

Personal Notes
041107 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time 156C
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These readings are about having the courage of one's convictions, because the love of God penetrates every other love. These readings apply to thinking Catholics. These Notes draw from the commentary on the psalms by Hans-Joachim Kraus.¹

Kraus points to the phrase *on waking* to observe that the Psalm 17 refers to the unconscious mind. In other words, the psalmist is saying that in the transparency of dream sleep the human being no longer has the potential of hiding thoughts. While Psalm 17 proclaims the innocence of the psalmist, Psalm 17 also realizes that innocence is a gift from God, something for which to pray.

Psalm 17, completed in the First Century BC,² almost in the Christian era, is about the Messiah purging the temple. If we consider the Temple at Jerusalem symbolic for the souls of the Faithful, then Psalm 17 is about the effect of having the courage of one's convictions. The effect is to purge the soul of evil. When the Faithful pray for deliverance from evil, in the *Our Father*, they are also praying for the courage of their convictions.

Christian scholars must run the gauntlet of the Christian hierarchy and political correctness. All too often, those in ecclesiastical power and those comforted by things the way they are, whether Catholic or not, wrongly accuse thinkers of heresy. Galileo makes a pointed example. The problem with Galileo engaged the meaning of the natural law. Thinking individuals can suffer greatly in the contemporary church, especially those eighty-percent of U.S. Catholics who do not agree that the current position of the hierarchy on birth control is necessarily in accord with the natural law.

The moral theologian suffering the most in this way is Father Charles Curran, hounded out of The Catholic University of America and forced into Southern Methodist University. Father is a priest in good standing. My Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Newport News, Virginia has a book for petitions in the commons area. Both at daily Mass and in that book, I have prayed the following, "For the cross imposed since 1991 by the administration of The Catholic University of America for violating the American Association of University Professors standards of academic freedom; for this we pray." The administration violated those standards in the case of Father Curran. These comments do not necessarily mean that I deny what the hierarchy teaches about artificial means of birth control. These entire comments mean that to think differently from the hierarchy in this non-infallible matter causes suffering.

¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1961/1978, 1989, 1993) 243-251.

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

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14.

Verse 1 mentions the mother of the Maccabees. This was Judith, plainly in the tent of the Faithful, along with other First Testament women, including Shiphrah and Puah, the midwives of Moses; Deborah; Jael; Hannah; and Esther whom Richard Bauckham associates with their men.³ By specifically including both men and women, these readings include human sexuality.

In verse 10, the third of the seven Maccabean brother martyrs *put out his tongue at once when told to do so*, something similar to what the Christian intellectual life requires. The tongue offers one expression of what is on the conscious mind of the Faithful. While Psalm 17 is misrepresented as hoping for the resurrection of the dead,⁴ the Maccabean martyrs did hope for the resurrection.

2 Maccabees 7:1-42 probably provides the background for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace of Daniel 1:8-16.⁵ God protects convictions of the Faithful in the fiery furnace of persecution. The experiences of the Maccabees and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego probably served as background for Psalm 17.

Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

This is the only place the Lectionary uses this psalm. In verse 1, Psalm 17 asks for justice. The psalmist has done nothing wrong, yet he is suffering false accusation.

The psalmist has lips *without deceit*, something thinkers can do in situations otherwise calling for political correctness. The psalmist prays that God will restore a confused situation to order again. The situation is a disputed and contested righteousness. The psalmist is taking an oath of innocence, more clearly set out in Psalm 17:3-5.⁶

³ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 57.

⁴ Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1961/1978, 1989, 1993) 250.

⁵ Paul L. Redditt, "Daniel 9: Its Structure and Meaning," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 245.

⁶ Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1961/1978, 1989, 1993) 170.

Verses 5 and 6 are in transition. Verse 5 proclaims the innocence of the psalmist; verse 6 asks God to help. That can happen when someone without power proclaims a truth others in power do not want to hear. Only God and time can overcome the immediacy of the situation.

In verse 8, *the shadow of your wings* refers to the Cherubim angels protecting the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple, where the psalmist is taking refuge, sleeping there overnight. When the psalmist sings that *I in justice shall behold your face*, the psalmist is referring to his dreams. During sleep, nothing is hidden.

2 Thessalonians 2:16—3:6

In verse 16, Paul prays that *Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father ... encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word*. Word especially applies to the intellectual apostolate and to having the courage of one's convictions.

Revelation 1:5a, 6b

No more can Jesus be killed than can the truth, thinkers seek.

Luke 20:27-38

There is a traditional aspect of marriage whereby her father gives the bride away as some sort of political and economic transaction solidified in a cultural bond. When Jesus teaches there will be no marriage in heaven, he is referring to the crass aspects of love.

In another place, Jesus models the love of God for his Church upon the love of married people. The point is that the love will endure, along with fulfilled Faith. The further point is that what God has planned for humans in everlasting life is beyond the wildest of dreams. Having the courage of one's convictions applies not only to family values, but to all other values as well.

Verse 36 is the second mention of angels; the first is the wings of the Cherubim in Psalm 17:8. Angels, being without parts, can no more be destroyed than can truth or the courage of one's convictions. Verse 36 asserts that the Faithful *can no longer die, for they are like angels*.

As an aside note, two facts make these Notes decided different from the past: (1) the Catholic Biblical Quarterly Index has only two scholarly articles to incorporate and (2) the initial rendition of these Notes was entirely lost to cyberspace, meaning they are entirely reconstructed and rethought through. The relative lack of scholarly articles permits a careful look at what Kraus wrote in his commentary on the Psalms. See footnotes 1, 4, and 6.

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To conclude, these Notes are about thinkers having the courage of their convictions. The Maccabees stand up before the intimidation of the king. Psalm 17 stands up before the witness of the unconscious mind. 2 Thessalonians encourages the Faithful to keep the Faith. The Gospel explains that eternal life is about having a conviction to love God, a love that subsumes all else.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.