

Personal Notes
051113 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time 157A
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On September 21, the Pennsylvania grand jury, many of whom were Catholic, reported, “the archdiocese’s handling of the abuse scandal was at least as immoral as the abuse itself.”¹ Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, who covered up what his priests were doing, was just as guilty as his priests were. Because I think that the way to end abuse is to expose abuse, though the following sentence makes me very uneasy, I present it anyway. Cardinal Bevilacqua and the Philadelphia archdiocese with “countless acts of sexual depravity against children,” Pope John Paul II and the Vatican must share the blame for placing these difficult Lectionary readings before the Faithful. Whoever indirectly assigned these readings for the Lectionary, like the priests raping boys in Philadelphia, demonstrated that the Church is human.

With outmoded patriarchal efficiency, the readings deny adult women adult dignity. The first reading, from Proverbs 13:10, describes a *worthy wife* as an *unfailing prize*, rather than as an adult marriage partner. The second reading from Psalm 128:3 describes a good wife as a *fruitful vine*, a thing. In 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Paul proclaims that the end of the world is like a woman in labor. The Gospel, Matthew 25:14-13, by having no women capable of earning an income, continues to deny women their dignity as active participants in either a marriage or the economy, able to care for themselves and children, if necessary.

Educated women, now capable of escaping sexual abuse by earning their own livings, deserve better. This is not to deny that educated women, like the women of France, are only reproducing at a rate of 1.8 births per person, when 2.4 are required to keep the population stable. The tragedy lies in only presenting males as deserving of authority, exemplified by ecclesiastical authority, and of not objecting to sexual abuse of girls, unless boys also become involved in the clerical sexual abuse scandals.

The proper language may be *hierarchical sexual abuse scandals*. The scandal is not with the clergy, but with the bishops.² Eugene Cullen Kennedy, emeritus professor of psychology at Loyola University, Chicago, describes hierarchical management style as a *beached whale*, especially evident in how the hierarchy handles the scandal of sexual abuse.³

¹ Ralph Cipriano, Philadelphia, “Cover Story: Philadelphia Report; Grand jury findings: Philadelphia cardinals `excused and enabled abuse, covered up crimes,” National Catholic Reporter Vol. 41, No. 43 (October 7, 2005), 5.

² Christopher F. Masters, Atherton, Calif. Letter to the Editor, National Catholic Reporter October 21, 2005, page 25, column 1.

³ Eugene Cullen Kennedy, “Bishops and the Beached Whale: They wait for signal from new pope, but bishops need to let hierarchical style die,” National Catholic Reporter, October 21, 2005, pages 11-13.

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For educated women and men who care, there is a lot to swallow in the readings for today. 1 Thessalonians 5:11, not used in these readings but only five verses away, is about “building up” members of Christ’s body.⁴ The readings for today tear down, rather than build up. What is used in these readings is a warning contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, *sudden disaster ... like labor pains upon a pregnant woman*, presented as the wrath of God.⁵

Proverbs 31:10-31 is very carefully thought out, as an acrostic passage.⁶ This means that the scholars of the assembly were responsible for composing the message. They insisted on a patriarchal system of society.

As a point of research interest, Personal Notes from 2002 are settling into a better pattern of using the Index. Both the Index of verses appearing in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly and Personal Notes, using those verses, are on the web at <http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes/Personal%20Notes.htm> This means I may begin adding earlier volumes of the Quarterly to the Index, as my effort to do the research lightens. The October 2005 CBQ issue is now on the web.

While Psalm 128 is not acrostic, Psalm 128 does continue to treat women as things, as prizes, as vines, useful for covering a man’s house. Psalm 128 is freer flowing than Proverbs. That notwithstanding, the Lectionary hints at the problem in its translation of the antiphon, Psalm 128 1a. first as antiphon, *Blessed are those ...* then as verse, *Blessed are you ...*, and, finally differently from Holy Family Sunday, *Blessed is everyone. ...* The Faithful may wonder about where the women are with the patriarchal translators, between *those*, *you*, and *everyone*.

Paul does see a parallel between entering eternal life and giving birth, but not as something dignifying women. Paul regards the end of the world as something like giving childbirth. Paul seems to be comparing female with male biology, to the detriment of females. Paul seems to accept abuse of females.

The varying translations of the Greek for *time*, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, contradict part of the reality of giving birth. The Faithful do have a sense of the timeframe, if not the exact hour, in which natural childbirth will take place.

⁴ Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 70.

⁵ 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) 413.

⁶ Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, “Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 444.

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1 Thessalonians 5:1:	
<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	Concerning times and seasons ...
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	De temporibus autem et momentis ...
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	But of the times and moments ...
<u>King James</u> (1611):	But of the times and the seasons ...
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	... about "times and seasons" ...
<u>New American</u> (1970):	Concerning times and seasons ...
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	About times and dates ...

The Greek uses two different words, both of which are translated *time*. Unlike English, the Koine Greek of the Bible does not show relationships of time with verb tenses. This reality hampers close translations. The Greek for 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 has seven indications of difficulties with surviving manuscripts, none of which involve the phrase mentioned above. Each of the variations, however, leaves room for the Church to decide which variation to follow. This permits change over time, change that is overdue for the readings used today.

Father Charles E. Curran lays out the principles involved. "Classicism tends to see reality in terms of the static, the immutable, the eternal, and the unchanging. Historical consciousness gives a greater recognition to historicity, change, the particular, and the diverse."⁷ These Personal Notes are written from the perspective of a professional historian. Scholar that he is, Curran goes on:

No matter what the nature of this assistance of the Holy Spirit is, the reality remains ... that papal teaching in the Catholic Church on specific moral issues has changed so that the church now accepts what was once condemned (usury, religious freedom, human rights, democracy) and condemns what was once accepted (slavery, persecution of heretics, the patriarchal family). Thus, history bears out that even the papal teaching office itself has experienced the limitations of reason and even to some extent the sinfulness that affects all human reason and human decision-making.⁸

Matthew is about the three slaves, which the Lectionary translates as servants. This parable about using talents can be interpreted in many ways. The usual way is to regard the king as God. Another way is to regard the slaves as exposing the cruelty of

⁷ Charles E. Curran, The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005) 107.

⁸ Charles E. Curran, The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005) 119-120.

the powerful males in the Matthean parables.⁹ Without any concern for abusive males, year after year, my parish priests have preached about developing one's talents, implicitly, within a capitalist market economy. The preachers entirely avoid the matter of sexual harassment and hierarchical sexual abuse.

The political situation at the time, also accounts for how the Church preserved the various divergent parables. This particular parable represents Jesus as judge, an extraordinary assertion, beyond the actions and attitudes of previous Israelite prophets.¹⁰ Matthew insists that human hierarchy is not the hierarchy of God.

This parable helps demonstrate the concern of Matthew for the mixed truly catholic nature of the Church.¹¹ Matthew is trying to include the Pharisees. To say that the Mother of God, Mary, is excluded is not entirely wrong. After all, she is not Pope. In this instance, Mary shows everyone how to deal with outrageous human fortune. However, it is incorrect to see the role of Mary as mother as the "one and only" role for women.

The broad context (Matthew 24:3—25:46) of this parable in the Gospel of Matthew is preparation for the passion narrative (Matthew 26:1-2).¹² Male abuse of women does run parallel to male abuse of Jesus. Just as society can develop in abusive ways, so can society change into less abusive manners. To be dealt with, the abusive manners must first be exposed.

By not objecting to sexual harassment and abuse, these readings are about the teaching Magisterium of Holy Mother the Church insulting women. The readings only present women as doing women's work, a vine, or in childbirth. The readings omit the ability of women to earn a living, though local churches are forced to hire women in many capacities, always under male authorities. This omission of objection is particularly galling to the Faithful women who became educated so that they would have an alternative to accepting abuse because, otherwise, they had to remain in the house.

⁹ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 237-238. 251.

¹⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 55, 77.

¹¹ Daniel C. Olson, "Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 444.

¹² 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.

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