

Personal Notes  
051030 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time 151A  
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At the time of Jesus, those taking the seat of Moses (Matthew 23:1) found the love of God through the law overly difficult. Matthew has no sympathy with such leaders. Matthew 23 is a polemical attack on the Pharisees.<sup>1</sup> In the final analysis, the readings are about the Faithful extending the love of God to themselves and to others.

The religious leaders at the time of Jesus had given up trying to love God<sup>2</sup> for loving the consolations of earthly existence.<sup>3</sup> Jesus reproaches them (Matthew 23:11-12).<sup>4</sup> Through his life, Jesus demonstrates how love can carry through all the vicissitudes of the lives of the Faithful.

One of the themes in the Gospel of Matthew is dealing with religious leaders. The Faithful today have a similar issue with the likes of Bernard Cardinal Law. According to anonymous notes taken at the papal conclave April 18-19, Cardinal Law received one vote to be Pope in the final ballot. Pope Benedict XVI then became the 265<sup>th</sup> Pope.<sup>5</sup>

The virtue of prudence does require the Faithful to use their common sense in their forgiveness of others. Saint Paul and Saint Matthew are not at all bashful in the blame game. Neither are they bashful proclaiming the need to love everyone.

Matthew insists that in the Christian era, *whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted* (Matthew 23:12). 1 Thessalonians 2:13 skips over the difficulty following the law to give thanks that the Faithful are accepting the Word of God at face value. 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 is the foundation

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<sup>1</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) 255.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 61, 62, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Francis D. Weinert, "Luke, the Temple and Jesus' Saying about Jerusalem's Abandoned House (Luke 13:34-35)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January 1982) 71.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Joy Lawrence, "For truly, I tell you, they have received their reward' (Matt 6:2): Investigating Honor Precedence and honor Virtue," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 702.

<sup>5</sup> The Associated Press, Vatican City, "World: Vatican City: Papal selection diary revealed: An anonymous cardinal breaks the vow of secrecy and leaks details of the Papal conclave," Daily Press, Sunday, September 25, 2005, page A 17, col. 1-2.

for accusing Saint Paul of being anti-Jewish.<sup>6</sup> The Lectionary covers up the relationship by omitting verses 14-16.

To be anti-Jewish today is very politically incorrect. As politically incorrect as that charge against Paul is, 1 Thessalonians 2:13 is part of a major struggle understanding Paul. Right now, the problem cannot help but be entangled with dealing with religious leaders covering up abusing the Faithful.

The issue concerns those who hear the Word of God, but do not accept it. While Paul says in Acts 18:6 that he is preaching only to the Gentiles, he also mentions the Jews (Acts 18:19) to whom he also preached and accepted into his Faith. Paul condemns hearing the Word of God and not listening to it, rather than any particular race or religion.<sup>7</sup> In the final analysis, Paul is not anti-Jewish.

The Lectionary readings begin with Malachi, readings that criticize the religious leaders of the Temple.<sup>8</sup> When Jesus echoes such criticism, the leaders decide to kill him. The message remains, however. The Faithful are to love God who creates all things and peoples.

Psalm 131 finds peace fulfilling the law of love, like a child at the breast of its mother.<sup>9</sup> Psalm 131 turns away from the competitive testosterone-ridden life on-edge toward the sharing life, quiet and at peace. Psalm 131 hopes in the Lord rather than competitive earthly accomplishments.

Even when Jesus makes his promises in the Matthean Beatitudes, they are promises for future time as well as the fulfillment of purpose. The New Testament is about renewing the original Covenants with the Eucharistic body and blood of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 408-427.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 426-427.

<sup>8</sup> P. M. Casey, "Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997) 328.

<sup>9</sup> John W. Miller, "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation: A Critique," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 614.

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The Eucharist gave the first Christians the excitement and joy of the Thessalonians, an excitement and joy continuing to the present. When Paul *gives thanks* for the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, the Greek he uses is a derivative of Eucharist. Paul recognizes the continuing life of Christ in the Faithful as they extend the love of God to others.

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).

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<sup>10</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) 252-253, 255.