

Personal Notes

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, 153C, October 30, 2010

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Readings

First Reading:	Wisdom 11:22—12:2
Responsorial Psalm:	Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14 (cf. 1)
Second Reading:	2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2
Alleluia:	John 3:16
Gospel:	Luke 19:1-10

Commentary

The readings for today are about humanizing social outcasts, rather than adding to their distress. The Wisdom readings are about God remaining with his human people, despite their sins. The psalm is about what makes humans human, namely their ability to pray, in all circumstances. *I will praise your name forever, my king and my God* (Psalm 145 (cf. 1)). Thessalonians is about the fact that *We always pray for you* (2 Thess 1:11). The Gospel is about Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, who stands and prays his prayer of repentance.

I see four applications for the Faithful not losing their humanity within a context of abusive secular authority. In Ancient History, Jesus showed the way, as he continued to pray on his cross. Similarities for the present include:

1. all of those abused by the sexual-cover-up by the Church hierarchy.
2. the Sisters in the United States undergoing the current Vatican inquisition.
3. the Catholic Biblical Association of America being stripped of an important source of income.
4. the ordinary Faithful being denied access to “controversial topics.”

The first abuse of authority listed above has been addressed numerous times in these Personal Notes. That leaves the other three for consideration.

Because there is no declared specific purpose, I am naming the current Vatican inquisition of the Sisters in the United States, persecution. Thinking, breathing, living in a human way, in and of itself, then, becomes the problem. When the Sisters act out of their human nature and think beyond the local Republican politics of the bishops, they must accept the consequences. The bishops are asserting that the bishops and only the bishops have the authority to pronounce what is morally correct in the current health-care debates. Score one for the Republicans. For the Sisters to stand up for the poor and maintain prayer-life with stressful consequences, including an inquisition and persecution, is an act of love for God.

Theological issues aside, the problem is Republican politics. There is another group in political trouble with the bishops, the Catholic Biblical Association of America

Personal Notes

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(CBA). To control their secular thinking, the bishops have been stripping the CBA of an important source of income royalties from translating Sacred Scripture. The problem looks the same, thinking beyond what is politically correct. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is forcing the Catholic Biblical Association of America (CBA) into a dispute over translation royalties from the New American Bible. The USCCB now wants to control the CBA.¹ Just a brief note: such control would simply add to the damage already being done by the bishops as they continue to leave the administration of The Catholic University of America under the censure by the American Association of University Professors that has lasted for twenty years, since 1990.²

The royalties in question subsidize the Catholic Biblical Quarterly (CBQ) that I index for use in these Personal Notes. Closing down the CBA is no small matter. According to outgoing CBA President, Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Sandra Schneiders of the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in California, the CBQ is “probably the premier Catholic biblical journal in the world.” The National Catholic Reporter (NCR) described the CBA convention as “the world’s largest and most diverse annual Catholic gathering of scripture scholars.”

The NCR reports, “the bishops’ conference has been seeking to have joint say over association projects or programs that receive funding from New American Bible royalties.” This has a chilling effect on any thinking outside of what may be politically correct and of Rush Limbaugh mentality. The conclusion, then, is that the behavior of the bishops actively opposes thinking outside of pay-pray-and-obey Catholicism.

Even the ordinary Faithful are beginning to recognize the reluctance of the bishops to move forward, beyond the status quo. The Book Discussion Group at Our Lady of Mount Carmel is currently reading My life with the Saints. The Thursday evening August 5th meeting brought the problem home to me. I pointed out that James Martin, S.J., wrote the following, “recently, during the course of writing this book, I was asked by my superiors not to write about certain topics that are still too controversial in the church.”³ The Faithful began to unpack what the passage meant for the thinking life of the Church. The more we talked, the more I suspected the Magisterium opposes any thinking whatsoever. Yet, thinking, rather than the all too frequent naval gazing, enables viable prayer for the Faithful.

This suspicion can account for why highly intelligent, highly educated young Catholics leave the Church of their Fathers. This suspicion can also account for why Sunday homilies rarely call attention to reading anything at all, beyond what appears in the official liturgical books, namely the Lectionary and Sacramentary. I try to praise God always for this opportunity to think about “his” glory.

¹ National Catholic Reporter: The Independent News Source, Vol. 46, No. 22 (August 20, 20 08) 1, 10.

² <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/about/censuredadmins/> Accessed August 23, 2010.

³ James Martin, S.J., My Life with the Saints (Chicago: Loyola Press: A Jesuit Ministry, 2006) 123.

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I have been wrongly assuming that homilists reading these Personal Notes would be able to reduce these Notes from the college level at which they are written, to the third grade level at which they ought to be preached at Sunday Mass. The homiletic focus here would be recognizing that controversial topics, as important as they are, are inappropriate for everyone. The message for the Faithful would be that they should not deny their own humanity by refusing to gain the background required to think beyond the homily. The other message for the Faithful would be to respect those abused by the sexual cover-up, the Sisters involved in the political health-care debates, and scholars working to give theology meaning in the Twenty-first Century. The most important message would be to keep all topics on the table for discussion under appropriate circumstances.

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Annotated Bibliography

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting details.

Wisdom 11:22—12:2

Wisdom 11:23

A. Andrew Das, "Paul and Words of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4-5 as a 'New Perspective' Case Study"⁴

Das argues that, contrary to recent scholarly opinion, Paul realized the distinction between the Jewish law as love and the Jewish law as ethnic observance.

Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14 (cf. 1)

2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2

Different languages perceive reality differently. The ancient Greeks used pronouns for emphasis. Translating this emphasis from the original Greek into English is an object of the highlighting on the last page of the hard copy, not found on the web site. The purpose of the highlighting is to transfer the Greek emphasis on personal pronouns into the English translation. Emphasized pronouns are highlighted in **blue**; intense pronouns in **red**. Words in **green** are not in the Greek. Words marked in **orange** are difficult to resolve because of differences in the original manuscripts. Words marked in **yellow** are remnants from before working with the Greek. Words underlined with a horizontal line, indicate places where the English translation uses a noun, corresponding to a pronoun in the Greek. Marks that do not highlight anything indicate untranslated pronouns.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 4 (October 2009) 800.

Personal Notes

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, 153C, October 30, 2010

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Anyone wanting a copy of the highlighted verses, please contact me at jirran@verizon.net. Thank you.

In verse 11, *always pray* and *every good purpose* are intense; the second *every* is omitted in the Greek. In verse 12, *you in him* is emphasized.

2 Thess 1:1—2:2:2

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.⁵

The Bibliotheek at Rijksuniversiteit, Ghent has a Third Century Papyrus with 2 Thess. 1:1-2; the Staatliche Museen in Berlin has a Seventh Century parchment with 2 Thess. 1:1—2:2.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2 2 Thess 2:2

Karl P. Donfried, review of Ben Witherington III, 1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary⁶

Where the Catholic Biblical Quarterly has *in 2 Thess 2:2*, the correct reading would be *in 2 Thess 2*.⁷ The reference, therefore, is not to these Sunday readings.

John 3:16

In the Greek, *everyone who believes* is emphasized.

Luke 19:1-10

The Greek in verses 2-5 is more of an equivalent than a formal translation. In other words, it is difficult briefly to point out the words emphasized. In verse 7, the Greek emphasizes *all saw this*. The Faithful can be sensitive to whether the Gospel reader reads with similar intensity.

The difficulty in verse 8 seems to be a direct object for *I shall give / to the poor*, that is not translated in English.

⁵ Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 97, 121.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2007) 841.

⁷ Email exchange with Karl Donfried, August 22, 2010.

Personal Notes

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Luke 19:10

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.⁸

The Alands explain that that Nestle-Aland omit Matt. 18:11 in the Greek. Neither the Post-Vatican II New American Bible, the Lectionary nor The New Jerusalem Bible use Matthew 18:11. The insertion would have looked to Luke 19:10.

The external evidence for the insertion of Matt. 18:11 is not very impressive: the manuscripts here, with the exception of D and W, are all of secondary rank (in L and ... and also in 892 it is an addition by a later hand), some even representing the Byzantine text. Further, the insertion itself has a divided tradition, with one strand reproducing Luke 19:10 verbatim and the other abbreviating it. The evidence for omission is far stronger. The “mission of Jesus” so impressively formulated in this verse is found inserted elsewhere as well; cf. the discussion of Luke 9:54-5 below (p. 309). It echoes statements found elsewhere in the Gospels, e.g., Mark 2:17; Matt. 9:13; Luke 5:32. The Parable of the Lost Sheep and the saying about the Little Ones provided an occasion for the insertion here.

Both the Pre-Vatican II King James and Douay-Rheims Bibles include Matt 18:11. In the final analysis this means that the Faithful need to be reserved about assurances that any translation accurately reflects the original Greek manuscripts.

Luke 19:1-10

John J. Pilch, review of Richard Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony⁹

Bauckham makes much of the fact that the name Zacchaeus means “Mr. Clean, Pure, Innocent” and that Luke may have made up the name. Pilch makes more of the fact that, though erudite, Bauckham ignores and opposes much of current scholarship.

⁸ Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 301.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 2008) 138a.

Personal Notes

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Luke 19:8

F. Scott Spencer, review of Greg Carey, Sinners: Jesus and His Earliest Followers¹⁰

This article generated my comments above the double line. Spencer reports that Carey seems to have overstated his case, “the Gospels include no stories in which he [Jesus] calls an individual sinner to repent” (p. 35).

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

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 72, No. 1 (January 2010) 137.