

Personal Notes
061015 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time 143B
© 2015
Raymond J. Jirran

Prayer comes in three basic forms: oral, meditative, and contemplative. The Lectionary begins with oral prayer, a one-way conversation between the Faithful and God. In human relations, one-way conversations are unacceptable exercises in power. Peasants did not invent language to speak to the king, but the king had language invented to tell the peasants what to do. A loving relationship among and between anyone, however, must be in more than one direction. Prayer needs to get beyond the Lectionary.

In prayer, the relationship with God is in more than one direction. Through the gift of language, God enables the Faithful to enter into a dialogic relationship with him. The acrostic Psalms deliberately celebrate that gift of language. Logic is the intellectual tool used in Western Civilization to draw closer to God. In a loving relationship, language enables the lovers to share and to unravel their experiences of life. Sharing and unraveling day-to-day issues with God offers peace, contentment, and joy. Simply “reporting” what has happened in an examination of conscience is too limiting.

Contemplative prayer gets beyond the need to dialogue. In human terms, contemplation consists in soul coasting in a comfortable silence with the beloved, because there is nothing to say. The mind is at peace. These Personal Notes intend to frame topics of meditation and contemplation.

This week, the Lectionary begins with the Book of Wisdom offering individual insightful prayer. The first words, Wisdom 7:7, the Lectionary uses are, “I prayed.” The focus on individuals, “I prayed,” caused Saint Paul trouble as he fostered his various Christian communities or churches.¹ A broader scope for Wisdom is essential for the Church.

Despite its egocentric focus, Wisdom involves prudence and insight, but not necessarily material wealth. Just the same, if Jesus was wise, why is there no mention of the carpenter’s son supporting his widowed mother? Why is there so much mention of giving up everything, when his mother may have had no visible means of support?

Psalm 90 is a lamentation prayer, reflecting on how short life is. Psalm 90:12, “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.” The Church uses Psalm 90 in its care for the sick.² Racism is a form of sickness. While one suffering

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.

² 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

Personal Notes
061015 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time 143B
© 2015
Raymond J. Jirran

from racial prejudice can hope for an exodus from that situation, as Wilma Ann Bailey writes, Psalm 90 is a lamentation reverberating in a racist society.³ Psalm 90:13, “How long?”

Despite difficulties, the Responsorial Antiphon, Psalm 90:14, prays, “Fill us with your love, O lord, and we will sing for joy!” Married couples can also get through lamentable situations with loving joy, if they are willing to communicate with one another, as they communicate with God. Rhetoric is but another name for good communication. As examples of good rhetoric, the Psalms exhibit ancient Jewish religiosity. Paul also strives to use language well.

Getting to the rhetoric of good language, Hebrews 4:12-13 is only two verses. The ancient Jewish community identified religiosity with good language, with rhetoric. Hebrews is about the Holy Word of God being good enough rhetoric to penetrate the soul, to reveal character.

The Greek language used to describe how the Word exposes the Faithful is a metaphor drawn from the literal bending back of the neck of the sacrificial victim for slaughter and complete exposure. That is what the Lectionary means by holding the Faithful accountable to the Word of God.⁴ Accountability before God is a topic for prayer.

Mark 10:18-29 is about the poor rich man, unwilling to give up his material wealth to follow Jesus. The Lectionary readings for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time invite several contemplations against politically correct expectations. First, where are family values and where is Mary at the foot of the Cross in Mark? Many people simply never are aware that Mark does not place Mary at the foot of the Cross.

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) 294.

³ Wilma Ann Bailey, “The Sorrow Songs: Laments from Ancient Israel and the African American Diaspora,” in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 64.

⁴ Alan C. Mitchell, S.J., “The Use of $\pi\rho\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\nu$ and Rhetorical Propriety in Hebrews 2:10,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 1992) 693.

Personal Notes
061015 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time 143B
© 2015
Raymond J. Jirran

Second, what insight does queer theory offer into the life of Jesus? With no home and family, Jesus is not meeting the expectations of his Jewish society. Thus, his masculinity becomes an issue for his followers and the community. The Church has difficulty with this issue and for the most part simply ignores politically incorrect musings. These issues help the Faithful realize that prayer was the way Jesus coped with his burdens of not living up to social expectations.

Did the devotion of Jesus to his ministry include responsibility for his parents, wife, and children? The Gospels tell the Faithful that Jesus had parents. The Gospels imply Jesus had no wife or children. Mark is confusing when the Lectionary begins with the express dismissal by Jesus of his own goodness in favor of the goodness of God. That beginning by Mark ought to give the Faithful something about which to pray.⁵

Concerning Mark 10:20-22, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan observes, "Jesus was free to disregard tradition."⁶ Kirk-Duggan has the United States tradition of racism in mind. Leaving everything is of the essence of discipleship.⁷ In the United States, leaving everything can involve leaving racism.

Once again, in Mark 10:28-30, queer theory offers yet another non-traditional insight. To the extent he had no household, Jesus lacked ancient Jewish masculinity. The Gospels report Jesus saying that he had nowhere to lay his head (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58).⁸

There is no word *family* in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. The best one can do is *house*. According to Gospel evidence, Jesus had no house. Richard Bauckham thinks that Mark 10:28-30 presents Jesus "as the model for Christians whose Christian

⁵ C. Clifton Black, review of George Keerankeri, S.J., The Love Commandment in Mark: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Mk 12, 28-34 in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 717.

⁶ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 125.

⁷ Joseph Plevnik, "'The Eleven and Those with Them' According to Luke," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 2 (April 1978) 210.

⁸ Rev. Newton Thompson, S.T.D. and Raymond Stock, Concordance to the Bible (Douay Version) (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1942) 598.

Personal Notes
061015 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time 143B
© 2015
Raymond J. Jirran

discipleship involves breaking with their close relatives.”⁹ Breaking with the relatives, causes a problem with caring for parents.

By having no house, Jesus is disrupting earthly family life values in favor of eternal life values. When Jesus is instructing his disciples to act as children, he is turning existing social structure on its head. In these readings, Jesus is inviting the Faithful to use their minds to meditate upon and contemplate God. Childlike simplicity is unsuited for a marriage relationship, whether between humans or with God.

Another intriguing question from Mark 10:28-30 is in the matter of rewards. To begin with, Jesus is emphatic, “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters ... who will not receive a hundredfold ...” (Mark 10:29). “Amen” is the same emphasis Jesus gave to the poor widow putting all she had in the temple treasury (Mark 12:43) and to “whoever gives you a cup of water” (Mark 9:41).¹⁰ That, however, is not all.

As Bruce J. Malina words it, “Why is there no mention of some next generation, or future generations, or future time periods in the NT?”¹¹ Malina thinks the answer lies with the difference between sequential Western clock time and enveloping Mediterranean time, that is, time in which the present includes what is still only potential in the future.

In conclusion, Wisdom is about individuals letting truth determine the politics of what they love. Ultimately, Wisdom is about loving and praying with God. Psalm 90 is about finding joy in knowing God. Hebrews is about finding insight into the meaning of life from the Word of God. Mark is about loving God, above all things, the way in which a married couple can love, one the other.

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

⁹ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 220.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 4 (October 1991) 601.

¹¹ Bruce J. Malina, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1989) 7.