

Personal Notes
061105 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time 152B
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The Lectionary readings for this Sunday invite the Faithful to contemplate how *to love* can be a command. Love can be a command, because God is wonderfully good, certainly in a philosophical sense of *ipsum ens subsistens*, self-sustaining being. Maybe I have studied more philosophy than I could absorb. In any event, that God is good comes as a revelation through Moses to the Faithful ancient Jews.

Philosophical and theological knowledge that God is good is not enough. The ability to see enough to love God is a gift of Faith. Some people do not regard God as good, at all. Those people lack the insights of Faith required to overcome the negativity of life.

To begin by outlining the readings, Deuteronomy 6:2-6 contains the original command to love God. Psalm 18 exercises the command to love with a song of praise. Hebrews explains the goodness of God in the person of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark reveals that just because one knows the law does not mean one lives the law.

Accepting the anthropomorphic problem that humans tend to make God in their own image, it still may be that humans are no more all good than is God. The issue is in human perception, rather than reality. God is wonderfully good, both in philosophical theory and in reality, if not in human perception. The point is, that as wonderful as God is, humans must still complement that goodness for that goodness to be effective at the individual human level.

Deuteronomy 6:2-6 is at the core of the human Jewish faith. The details of the Jewish Torah specified both Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.¹ Deuteronomy is about love of God; Leviticus about love of neighbor.² The Lectionary uses Leviticus 19:18 at Reading 79A, 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Deuteronomy 6:5, used this Sunday, calls for total commitment.³ The Jews took Deuteronomy 6:5, among others, put it on a scroll, and wore it as a phylactery.⁴ Jews wore phylacteries on their left arms, perhaps giving rise to Christians as “right-handers.” For Christians, Jesus has become Israel, bringing

¹ Terence L. Donaldson, “The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 692.

² C. Clifton Black, review of George Keerankeri, S.J., The Love Commandment in Mark: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Mk 12:28-34, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 4 (October 2005) 716.

³ Jacqueline E. Lapsley, “Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No 3 (July 2003) 351.

⁴ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 40.

redemption to humanity.⁵ Deuteronomy proclaims that the Jewish monotheistic God is God of the entire world.⁶

As might be expected from the well-versed Saint Paul, Deuteronomy plays important roles throughout Corinthians and in Galatians 3:20 and Romans 3:30.⁷ Paul is close to the Shema. The Shema is the Jewish profession of faith, made up of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (the readings for today) and Numbers 15:37-41.⁸ P. M. Casey describes the center of Judaism as Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. How to unscramble the place of Numbers 15:37-41 mystifies me. The other great commandment of love, besides Deuteronomy 6:4-9, is Leviticus 19:18.⁹ *Shema* comes from the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4, *hear*.

When Deuteronomy 6:4 records that, "the LORD is our God, the LORD alone!" Deuteronomy is testifying to monotheism.¹⁰ Deuteronomy means that there is no other God. In light of this fact, the Deuteronomist edited Sacred Scripture to replace love in its many faceted dimensions with the law. The Faithful have the Deuteronomist version of Sacred Scripture. The sense of incorporating love into religious regulations is an ongoing task, particularly as considered below in the matter of human sexuality.

Pope Benedict XVI uses Deuteronomy 6:5 at no. 9 in his "Deus Caritas Est." In this section, Benedict uses the masculine pronoun fourteen times to refer to God in thirty-two lines. Benedict uses the feminine pronoun to refer to Israel four times. Benedict uses the word *man* three times and the androgynous *human, humanism, and people*

⁵ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 518.

⁶ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "The Problem of Νομος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 302.

⁷ John Fotopoulos, "Arguments Concerning Food Offered to Idols: Corinthian Quotations and Pauline Refutations in a Rhetorical *Partitio* (1 Corinthians 8:1-9)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 626.

⁸ "E:\Documents\Microsoft Office\merriam-webster.exe" Eleventh Edition.

⁹ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 266.

¹⁰ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 110, 232, 284.

three times twice. The rhetoric of Benedict requires development in order to inscribe the love of women deeper into his heart and that of the Church.¹¹

While thinkers before the Eighteenth Century almost identified love with obedience, love is also spontaneous. Much of marital love is of spontaneity rather than rigidity. Sacred Scripture does invite the Faithful into spontaneous love of God.

The law of love does deserve explanation. Sacred Scripture advances the issue, by explaining and interpreting itself. Paul Overland explains that Proverbs expands and explains the meaning of Deuteronomy.¹²

Overland goes into detail about what “with one’s whole heart, whole soul, and whole strength” means. Depending on how it is used, *heart* can mean both emotions and intellect. *Soul* means desire. *Strength* is an interesting attribute. *Strength* means material wealth.¹³

Psalm 18 is a song of praise.¹⁴ As the Responsorial Antiphon puts it, “I love you, Lord, my strength.” (Psalm 18:2) J. J. M. Roberts thinks the poet wrote Psalm 18 about the time of David and Solomon.¹⁵ “You who gave great victories to your king” (Psalm 18:51) is one of the few references to David in the Psalms.¹⁶ Craig A. Evans thinks the poet wrote Psalm 18 in the First Century B.C.¹⁷ The scholars are trying to determine when

¹¹ 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/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html 1/30/2006 6/25.

¹² Paul Overland, “Did the Sage Draw from the Shema? A Study of Proverbs 3:1-12,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 424-440.

¹³ Paul Overland, “Did the Sage Draw from the Shema? A Study of Proverbs 3:1-12,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 428-440.

¹⁴ Richard J. Dillon, “The Benedictus in Micro- and Macrocontext,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No 3 (July 2006) 459.

¹⁵ J. J. M. Roberts, “The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 676-677.

¹⁶ Melody D. Knowles, “The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 237.

the Psalm was first composed, leaving later editing unexamined. As the prayer of the Church, psalms are associated with the ancient Jewish High Priest.

Hebrews 7:23-28 is about Jesus the Great High Priest, revealing the love of God both for and to humanity. Hebrews 7:26 describes Jesus, "It was fitting that we should have such a high priest," a priest who knew suffering.¹⁸ In this passage, Hebrews identifies Jesus with God by placing Jesus outside of time, from all eternity, through all eternity. (Hebrews 7:24, 25, 28)¹⁹ Jesus demonstrates the love of God for humanity, a demonstration that commands the love of humanity for God.

Though they may have worn the verse on their foreheads and arms as phylacteries, the Pharisees had not let the law of love penetrate their hearts enough to hear Jesus. Instead, "one of the scribes" (Mark 12:28) began by verbally attacking Jesus. Others, later, put him to death. At this point, simply "no one dared to ask him any more questions." (Mark 12:34)

Why not? Because the answers Jesus gave were more than satisfactory. I draw from my own experience, at those times when I am in more trouble because I am correct, than if I was wrong and could apologize. The Pharisees realized that were they to listen any more to Jesus, the command of love would have forced them to change their ways.

Queer theory also gets involved with Mark 12:31, about loving one's neighbor. Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler quote that verse in a theological examination of the appropriateness of what the Magisterium calls *sexual complementarity*. Like *domestic church* (1992), *sexual complementarity* (1981) is a creation of John Paul II. For *domestic church* see Reading 122B, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 27, 2006. For here, Salzman and Lawler make some interesting observations about sexual complementarity:

... God, Jesus, and husband are masculine and bridegroom; and creation, church, and wife are feminine and bride. ... claims that God created individuals complete in themselves but are incomplete when they come to form a couple ... The further claim that there is an intrinsic difference

¹⁷ Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989) 254.

¹⁸ Alan C. Mitchell, S.J., "The Use of *πρεπειν* and Rhetorical Propriety in Hebrews 2:10," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 1992) 682, 694; Craig R. Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 112.

¹⁹ Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., "Without Beginning of Days or End of Life" (Hebrews 7:3): *Topos for a True Deity*, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 3 (July 1991) 445.

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between male and female whereby the male and female find psycho-affective, social, and spiritual completion in one another only in marriage is unsubstantiated. ... provides no scientific evidence, there or elsewhere, to substantiate its claim that homosexual union is an obstacle to the normal development of children. There is, however, abundant evidence to the contrary. ... the CDF's [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith] premise is manifestly false ... magisterial positions on gays and lesbians tend to be theoretical hypotheses unsubstantiated by the practical experience of those gays and lesbians.²⁰

More important than whether or not Salzman and Lawler are correct, is their explanation of the proper role of theologians vis-à-vis the Magisterium and the rest of the Church. With Salzman and Lawler, these Notes approach theologians as part of the "communion-church as a whole" trying to discern the will of God.

There is a difference between the command to love in Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28 and Matthew 22:40. In Matthew, the command hangs over Israel like a mountain, posed to crush disobedience. Matthew must have been presenting Christianity to a Jewish community.²¹

These readings are about love as a command of God. Deuteronomy sets out the command, Psalm 18 exercises the command, Hebrews explains the command, and Mark shows that not everyone who knows the command lives it.

At a technical note, this is the first time these readings are explored. None of the Greek was translated. The Vulgate versification was entered into my copy of the Lectio.

As another technical note, for more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes

²⁰ Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, "Quaestio Disputata: Catholic Sexual Ethics: Complementarity and the Truly Human," Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 3 (September 2006) 628, 638, 639, 640, 641, 646, 648, 652.

²¹ Terence L. Donaldson, "The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 690.