

Personal Notes
061126 Thirty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 161B
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In Daniel 7:13-14, clouds bring the Son of man [the Lectionary does not capitalize *man*] in an everlasting dominion. In Revelation 1:7, Jesus Christ is coming amid the clouds, clouds relevant to the clouds in Daniel 7:13. The clouds are from incense smoke used in Temple worship.¹ After clouds disappear, what remains are the lives of the Faithful, who bring the Son of man in an everlasting dominion.

The Son of man arriving on the clouds is the Messiah. Though Daniel does not clearly define Messiah, in the Gospels, Jesus often refers to himself, as Son of Man. Jesus is the Messiah. The cloud of incense used at funerals and elsewhere, symbolically brings Jesus into the presence of the Faithful.

The everlasting dominion of Daniel 1:14 is the Kingdom of God, mentioned in Revelation 1:6. In Revelation, the Faithful are the Kingdom. By their lives, the Faithful bring the Kingdom of God so that “all peoples, nations, and languages serve him” (Daniel 7:14).

Christ the King is the more popular name for this, the last Sunday in Ordinary Time, a time for recalling the end-time, when Jesus returns to judge the world. These Personal Notes focus on the use of incense at funerals. Incense does relate to Christ the King, because incense is associated with the ancient Jewish monarchy. Since Jesus is of the House of David, so, in a sense, must be his followers.

These Notes cast a democratic, rather than a hierarchic, understanding of the apocalyptic power of the Messiah. Though the Jewish prophets of old were downgrading their kings, these Notes are trying not to downgrade the Church hierarchy. The approach here is that the Church hierarchy participates in offering the incense of their lives to God in a sweet odor of sanctity, as do the Faithful.

Scholars are broadening the historical concept of Messiah from that of an individual to include the Faithful as a group.² In extending the sense of the Messiah to the Faithful, these Notes include the hierarchy. The use of incense at funerals symbolically brings God into the presence of the Faithful through the memory of the recently deceased. The Faithful, then, become the presence of God to one another.

Scholars are doing much work with the Book of Daniel. Both Daniel and the Book of Revelation are apocalyptic. Daniel and Esther connect the effort required to maintain

¹ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 65,

² Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985).1485, fn k. Also see G. R. Beasley-Murray, “The Interpretation of Daniel 7,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1983) 44-58.

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religious identity at the same time one incorporates new insights into personal identity. In the Book of Daniel, Shadrack, Meshak, and Abednego refuse to change their ways. In the Book of Esther, Esther adapts to the ruling Persians, as much as she is able.³

Sara R. Johnson regards Daniel, Tobit, Esther, and Judith as “Jewish fictions,” a type of literary genre.⁴ This means that the ancient writers are searching for a sense of identity. Funerals offer an opportunity to do likewise, not in the sense of a top-down standard the Faithful must meet, but in the sense of a bottom-up examination of how Christians actually lead their lives. This is not to say that Christians are perfect, but that God forgives them through his gracious love. Funerals are an occasion to search for and praise the Christ one finds in the Faithful.

At funerals, the Faithful incorporate and further the identity of the deceased into their own identities. The presider incenses the funeral bier, recalling Daniel 7:13 that the Messiah will come on clouds and Revelation 1:7, “he is coming amid the clouds.” The clouds are likely clouds of incense, as used in the Second Temple at the time of Jesus.⁵

According to Margaret Barker, “the human figure goes with clouds—the clouds of incense with which the human figure entered the holy of holies—and is offered ... before the Ancient of Days [sic] (Dan. 7:13).”⁶ In another place, Barker writes in the same light, “entering the holy of holies with a cloud of incense is the temple reality that underlies the visions of the human figure entering heaven with clouds or of [sic] the LORD appearing in clouds upon the throne.”⁷ Funerals do celebrate the Faithful entering heaven with clouds of incense.

Barker goes on, “The great vision in Daniel 7, the Man [sic] figure going with clouds into heaven, was inspired by the ancient belief that the offering made on earth ‘was’

³ Mary E. Mills, “Household and Table: Diasporic Boundaries in Daniel and Esther,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 408-420.

⁴ Sara R. Johnson, “Novelistic Elements in Esther: Persian or Hellenistic, Jewish or Greek?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 571-589.

⁵ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 65,

⁶ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 82.

⁷ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 222.

the offering in heaven.”⁸ Some scholars think Daniel gave up hope in a Messiah, perhaps because of past disappointments.⁹ Francis J. Moloney thinks that the figure in Daniel 7:13 “represents the suffering and ultimately vindicated holy ones of the Most High.”¹⁰ Suffering and frustration are always present at funerals.

Clouds of incense not only bring to mind the presence of God as the Jews wandered in the desert. Incense also brings to mind the self-offering of the Faithful in their own priestly experience. Where Daniel 7:13 has the Son of man *presented* before the Ancient One, the Ancient One is God. The Hebrew for *presented* contains the sense of an offering.¹¹ By offering his life to God, Jesus enables the Faithful to do the same, as a type of incense. What happens at Christian funerals is that the Faithful offer the life of the deceased to the Ancient One, God.

Paul Niskanen writes that Daniel has a theology of history, in which the good and bad rise and fall with the vicissitudes of life, with a final reconciliation to happen over the course of time. In Luke 10:18 and 19, Jesus calls upon the sense of history in Daniel, particularly Daniel 7:13.¹² Some have found Daniel 7:13 a secular call for the later reincarnation of Nero.¹³ The Greek secular outlook influences Daniel.¹⁴ The Faithful live in a secular world in which a religious sense of clouds of incense is appropriate to examine.

⁸ Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 104.

⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, “The Interpretation of Daniel 7,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1983) 50.

¹⁰ John R. Donahue, S.J., review of Francis J. Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, *Theological Studies*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (March 2006) 214.

¹¹ Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 104.

¹² Susan R. Garrett, “Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 1990) 668.

¹³ Hans-Josef Klauck, “Do They Never Come Back? *Nero Redivivus* and the Apocalypse of John,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (October 2006) 688.

¹⁴ Thomas B. Dozeman, review of Paul Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 696-697.

The first Christians did not immediately take to the idea that Jesus, the Messiah, was a priest offering sacrifice. The adoption of priestly symbolism for Jesus only happened after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.¹⁵ Incorporating Prophet, Priest, and King into Christian identity, nevertheless, was an early Christological development.¹⁶

So it is with the Faithful. When they offer their lives up as a living sacrifice to the Father, their priestly identity is not immediately evident. Psalm 93 is about recognizing the LORD as King, an act of faith,¹⁷ an act of faith in the sense of the African-American mantra that God is good, all the time and all the time, God is good. Like incense, the Faithful offer the joys and sorrows of their lives in praise of God, with the psalmist. The Order of Christian Funerals makes Psalm 93 available, with the antiphon, "From clay you shaped me; with flesh you clothed me; Redeemer, raise me on the last day."¹⁸ Relating funerals to the Feast of Christ the King, therefore, is consistent with Church liturgy.

Revelation connects the reality of God with the expectation of the last things. Last things include not only the end of individual earthly lives, but also the return of Jesus in glory at the end of the world. Interestingly, as literature, Revelation is not well written. As Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., words it, Revelation is "the least literary of the NT [New Testament] books."¹⁹ The grammarians offer many suggestions for translating the choppy Greek into English, which are too numerous to include here.

¹⁵ <http://www.answers.com/topic/siege-of-jerusalem-70> 061024

¹⁶ PHEME PERKINS, review of Martin Hengel und Anna Maria Schwemer, Der Messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien, Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2005) 447.

¹⁷ Alfred Cody, O.S.B., "'Little Historical Creed' or 'Little Historical Anamnesis'?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2006) 5.

¹⁸ N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 272.

¹⁹ Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 6.

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The most interesting aspect of the Greek is group identity. Revelation 1:8 proclaims that the people will lament (Revelation 1:7) how they treated Jesus. Similarly, the Faithful, at funerals, are often in tears because the departed no longer answers them. There are at least three Greek words for *people*, one connoting all people on earth, another connoting a nation, and a third, used in Revelation 1:7, connoting tribes. Revelation is incorporating the identity of the tribes of Israel into the identities of nations and of all people throughout the earth. Such an examination of identity is an appropriate prayerful exercise at funerals.

In the Gospel of John, used for this Sunday, Christ the King, Jesus sees himself as God. John regards his Gospel as the culmination of Sacred Scripture.²⁰ Scholars like to speculate about whether and how Jesus understood his own Divinity. As PHEME PERKINS writes in a book review, "Jesus was able to define what it meant to be God's anointed because there was no well-defined concept 'messiah' (69)."²¹ At funerals, the Faithful may do likewise as they try to examine their consciences as Christians. At funerals, Christians are particularly open to defining the Christian life.

How are the Faithful to Christianize war? In the Fourteenth Century, during the Hundred Years War, John Wycliffe (1330-1384), struggled with defining the Christian life. Wycliffe struggled with identity. In passing, what historians label the Hundred Years War, was not a war, but a series of wars between England and France. Neither did those wars last a hundred years, but longer. In examining the moral right to go to war, Wycliffe looked to the Gospel for today, John 18:36, *my kingdom is not here*.²² Clouds in the Gospel Passion, e.g. John 18:36, hide rather than reveal the Messiah, at least until the Resurrection in which all Christians hope. Contemporary scholars relate to the concerns of Wycliffe.

In line with the pacifism in John 18:36, Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., finds a similar pacifism in Daniel. "G. von Rad correctly observes: 'Without any doubt, the writer of Daniel sides with those who endure persecution rather than those who take up arms

²⁰ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "The Gospel of John as Scripture," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 2005) 459.

²¹ PHEME PERKINS, review of Martin Hengel und Anna Maria Schwemer, Der Messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien, Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2005) 446.

²² Ian Christopher Levy, "John Wyclif: Christian Patience in a Time of War," Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2005) 356. Wycliffe is the way the name is usually spelled. Levy does not explain his change.

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against it.”²³ As Daniel and Wycliffe struggled with how to react to abuse, so do the Faithful struggle with the War in Iraq as one of the issues in the United States. Furthermore, anyone living a Christian life puts up with a certain amount of abuse, something useful to contemplate at funerals, even in the light of the Iraqi War.

When Jesus faced abuse, he did not defend himself before Pilate. His lack of defense had severe consequences, because the legal assumption would be guilt. Pilate, therefore, crucified Jesus. Pilate, however, did not persecute the disciples of Jesus, at least not in the records. This means that Pilate held no animosity toward Christians.²⁴ At funerals, the Faithful celebrate the lives of the deceased for being consumed like incense, not retaliating, like Jesus, because of love of neighbor and God. When the cloud announcing the presence of the Messiah disappears, the memory of the Messiah remains incorporated into the lives of the Faithful.

The results of a Christian life are not always winning friends and influencing people. Research has shown that the more Faith one has, the more likely one is to be an outcast. Funerals, like canonizations, are good times for the Faithful to reflect on how they treat holy people.

The readings for the Feast of Christ the King, using incense, track a divine identity to Christians as they try to relive the life of Christ within their own Messianic lives. Daniel symbolizes this divinity with the metaphor of the cloud, a cloud of incense, on which the Messiah will arrive. Psalm 93, available for funerals, is more direct, proclaiming that the LORD is king. Revelation proclaims that those rejecting Jesus, will come to regret. Finally, Jesus, as he is condemned to death, proclaims that he is King of the universe and that his kingdom is not of this world. So it is with the Faithful at the time of their funerals.

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

²³ G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962-65, 2.315 as cited by Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., “The One in Human Likeness and the Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 1977) 14.

²⁴ PHEME PERKINS, review of Martin Hengel und Anna Maria Schwemer, Der Messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien, Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2005) 447.