in this section of Mark is that love is overwhelming, not only binding married couples, but also God, with the Faithful.

Love is the way to deal with suffering and death. Genesis is about married love beginning in this life and lasting into eternal life. Psalm 128 is about the peace love bestows on all trials and tribulations. Hebrews explains that death is integral to the lives of both Jesus and the Faithful. Mark brings an insistence upon joining married love with the love between God and the Faithful.

²⁶ John Paul Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 77.

²⁷ F. Gerald Downing, "*Honor*" among Exegetes, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 1999) 54, 59.

²⁸ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 265.

²⁹ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "Jesus as Messiah in the Gospel of Luke: Discerning a Pattern of Correction," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 94.

³⁰ Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 1992) 484.

³¹ Elliott C. Maloney, O.S.B., review of James G. Crossley, The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No., 3 (July 2005) 526-527.

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I am revising the following comment in the Appendix, which I intend to distribute with this set of Notes.

The Sunday Lectionary organizes the readings into three-year cycles, A, B, and C. In general, the Lectionary numbers sequence as 1A, 2B, 3C. The readings for this Sunday, 140B, therefore, are in cycle B.

The Lectionary usually divides the readings 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. In current practice, Sunday preaching is only on the Gospel. Why, I do not know.

With Demetrius K. Williams, I do know that the Exodus is foundational to the attraction of African Americans to the Gospel. As Williams words it, "The most important Biblical model or paradigm of liberation in African American social and religious history is the exodus."³² I chafe at the recognition that limiting preaching to the Gospel avoids the reordering of a new creation in the Epistles as well as the Exodus. The institutional Church would do well to examine its conscience over this matter of feeding the Faithful the same old pabulum supporting the status quo, old order.

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. To this point, these Personal Notes, however, have always found a relationship among all four readings.

These Personal Notes annotate the Biblical index derived from the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. That means the Personal Notes do not rest until every new reference finds a place, in one way or another. In August 2006, these Personal Notes were working their way through the cycles a second time. This means that usually there are Notes posted on the web that already treat the readings. For example, Personal Notes for 2006 already exist from 2003. In addition, each of the Personal 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.

³² Demetrius K. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 34.

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These Personal Notes repeatedly recognize passages that the Church uses at funerals and in pastoral care of the sick. The reason is to recognize the liturgy when it becomes 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