

Preaching the Bible

Fresh Translations of Lectionary Readings with Homily Notes

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Good preaching changes lives – so does bad preaching

Lectio Divina

Lectio divina – a prayerful reading -- of the Bible, is not studying the Bible, preparing for some apostolate or reading the Bible in order to have some extraordinary experience. *Lectio divina* is reading the Bible in order to listen to what our godparent has to say to us and to live more deeply as Jesus, our teacher, lived. *Lectio divina* is standing before this word with the words of Samuel on our lips: *Speak, YHWH, your servant is listening* (1 Sam 3:10).¹

The phrase *lectio divina* is Latin for *sacred reading* or better *reading which is sacred*.² Ordinarily *lectio* is a deliberately slow consideration of a tradition from the Bible, not to gain information but to put you in the presence of your godparent. Basic to this meditation practice is a union with our godparent. Resist the temptation of covering a given amount of material within a prescribed time. This is more difficult to sustain than it may seem. Linger over a single word or phrase for an indefinite period of time, trusting that it will lead further. Such is one of the most attractive features to *lectio divina*, for it is open-ended and subject to continuous growth.

Lectio divina synchronizes our daily life with the spirituality of the lectionary.³ Beginning each day by reminding ourselves to live this word is essential to both good living and good preaching. Using the lectionary for meditation enriches our participation in the Eucharist as a member of the congregation, in the pulpit or at the altar.

In my practice of *lectio divina*, I get up early and go to my desk with a cup of coffee.

- I go to the USCC web site:
<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/today.htm>.
- I copy and paste readings for the day into a Microsoft Word file.
- I save the reading under the number assigned to the readings in the Lectionary. For example: **487_31stWE_ORDTIME.DOCX**.

¹ Carlos Mesters, O. Carm. -- Advice on *Lectio*. <http://www.carmelite.org/mesters/mesters3.htm>

² Richard McCambly OCSO, "The *Lectio Divina* Homepage," <http://www.lectio-divina.org/>

³ Luke Dysinger OSB, "How to Practice *Lectio Divina*," <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Catholic/2000/08/How-To-Practice-Lectio-Divina.aspx>

- I use the footnote option under the Insert tab to keep a record of your thoughts, responses and questions.

To close my *lectio divina* I use the readings to write a prayer using the format of the presidential prayers from the Eucharist.

- I address my prayer, not to Jesus, but to my godparent: *Father of Jesus* or *'Abba* or *My Godparent*. Jesus inspires me to call on his godparent directly, and stands with me as I pray.
- I recall something my godparent did in the past: *You sent your son to teach us to be selfless, not selfish...* (Luke 14)
- I ask for help to change my life. For example: *...help me to pay the price of this day, without complaint...* (Luke 14)
- I end by affirming my desire to live as Jesus lived. For example: *...I take my place beside Jesus, our teacher. Amen.* The longstanding tradition of translating Jesus' titles as *Lord* and *Christ*, I translate as *our teacher*.

Very often our concerns, our relationships, our hopes and aspirations, interrupt meditation. We experience our godparent reaching out to us through our own memories. Our own personal story becomes salvation history.

Read the biblical traditions slowly. Savor each portion, constantly listening for the *...still, small voice* of a word or phrase that somehow says: *I am with you today*. Do not expect to have an ecstatic experience – to hear voice or see visions. *Lectio divina* seeks the divine voice in silence. It gently invites us ever more deeply into an awareness of the presence of our godparent in our lives.

Slowly repeat one word or phrase at a time as a mantra for the day, allowing it to interact with our inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of us that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to our godparent along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite us into the dialogue.

We need to speak with our godparent. Whether we use words, ideas, or images is not important. We need to interact with our godparent as we would with one who we know loves and accepts us. We need to give 'Abba what we have discovered during our experience of meditation. We need to experience our godparent by using the word or phrase we have received as a means of blessing and of transforming the ideas and memories which our meditation has awakened. We need to give our godparent what we have found within our

heart. Make it our mantra for the day. My default mantra is: *O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me.*

Picture yourself embraced by your godparent like the son in *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1669) by Rembrandt which was such a catalyst for the spirituality of Henri Nouwen in his *Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992). When your godparent invites you to return to your prayerful reading of the Bible during meditation, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they are not. Rejoice in the knowledge that your godparent is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Re-read passages more than once. Savor the context of their words. Choose a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times, a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for *lectio divina*. It is not necessary to assess anxiously the quality of your *lectio divina*, as if you were *performing* or seeking some goal. *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of your godparent by prayerfully the reading the portions of the Bible assigned by the lectionary for the day.

Listening to your Godparent does not depend on you or on your effort. It depends entirely on your Godparent, who freely talks with you and allows you to listen to that voice. Thus you need to *prepare yourself by asking your Godparent to send the Holy Spirit*, since without the Spirit of your Godparent, it is impossible to discover the meaning of the Word which the lectionary has prepared for us today (John 14:26;16:13; Luke 11:13).

Create surroundings which will facilitate recollection and an attentive listening to the readings. For this, you must build a prayerful place within and around you. Putting your body in the right position helps focus your mind.

When you open the Bible, you have to be conscious that you are opening a book which is not yours. It belongs to the community. In your *lectio divina* you are setting foot in the great traditions of Jewish, Christian and Muslim people of faith, which they have handed down through the centuries. Your prayerful reading is like a ship which a winding river carries down to the sea. The light shining from the sea has already enlightened the dark night of many generations. In having your *lectio divina* you are not alone. You are united to brothers and sisters who, before you, succeeded in meditating day and night upon these traditions.

An attentive and fruitful meditation on the readings for the day involves asking: *What does the reading say?* This requires silence. Everything in you must *be silent*, so that nothing stands in the way of your hearing what the

readings say to you and so that you do not make the readings say what you would like to hear.

Then you must ask: *What does the reading say to me?* Dialogue with the reading, so that its meaning comes across with freshness and penetrates your life today. Like Mary, ponder what you read and *meditate on the teachings of your Godparent. Let the Word of Your Godparent dwell abundantly on your lips and in your heart.*

Dialogue is followed by discovery – asking: *What does the reading invite me to say to my Godparent?* This step invites us to make a commitment or answer a call. .

The goal of *lectio divina* is contemplation – an on-going focus on the *wisdom which leads to salvation* (2 Tim 3:15). We begin to see the world and life through the eyes of the poor who are the eyes of your Godparent. We must eliminate from our way of thinking all that smacks of being powerful. We recognize that many things we believed or were doing which we mistakenly assumed were an expression of our gratitude to our Godparent or living as Jesus lived, were, in reality, nothing more than the pursuit of our own interests to become powerful – successful, respected, admired. During *lectio divina* we come to see that in our lives true love for our Godparent is revealed in love of our neighbor. It is like saying always, *Let it be done to me according to your Word* (Luke 1:38).

So that our *lectio divina* does not end up being an affirmation of our own individual conclusions, it is important to check the results of our reading with our community. Otherwise our *lectio divina* might lead nowhere (Gal 2:2). We need to check the conclusions of our *lectio divina* with what is going *on in life around us*. It was in confronting their faith with the situation existing around them that created these biblical traditions. When *lectio divina* does not reach its goal in our lives, the reason is not always our failure to pray, our lack of attention to the teachings of our faith communities or our lack of serious study of the Bible. Often it is simply our failure to pay attention to the crude and naked reality of the poor around us. Anyone who lives superficially, without seeking to go deeper, will not be able to reach the source where the psalms, for example, were born. Finally, check the conclusions of your reading with the work of biblical scholars. *Lectio divina* cannot remain chained to the letter. The inspired meaning of the traditions is seldom what we think it means when we first encounter it (2 Cor 3:6). Common sense is a most important quality of the spiritual life. Common sense will be nourished by critical study of the written Word.

Paul taught the communities he founded to consider themselves as the first audiences to ever hear their biblical traditions. He wanted them to assume that these traditions spoke to them, and to the challenges they faced in their lives of faith (1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4). *Lectio divina* invites us to listen to the readings for the day not as something which belonged to someone else, but as our own, created for us and handed on personally to us.

Paul also taught his communities to *keep faith in Jesus Christ in your eyes*, since it is only through faith in Jesus, our teacher, that the veil is removed and the readings reveal their meaning for us (2 Cor 3:16; 2 Tm 3:15; Rom 15:4).

For Paul *Jesus Christ Crucified* (2 Cor 2:2), *a stumbling block for some and foolishness for others* was the focus of his own *lectio divina*. Jesus opened his eyes to see how, among the poor on the outskirts of Corinth, the foolishness and stumbling block of the cross was confounding the wise, the strong and those who believed themselves to be something in this world (1 Cor 1:21-31).

Paul always joined his *I* to the *we* of his communities and those founded by others. *Lectio divina* is never the work of *I* alone, or *we* alone, but us together (Acts 13:1-3).

Finally, Paul taught his communities to keep life's problems in mind -- all that is happening in the communities support you as well as the communities you serve. The starting point of Paul's *lectio divina* was what was going on in the communities which he founded (1 Cor 10:1-13).

When you pray the readings for the day, be aware that the Bible is a *symbol* (Heb. 11:19) -- a window through which you see what happened to others in the past and *a mirror in which you can see what is happening to you today* (1 Cor 10:6-10). A prayerful reading is like a gentle flood which, little by little, waters the earth and makes it fruitful (Isa 55:10-11). In beginning of your *lectio divina* you grow like a tree planted near streams of water (Psa 1:3). You cannot see the growth but you can see its results in your encounter with yourself, with your Godparent and with others ...*like a flood that washes clean, like a fire that devours, so is your Word, leaving its mark upon me each times it passes.*

Fresh Translations

James Henry Breasted (1865-1935) pioneered the art of introducing the Bible in its ancient literary context. By 1907 he had published five volumes of *Ancient Texts*, including translations of virtually every document recovered to that time. In 1919, he founded the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago whose museum today houses an impressive collection of ancient Near Eastern artifacts.

Leo Oppenheim (1904-1974) was an outstanding philologist and Assyriologist, whose major contribution to scholarship was made as the editor of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*. He, however, described himself as a cultural anthropologist. By expanding his interest from text to society, Oppenheim did much to make Mesopotamian texts as understandable in the world today as those of Greece and Rome. In *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (1977:3), Oppenheim issued an early call for more readable translations of ancient Near Eastern parallels.

“. . . translated texts tend to speak more of the translator than of their original message. It is not too difficult to render texts written in a dead language as literally as possible and to suggest to the outsider, through the use of quaint and stilted locutions, the alleged awkwardness and archaism of a remote period. Those who know the original language retranslate anyhow, consciously or unconsciously, in order to understand it. It is nearly impossible to render any but the simplest Akkadian text in a modern language with a satisfactory approximation to the original in content, style, or connotation. A step nearer to the realization of the legitimate desire to make the texts "speak for themselves" would bring us, perhaps, an anthology of Akkadian texts, with a critical discussion of the literary, stylistic, and emotional setting of each translated piece."

The traumatic experiences of World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) had a dramatic impact, not only on politics and geography, but also on how scholars viewed the relationship of language and the past. Like Gabrielle M. Spiegel (Johns Hopkins University) in *The Task of the Historian* (2009), they now label this shift the *linguistic turn*. Prior to the wars scholars considered language capable of giving detached and objective reports of past events. After the wars, they realized that no language could give detached and objective reports of trench warfare, the effects of mustard gas, the amphibious landings at Normandy and Iwo Jima or the Holocaust. So scholars began to consider language a strategy for processing human experience, and realized that what language hands on about the past are carefully crafted explanations of the meaning of past events for their own times. Therefore, it is important to remember that the biblical traditions in the lectionary are not as interested in what happened, as they are in what the past – recent or distant -- meant for their day. My translations here are not detached, objective reports of the past, as much as they are responsibly crafted experiences of the world of the Bible and the Bible itself for readers today.

John J. Pilch (Johns Hopkins University) is a biblical scholar who has devoted his career to carefully translating the social world of the Bible. In *Proverbs in MENA (Middle East North Africa) Cultural Content* (2015) Pilch describes how traditional cultures use language to program the world views and behaviors of their peoples in ways that peoples of Enlightenment cultures do not understand or appreciate. One of his most interesting is *normative inconsistency* which means that people in traditional cultures are comfortable with ambivalence and inconsistency. Therefore, sometimes they use language to describe an ideal behavior, for example: *...securing loans to outsiders with collateral causes trouble...* (Prov 11:15). Other times they use language to describe practical behavior: *...be sure to secure loans to outsiders with collateral...* (Prov 20: 16). They expect the wise to know when to make loans and accept collateral, and when not to make loans and accept collateral. People in Enlightenment cultures find such contradicting advice in the same book of the Bible to be a symptom of reckless decision making and a culture with a failed values system. They want Proverbs to teach people to make loans secured with collateral, or teach them not to, but not both. They have no tolerance for ambiguity or inconsistency.

I have tried to meet the challenges of semiotics and structural linguistics – two of the philosophies of language which both defined and developed the linguistic turn, and to remain sensitive to the cultural characteristics which social scientists consider critical for reliable interpretations of ancient Near Eastern traditions. Therefore, these translations are not literal, visual, text-oriented translations, but responsible, reader-oriented translations. The English vocabulary and idiom emphasizes the relationship between these ancient Near Eastern traditions and the Bible. They imitate commonly used patterns of speech today to avoid awkwardness and archaism. The translations also avoid as much sexism and racism as possible. There was certainly sexism and racism in the world of the Bible, and where it clearly appears in a tradition, we have left it in our readings. Where the traditions are indifferent to questions of gender and race, we have tried not to introduce it. Hopefully, these translations are dynamically equivalent to the way in which they were heard, and felt, and understood in their own worlds.

Homilies

Whenever I have an invitation to preach, I do so without a text in front of me, even though I write and re-write my homilies beforehand. For me, preaching requires eye-contact with my audience.

Not all the homilies here have been preached. Many are simply my own *lectio divina* for the day. Not all of the homilies here are in final form. Some are simply notes or resources which I have used for meditation.

The translations and homilies here are my attempt at *A Prayer Journal* (January 1946-September 1947) kept by Flannery O'Connor. She was not 21 years old when she began this journal, and at 22, when she wrote the last entry, it was clear that her prayer journal had already made a difference in her life, as making these translations and composing these homilies has made in mine. O'Connor prayed seeking the gift of mysticism. I am praying simply to be able to live more like Jesus lived. Preaching the Bible is not a means to an end, it is a pause in my day where I check my map to try and avoid losing my way or getting distracted from the commitment I made in my baptism to live a life of biblical faith.

O'Connor was a woman who considered her relationship with God as a love affair. God was not a sexual partner for O'Connor, but a muse who inspired her to write. I am a man who considers my relationship with my godparent to be not just a friendship, but a relationship in which my godparent is a mentor or spiritual director.

O'Connor was dying of lupus, which would take her life at age 39 in 1964. I hope that I have a genuine sense of my own mortality, but I am not – to my knowledge – in imminent danger of dying. I write expected to live out this day, and to begin tomorrow with another moment of *lectio divina*. I am on a journey which is more focused on living well, than dying well.

Sunday of the First Week of Advent

Lectionary 002

A Lament

(Isa 63:12—64:11)

The favors of the CREATOR I will recall,
The glorious deeds of the CREATOR,
Because of all our divine patron done for us;
For Creator is good to the house of Israel,
Our divine patron has favored us with mercy and great kindness.
Creator said: They are indeed my people,
Children who are not disloyal;

So Creator became their savior in their every affliction.
Not a messenger or an angel, but Creator himself saved them.
Because of his love and pity Creator redeemed them,
Lifting them and carrying them all the days of old.
But they rebelled,
 and grieved Creator's holy spirit;
So Creator turned on them like an enemy,
 and fought against them.
Then they remembered the days of old and Moses, his servant.

Petition

Where is the divine patron who brought up out of the sea the
shepherd of the flock?
Where is the divine patron who put the holy spirit in their midst?
Whose glorious arm was the guide at Moses' right;
Who divided the waters before them, winning eternal renown;
Who led them without stumbling through the depths like horses in
the open country,
 Like cattle going down into the plain, the spirit of CREATOR
guiding them?
 Thus you led your people, bringing glory to your name.
 Look down from heaven and regard us from your holy and glorious
palace!
Where is your zealous care and your might, your surge of pity and
your mercy?
 O Creator, hold not back,
 for you are our creator.

Profession of faith

Were Abraham not to know us;
Nor Jacob to acknowledge us,
Your eternal names are:
CREATOR, our creator,
Creator, our redeemer

Petition

Why do you let us wander, O CREATOR, from your ways;
Why do you harden our hearts so that we do not honor you?
Return for the sake of your servants;
Come back for the tribes of your heritage.

Complaint

Why have the wicked invaded your holy place?
Why have our enemies trampled your sanctuary?

Too long have we been like those you do not rule, who do not bear your name.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you,

1

As when brushwood is set ablaze, or fire makes the water boil! Thus your name would be made known to your enemies and the nations would tremble before you,

2

While you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for,

3

such as they had not heard of from of old. No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any divine patron but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him.

4

Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;

5

all of us have become like unclean men, all our good deeds are like menstrual rags; We have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind.

6

There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; For you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt.

7

Yet, O CREATOR, you are our creator; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

8

Be not so very angry, CREATOR, keep not our guilt forever in mind; look upon us, who are all your people.

9

Your holy cities have become a desert, Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a waste.

10

Our holy and glorious temple in which our creators
praised you Has been burned with fire; all that was dear to us is
laid waste.

11

Can you hold back, O CREATOR, after all this? Can you
remain silent, and afflict us so severely?

A Hymn

(Ps 80:1-20)

2

Shepherd of Israel, listen, guide of the flock of Joseph! From
your throne upon the cherubim reveal yourself

3

to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Stir up your power,
come to save us.

4

YHWH of hosts, restore us; Let your face shine upon us, that we may
be saved.

5

YHWH of hosts, how long will you burn with anger while your
people pray?

6

You have fed them the bread of tears, made them drink tears in
abundance.

7

You have left us to be fought over by our neighbors; our
enemies deride us.

8

YHWH of hosts, restore us; let your face shine upon us, that we may
be saved.

9

³ You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove away the nations
and planted it.

10

You cleared the ground; it took root and filled the land.

11

The mountains were covered by its shadow, the divine cedars by
its branches.

12

⁴ It sent out boughs as far as the sea, shoots as far as the river.

13

Why have you broken down the walls, so that all who pass by
pluck its fruit?

14

The boar from the forest strips the vine; the beast of the field
feeds upon it.

15

Turn again, YHWH of hosts; look down from heaven and see;
Attend to this vine,

16

the shoot your right hand has planted.

17

Those who would burn or cut it down-- may they perish at your
rebuke.

18

[5](#) May your help be with the man at your right hand, with the
one whom you once made strong.

19

Then we will not withdraw from you; revive us, and we will call
on your name.

20

YHWH of hosts, restore us; let your face shine upon us, that we
may be saved.

Reading II (1 Cor 1:3-9)

Brothers and sisters:

Grace to you and peace from the Father of Jesus, our divine patron
and our Savior Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,
that in him you were enriched in every way,
with all discourse and all knowledge,
as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,
so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revelation of our Creator Jesus Christ.
He will keep you firm to the end,
irreproachable on the day of our Creator Jesus Christ.
God is faithful,

and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son,
Jesus Christ our divine patron.

A Parable (Mk 13:33-37)

Jesus taught his disciples this parable:

“Watch! Be alert!
You do not know when the time will come.

There was a traveler, who left his household in charge of his slaves. Each had their own work. For example, he orders the gatekeeper to be on the **watch. Watch**, therefore. You do not know when the father of the household is coming -- in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. The father of the household may come suddenly and find you sleeping.

My word to you, and to all is: **“Watch!”**

Second Sunday of Advent Lectionary: 004

(Isa 11:1-10)

On that day, a *newcomer*⁴ shall sprout from the disgraced household of David,⁵ and from its roots a something new⁶ shall blossom. The spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit

⁴ NAB: shoot

⁵ NAB: stump of Jesse

⁶ NAB: bud

of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of living morally,⁷ -- his best quality⁸ shall be living morally.

Not by appearance shall this newcomer judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's persecuted.

The newcomer shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb. The leopard shall lie down with the kid goat. The calf and the young lion shall graze together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors; together their calves and cubs shall rest. The lion shall eat hay like the ox. Human children shall safely play near a cobra's nest, and stick their hands into a snake hole. There shall be no harm or ruin on Mt. Zion; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of Yahweh, as water covers the sea. On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for all people. Gentiles shall come to see the House of Yahweh because of its reputations.

A Lament

(Ps 72:1-20)

Dedicated to Solomon

Petition

- ¹ As our divine patron, give the king your justice;
Your righteousness to the king's heir.⁹
- ² May the king your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for his people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May the king defend the cause of poor people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush their oppressors.
- ⁵ May the king live while the sun endures,

⁷ NAB: fear of God

⁸ NAB: delight

⁹ NRSV: son

- and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May the king be like rain that falls on the mown grain,¹⁰
like showers that water the soil.
- ⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May the king have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the (Euphrates) River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May his foes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the rulers of Tarshish (Turkey) and of the Isles (Cyprus)
Pay tribute to him,
may the kings of Sheba (Yemen) and Seba (Sudan)
bring gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.

Declaration of innocence

- ¹² For the king delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

Petition

- ¹⁵ Long may the king live!
May gold of Sheba (Yemen) be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.
- ¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field.
- ¹⁷ May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun.
May all peoples be blessed in him;
may they call him *happy*.

¹⁰ NRSV: grass

A Hymn

(Ps 72:18-20)

Call to worship

- ¹⁸ Blessed be Yahweh, the divine patron of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
- ¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name for ever;
may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

²⁰ *The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.*

(Rom 15:4-9)

Brothers and sisters:

Whatever was written previously was written -- *I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name* -- for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

May our enduring and encouraging divine patron grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Jesus, our messiah, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify 'Abba, the godparent of Jesus, our Teacher and messiah.

Welcome one another, then, as our messiah welcomed you, for the glory of 'Abba. Our messiah became a minister of the circumcised to show 'Abba's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to our ancestors so that the Gentiles might glorify 'Abba, who is merciful.

(Matt 3:1-12)

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying:
Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: *a voice of one crying out in the desert, prepare the way of Yahweh, make straight the paths of Yahweh.*

John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all

Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan River were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: *You nest of snakes! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence that you have changed. Do not presume to say to yourselves: We have Abraham as our father.*

For I tell you: 'Abba can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing basket is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Homily

Opus Dei in the United States

[James Martin, SJ](#)

America Magazine (February 25, 1995)

Opus Dei is the most controversial group in the Catholic Church today. To its members it is nothing less than The Work of God, the inspiration of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, who advanced the work of Christ by promoting the sanctity of everyday life. To its critics it is a powerful, even dangerous, cult-like organization that uses secrecy and manipulation to advance its agenda. At the same time, many Catholics admit knowing little about this influential group. Moreover, because of the dichotomy of views on the group, and perhaps because of its influence in Vatican circles, it is difficult to find balanced reporting on Opus Dei.

This article is a look at Opus Dei's activities in the United States. It is based on material written by [Opus Dei](#) and its critics, as well as on interviews with current and former Opus Dei members and with priests, religious, laypersons, campus ministers, scholars and journalists who have encountered Opus Dei in the United States.

Some Basics

Any look at Opus Dei must begin with Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the Spanish priest who founded the group on Oct. 2, 1928. On that day, according to Opus Dei's literature, while on a retreat in Madrid, "suddenly, while bells pealed in a nearby church, it became clear: God made him see Opus Dei." Monsignor Escrivá, invariably referred to as The Founder by members, envisioned Opus Dei as a way of encouraging lay people to aspire to sanctity without changing their state of life or occupation. Today Opus Dei sees itself as very much in line with the Second Vatican Council and its renewed emphasis on the laity.

Some of the group's spirituality can be gleaned from Escrivá's numerous writings, most notably his 1939 book, *The Way*. The book is a collection of 999 maxims, ranging from traditional Christian pieties ("The prayer of a Christian is never a monologue") to sayings that could easily have come out of *Poor Richard's Almanack* ("Don't put off your work until tomorrow").

His group grew rapidly, spreading from Spain to other European countries, and in 1950 received recognition by the Holy See as the first "secular institute." Over the next two decades The Work, as members call it, moved into Latin America and the United States.

In 1982 Pope John Paul II granted Opus Dei the status of "personal prelature," a canonical term meaning that jurisdiction covers the persons in Opus Dei rather than a particular region. In other words, it operates juridically much as religious orders do, without regard for geographical boundaries. This unique recognition—it is the only personal prelature in the church—demonstrated the high regard in which it is held by John Paul II as well as Opus Dei's standing in Vatican circles. But it also prompted critics to ask why a professedly lay organization would need such a status. Today Opus Dei counts 77,000 members (including 1,500 priests and 15 bishops) in over 80 countries.

Further evidence of Vatican favor—and added legitimacy—came in 1992 when Escrivá was beatified in a ceremony attended by 300,000 supporters in St. Peter's Square. But coming only a few years after Escrivá's death in 1975 and leapfrogging over figures like Pope John XXIII, the beatification was, to say the least, controversial. "Is Sainthood Coming Too Quickly for Founder of Influential Catholic Group?" read a January 1992 New York Times headline, echoing other critical articles appearing around the same time. An article in *The London Spectator*, for example, included allegations by former close associates about Escrivá's less than saintly behavior. "He had a filthy temper," said one, "and pro-Nazi tendencies, but they never mention that."

Kenneth Woodward, religion editor of *Newsweek* and author of the book *Making Saints*, also pointed out irregularities in Escrivá's beatification in a 1992 article. One of Mr. Woodward's more serious charges was that Opus Dei prevented critics of Escrivá from testifying at the church tribunals deliberating

on his life. In a recent interview, Mr. Woodward said: “It seemed as if the whole thing was rigged. They were given priority, and the whole thing was rushed through.”

Countering these claims, Opus Dei’s director of communications in the United States, Mr. William Schmitt, defended the speed of the beatification by pointing to streamlined Vatican procedures and the exemplary life of Monsignor Escrivá. “Just look at the facts,” he said.

But even with Escrivá’s beatification, controversy dogs the group. In 1992 Michael Walsh’s book, *Opus Dei: An Investigation into the Secret Society Struggling for Power Within the Roman Catholic Church*, engendered such a negative reaction from Opus Dei that they published their own book, *Opus Dei: An Open Book*, to rebut Walsh’s claims.

Opus Dei in the United States

There are over 3,000 Opus Dei members in the United States, with 64 centers, or residences for members, in 17 cities: Boston; Providence, R.I.; New York; South Orange, N.J.; Princeton, N.J.; Pittsburgh; Washington; Delray Beach, Fla.; South Bend, Ind.; Chicago; Milwaukee; Urbana, Ill.; St. Louis; Houston; Dallas; Los Angeles and San Francisco. This is up from eight cities in 1975. Many of the centers are located near large college campuses, where Opus Dei attracts new members. (For example, the Leighton Studies Center for men and the Petawa Center for women are located in Milwaukee near Marquette University.) Each center typically houses 10 to 15 members, with separate centers for women and men. Opus Dei also sponsors other programs, such as retreat houses, programs for married Catholics and outreach programs to the poor, like its education program for children in the South Bronx. Other activities are run in Syracuse, Philadelphia, Miami, San Antonio, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Denver and Phoenix.

Opus Dei operates five high schools in the United States: The Heights (for boys) and Oak Crest (girls) in Washington, D.C., the Montrose School (girls) in Boston, and Northridge Prep (boys) and The Willows (girls) in Chicago. Their retreat houses include Arnold Hall in Pembroke, Mass., the Fetherock Conference Center near Houston and Trumbull Manor near San Francisco.

In light of their growing presence in this country, I contacted each of the seven U.S. cardinals and one archbishop requesting comments on Opus Dei for this article. I had hoped in this way to gauge the opinions of the U.S. Catholic leadership. None would comment—either positively or negatively. The majority said they had either no substantial knowledge or no contact with them, though Opus Dei is active in nearly every large archdiocese in the country.

Secrecy and Privacy

It is difficult to read anything about Opus Dei without running across accounts of its alleged secrecy. (“Pope Beatifies Founder of Secretive, Conservative Group” ran a New York Times headline in 1992.) Indeed, while a few members of Opus Dei are well known, like the Vatican press officer

Joaquín Navarro-Valls, M.D., most are not. Critics also point out that most of Opus Dei's organizations are not clearly identified as being affiliated with Opus Dei.

Opus Dei denies all this. "It's not secret," says communications director Bill Schmitt, "it's private. Big difference." Mr. Schmitt describes the vocation to Opus Dei as a private matter, a personal relationship with God. The members are known by their friends, their families, their neighbors, their colleagues at work. Even Escrivá in a 1967 interview said, "The members detest secrecy."

But most critics are not concerned about whether members publicly announce their affiliation with Opus Dei. After all, many members of other lay organizations work without broadcasting their affiliations. When critics speak of "secrecy," they refer instead to frustration in their efforts to get answers about the basic corporate activities and practices of Opus Dei.

Two priests I interviewed (who asked to remain anonymous) came into contact with Opus Dei while studying at Princeton in the mid-1980's. In the course of their work with campus ministry, a divisive conflict arose between an Opus Dei priest and other members of the team. "Opus Dei was rather defensive about being secretive," said one. "They'd say, 'No, we tell it like it is.' And, yes, they'd answer your questions, but it was like peeling away an onion. But if you didn't ask the right question to peel away the next layer you simply weren't told. You just *never* had the full picture. And I suppose it wouldn't have been so annoying if they hadn't been saying all the time how open they were."

I encountered perhaps one example of this difficulty in the course of my research. Early on, I asked Bill Schmitt for a copy of Opus Dei's constitutions. I thought that by reading them I could better understand Opus Dei and lay to rest some misconceptions. He gave me a copy of the 1982 statutes. But they were in Latin, and a technical "church" Latin at that. Could I have a copy of the English translation? There was none, he said. Why not? First he said that Opus Dei had not had sufficient time to translate them. I replied that this seemed odd, given that the statutes had been around for 12 years and that *The Way* had already been translated into 38 languages.

When I pressed him, he provided a second explanation, and I was reminded of the comment about peeling an onion. "It's a church document," he said. "We don't own them. The Holy See wants them in Latin." Perhaps, he added, the Vatican wants to prevent other groups from applying for the status of personal prelature. But how could English-speaking members study their own statutes? The members study them in depth, he explained. "All of it should be clear to them in their formation."

Opus Dei member James Gabriel seconded this, explaining that the statutes were also available in Spanish. "I can look things up in a Spanish dictionary if I want to. But you receive so much formation that I don't have *any* questions that I would want to go over."

Nevertheless, it still seemed odd, so I asked Mr. Schmitt again. I received the same answer: “The document belongs to the Holy See and the Holy See does not want it translated. I’m sure there’s a reason.”

I asked three experts in canon law what that reason might be. One canon lawyer said, “Property of the Holy See? I’ve never heard of such a thing.” Another, John Martin, S.J., professor of canon law at Regis College in Toronto, noted that religious orders and lay associations as a matter of course publish their statutes in local languages, and as far as he knew, “there is no general ecclesiastic prohibition against the translation of documents of religious orders.” Or of personal prelatures, for that matter. Richard Hill, S.J., of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., agreed, saying “there is no canonical reason” why Opus Dei should not be allowed to translate their own statutes. So it appears to be Opus Dei, not the Holy See, that is keeping the statutes from being translated.

Ann Schweninger is a 24-year-old former Opus Dei member now living in Columbus, Ohio, where she works with the Diocese of Columbus. She was not surprised when I told her of my difficulty in making sense of all this. “Opus Dei plays by its own rules,” she said. “If they don’t want to have something out in the open, they won’t make it accessible.” Referring to her own time in Opus Dei, she said: “The statutes were never shown to me nor were they available. They are mentioned but not discussed.” According to Ms. Schweninger, the only official document available is the catechism of Opus Dei, which even members can read only with the permission of the house director. “It’s kept under lock and key.” She also mentioned that during classes on the catechism, she was encouraged to take notes “in code” in case non-members should read them.

Opus Dei members frequently mention that they feel unfairly maligned. I asked Bill Schmitt if this might be partially a result of misunderstanding about the privacy they insist on. “Well, we’re in the phone book. I don’t understand your question.” I suggested, for example, more publicly identifying a school as a work of Opus Dei. “That’s not our charism. We have an institutional barrier to that. There’s no dissimulation going on. We’re not trying to hide.” But how, I asked, is such public identification against Opus Dei’s basic charism of spirituality of the laity? “Other people do that. We don’t. We don’t advertise. It’s not our way,” he said. “Our way is a personal way of friendship. People think we’re secret and we’re not. We’re trying to make ourselves as open as we can.”

A Lay Institution

To encounter Opus Dei is to encounter dedicated, energetic Catholics engaged in a variety of occupations. It is also to encounter a sometimes bewildering array of priests, numeraries, supernumeraries, cooperators, associates, directors and administrators. Opus Dei describes the various types of membership as different levels of availability for their mission. Critics maintain that Opus Dei, with its emphasis on hierarchy as well as celibacy and

obedience, merely replicates religious life while professing lay spirituality. “And they’re really priest-ridden.” claims Newsweek’s Kenneth Woodward.

A few basic terms: *Numeraries* are single members who pledge a “commitment” of celibacy and normally live in “centers.” Numeraries turn over their income and receive a stipend for personal expenses. Numeraries (accounting for roughly 20 percent of the membership) follow the “plan of life,” a daily order that includes Mass, devotional reading, private prayer and, depending on the person, physical mortification. Numeraries also attend summer classes on Opus Dei. Every year an oral commitment to Opus Dei is made, and after five years the “fidelity” is made, a lifetime commitment. There are separate centers for men and women, each with a director. Male numeraries are encouraged to consider ordination to the priesthood. After 10 years of training, those who feel called are sent to Opus Dei’s seminary in Rome, the Roman College of the Holy Cross.

Most members are *supernumeraries*, married persons who contribute financially and sometimes serve in corporate works like schools. *Associates* are single people who are “less available,” remaining at home because of other commitments, such as responsibilities toward aging parents. *Cooperators*, strictly speaking, are not members because “they do not yet have the divine vocation.” They cooperate through work, financial help and prayers. Opus Dei also includes the *Priestly Society of the Holy Cross*, an association of diocesan priests who receive the spiritual help that Opus Dei provides. They remain incardinated in their own dioceses. Numeraries or associates who are ordained priests also become members of this society. The head of Opus Dei, or “prelate,” is currently Bishop Javier Echevarría, who works out of its headquarters in Rome.

Critics contend that numerary life is anything *but* lay, particularly in what they see as its replication of religious life, with emphasis on “commitments” (Opus Dei does not use the term “vows”), life in common, a daily order and, at least for some of the men, eventual ordination. Many of those in authority are clerics—the director of their national headquarters in New Rochelle, N.Y., is a monsignor; their prelate was recently ordained a bishop. “If this is a lay organization, I’d hate to see a clerical one,” said one of the priests from Princeton.

Another common criticism is that men and women numeraries are separated not only in housing but even in work. Numerary Jim Gabriel, who lives in Opus Dei’s Riverside Study Center in Manhattan explained: “There is pretty much no interaction. They do things that they have to do and we do what we have to do.”

According to two former numeraries, women numeraries are required to clean the men’s centers and cook for them. When the women arrive to clean, they explained, the men vacate so as not to come in contact with the women. I

asked Bill Schmitt if women had a problem with this. “No. Not at all.” It is a paid work of the “family” of Opus Dei and is seen as an apostolate. The women more often than not hire others to do the cooking and cleaning. “They like doing it. It’s not forced on them. It’s one thing that’s open to them if they want to do it. They don’t have to do it.”

“That’s totally wrong,” said Ann Schweninger when she heard that last statement. “I had no choice. When in Opus Dei you’re asked, you’re being told.” According to Ms. Schweninger, it is “bad spirit” to refuse. Women are told that it is important to have a love for things of the home and domestic duties. “And since that’s part of the spirit of Opus Dei, to refuse to do that when you’re asked is bad spirit. So nobody refuses.”

For numeraries living in the centers, mail—incoming and outgoing—is read by the director. But for most numeraries this is not a problem. “If you’re in an organization and part of the group, where you go to the priest in confession and tell him everything that’s on your mind, what could you possibly receive in a letter that would matter?” said one. But he also admitted that he wasn’t sure if his friends knew their mail was being read. “But they never say anything that couldn’t be read by other people.”

Casting a Wide Net

But it is Opus Dei’s way of attracting new members that comes under the most vigorous attack by its critics. Opus Dei contends that their distinct brand of spirituality fills a need in society and that, as a result, Americans are naturally attracted to it. Others disagree, speaking of overly aggressive recruiting tactics. “I call them the Catholic Mormons,” says Kenneth Woodward.

One man who attended Columbia University in the early 1980’s, who asked not to be named, described the process of being recruited by Opus Dei. “They had someone become my friend,” he said bluntly. After Mass one day he was approached by another student, with whom he soon became good friends. Eventually he was invited to the Riverside Study Center near Columbia’s campus. He was not certain exactly what it was. “I thought it was a group of students that were a think tank or something.” After dinner a priest gave a short talk. He was later invited to join a “circle,” which he described as a sort of an informal prayer group. Soon afterwards Opus Dei suggested that he take one of the priests at the center as his spiritual director.

After becoming more involved—at this point meeting with the group frequently—he decided to investigate on his own. He spoke with a few priests and professors at Columbia and was surprised at how little he really knew: “I didn’t know anything about the secrecy, the numeraries, supernumeraries, any of that. And I didn’t know there were people taking vows of celibacy. I felt kind of upset that I didn’t know much about them. I didn’t think they were honest or straightforward about who they were. I felt very indignant.”

At the next circle meeting he raised some questions about issues that troubled him—for example, women and minority presence in Opus Dei. “They really didn’t have any answers and asked me not to return.” And more disturbing for him: “I never heard from my friend again. I was totally cut off.”

According to two former numeraries, if this man had stayed in the circle Opus Dei would have confronted him with a decision to join. Tammy DiNicola talked about her experience. “They staged a vocation crisis for me,” she said. “At the time, I didn’t realize they had staged it. But it’s standard practice. The person that’s working on you is consulting with the director, and the two of them decide when is the best time to propose the question of vocation to the recruit.”

Why is it a crisis? “Well, they *make* it a crisis for you!” said Ann Schweninger. “And it’s totally orchestrated. They tell you it’s a decision you have to make now, that God is knocking on the door, and that you have to have the strength and fortitude to say yes.” Tammy DiNicola was told that it was her only chance for a vocation. “Basically it’s a one-shot deal—if you don’t take it, you’re not going to have God’s grace for the remainder of your life.”

I asked if they were surprised at hearing that the man at Columbia had been cut off by his friend. “No,” said Tammy recalling her own recruiting days. “They use friendships to get people to join. They call it an apostolate of friendship and confidence, but it’s certainly not confidence—because everything that you talk about with your recruit is discussed with your director.” Even personal matters? “Especially personal matters, because those are the things that you can use so that a person would think about joining Opus Dei.” She was also advised to recruit only “select” people—intelligent and physically attractive—since they would be more likely to attract others once they were members.

Opus Dei looks at it differently, stressing the fact that any relationships are entered into freely. “There is no recruitment to Opus Dei,” said Bill Schmitt. It is not in Opus Dei’s interest, he explained, to have anyone as a member who does not freely understand and embrace their vocation. Jim Gabriel agreed. “The word *recruiting* sounds so bad,” he said. “Like we peg people and then try to get people to join The Work.” He spoke of helping people to come to know Opus Dei through friendship, and had had no experience of coercion.

Still, even Escrivá’s writings emphasize at least the idea of recruiting. In the internal magazine, *Cronica*, he wrote in 1971: “This holy coercion is necessary, *compelle intrare* the Lord tells us.” And, “You must kill yourselves for proselytism.”

Ann Schweninger finds this closer to her experience: “Whenever you’re in Opus Dei, you’re recruiting.”

On Campus

Opus Dei is an increasingly strong presence on U.S. college campuses. Traditionally, their efforts to attract new members has led them to colleges and universities. And it has sometimes led them into conflict with other groups.

Donald R. McCrabb is executive director of the [Catholic Campus Ministry Association](#) (C.C.M.A.), an organization of 1,000 of the 1,800 Catholic chaplains in the United States. What was he hearing about Opus Dei from his members? “We are aware that Opus Dei is present at a number of campuses across the country. I’m also aware that some campus ministers find their activities on campus to be counterproductive.” One of his concerns was Opus Dei’s emphasis on recruiting, supported by an apparently large base of funding. “They are not taking on the broader responsibility that a campus minister has.” He had other concerns as well. “I have heard through campus ministers that there’s a spiritual director that’s assigned to the candidate who basically has to approve every action taken by that person, including reading mail, what classes they take or don’t take, what they read or don’t read.”

The former Columbia student echoed this: “They recommended I not read some books, particularly the Marxist stuff, and instead use their boiled-down versions. I thought this was odd—I was required to do it for class!”

Susan Mountin, associate director of Marquette University’s campus ministry, saw two sides of the issue. “My own sense is that there probably is a need for many people to experience some sort of devotion in their lives. So the quest for spirituality is a very important thing—that part I’m fine with. What I worry about is the cult-like behavior, isolation from friends—and students talk about it. One student, in fact just this week, described being invited to a dinner and felt that she was being badgered by the individual to accept some sort of commitment to Opus Dei that she wasn’t willing to accept.”

The director of campus ministry at Stanford University from 1984 through 1992, Russell J. Roide, S.J., initially approached Opus Dei with an open mind. However, students began coming to him complaining about Opus Dei’s recruiting. “They just didn’t let the students alone. Students would come to me and say, ‘Please get them off our backs.’” He felt his only recourse was to pass out information to these students about Opus Dei, including critical articles. This prompted Opus Dei numeraries to visit Father Roide to tell him that he was “interfering with their agenda.” Eventually, because of continued student complaints about their recruiting, “I decided not to let them anywhere near the campus.” He now describes them as “subtle and deceptive.”

The two priests mentioned earlier, who studied at Princeton University and worked with campus ministry, described Opus Dei’s involvement there in the 1980’s. According to both men, an Opus Dei priest, the Rev. C. John McCloskey 3d, presented himself to the campus ministry group, which welcomed his offer to assist with chaplaincy duties. Soon after beginning his work, Father McCloskey presented to the other chaplains a list of the number of communions he had distributed and the number of confessions he had

heard—as an objective way of measuring whether a priest was doing his job. Said one of the ex-chaplains, “He came to the rest of us and said, ‘I don’t think the chaplaincy program is doing this work. You should be doing what I’m doing’.”

Later, Father McCloskey began interviewing all entering Catholic freshmen, over the objections of some of the staff. It was at this time that the problems began. According to both sources, Father McCloskey asked questions about students’ sexual practices, among other things, and about their parents’ religious activities. In addition: “Some of the students claimed he coerced them into having the sacrament of reconciliation, or confession, as he called it. He would say, ‘You really need to go to confession. The chapel’s right around the corner and I’m available now.’ Now I can’t cite you a line in canon law, but one is *never* coerced into a sacrament. I found it outrageous, and a lot of other people did, too.”

C.C.M.A.’s Mr. McCrabb added, “It is my understanding that one of the most controversial aspects is their insistence that their members go to confession only to Opus Dei priests. I think that campus ministers have seen it as a way of controlling, manipulating or coercing a student. That’s the worst interpretation. The best is that it is discounting the ministry performed by other priests.”

After students were recruited, said one former chaplain, they would disappear from the regular campus chaplaincy functions at Princeton, “because it was seen as not being truly Catholic.” Father McCloskey also wrote a letter instructing students to avoid certain professors: “If [a course] is given by an anti-Christian its impact is counter-productive.” This led some students to circulate a petition claiming that Father McCloskey’s work was detrimental to the welfare of the university.

Father McCloskey denied coercing students into the sacrament of reconciliation but added, “I might have told people they need to go to confession—that’s the duty of the priest at times.” He denied asking about sexual activities. Nor, he said, had he ever recruited for Opus Dei. “I rarely if ever talked about Opus Dei with students.” As for presenting the other chaplains with the list of objective measures, he termed it a “lie.” He also noted that his list of courses were only “recommendations” to Catholic students.

In 1990 a new chaplain took over and dismissed Father McCloskey. Opus Dei has since opened a center in Princeton called Mercer House, three blocks from the campus ministry office.

At an Opus Dei Center

A visit to the Riverside Study Center on Manhattan’s Upper West Side provided an opportunity to meet a few numeraries. The center houses 17 men, some studying at nearby Columbia University and other schools, some working in Manhattan. Two Opus Dei priests also reside there. It is a very large but not

lavish house, with an ornate chapel, comfortable living areas and medium-sized bedrooms. Dinner was served family style, with much conversation.

After dinner I met with the center's director and three numeraries, along with communications director Bill Schmitt. The men seemed genuinely content with life at the center. Their descriptions of how they were drawn to Opus Dei sounded like any vocation story, and none mentioned any coercion. One, in fact, said that any coercion would have turned him off to Opus Dei and made him less likely to join.

After a while, I brought up some of the criticisms I had heard. One young man studying at Cooper Union in Manhattan laughed at the accusation that Opus Dei isolates one. Going to classes all the time, he said, he regularly socializes with his classmates. "How could I be isolated?"

What about their recruiting? "Recruitment is the farthest thing from reality," said one. "People are looking for something. It's very easy to misunderstand, of course. People who are critics just won't make the effort."

Is there a lack of freedom in the life of a numerary? "They have to form us. You can't become a saint alone." As far as work goes, "You're free to go in and say, I'd like to work here." Why the need for priests in a lay organization? "You need priests for practical matters, with women and men working separately, you need someone to coordinate that. That's just the way it is."

I asked one man about going to confession to non-Opus Dei priests. "I must admit it would seem strange. The spirituality of The Work is pretty specific. If a priest doesn't know what you're going through in the context of your vocation...it could make it real difficult. And it could lead to misunderstanding, plus, they can give you totally different advice. And it's really frustrating. I think it would be strange, not bad. No one's going to say don't go."

They all felt that Opus Dei is unfairly maligned. Part of the reason, they said, has to do with their "unique" charism—the spirituality of everyday life. Though lay spirituality has long been a Catholic tradition (St. Francis de Sales wrote his *Introduction to the Devout Life* [1608] with laypersons in mind), members say there are still many who do not understand their charism. "Opus Dei represents a new concept in the church," said Bill Schmitt, "and this has given rise to misunderstanding, even, in some instances...slanders." But he added, "A lot of it comes from bad will."

Are there problems with Opus Dei? "We're not holy enough," said one member. And what would they change if they could? "The spirit has been given to us and there's nothing for us to change," said another. "We are good sons and a faithful son is not an innovator. The essentials will not change."

Opus Dei Awareness Network

Dianne DiNicola, Tammy DiNicola's mother, knows some things about Opus Dei that she would like to change. In 1991 she started the [Opus Dei](#)

[Awareness Network](#), a self-described support group concerned with outreach to families with children in Opus Dei.

A few years ago Mrs. DiNicola noticed that Tammy, then an undergraduate at Boston College, “seemed to be going through a personality change.” According to Mrs. DiNicola, she became “cold and secretive,” not wanting to spend time with the family—which had not been the case before. “I just had the feeling something was wrong.”

When Tammy wrote a letter saying that she would no longer return home, Mrs. DiNicola grew more worried. She eventually found out that Tammy had joined Opus Dei as a numerary, living in one of their centers in Boston. “Our daughter,” she recalls, “became totally estranged from us. I can’t tell you the turmoil that our family went through. We tried to keep in touch with her, but it was like she was a completely different person.”

Initially trying to accept her daughter’s decision, she met with Opus Dei officials and diocesan officials to obtain more information. “I was just trying to feel good about Opus Dei. I love my religion. I mean, you’re not talking about the Moonies. This is something within the Catholic Church.” But the situation deteriorated, and Mrs. DiNicola felt that the church either was not in a position to help or did not want to do so.

Finally, Mr. and Mrs. DiNicola enlisted the help of an “exit counsellor” and asked Tammy to come home for her graduation in 1990. They later discovered that this would have been the last time she would have come home, since she had already been told to sever contacts with her family. According to both Mrs. DiNicola and Tammy, the counselling enabled Tammy to think about Opus Dei critically for the first time.

After the 24-hour counselling session Tammy decided to leave. Mrs. DiNicola described the scene: “My husband is a very, very good man, and throughout all the turmoil, I would cry and my other daughter would cry. We were losing our daughter—it was like she had died. For 24 hours we talked to her, without a break. When we did break early in the morning, my husband was over in the corner of our bedroom weeping softly. There was only one other time I saw him weep—that was when his father died.”

“It was pretty tumultuous,” recalled Tammy, now 26. She said that since Opus Dei “shut down” all of her emotions, she experienced a flood of emotions after she left. Now Mrs. DiNicola runs the Opus Dei Awareness Network (ODAN), which she says enables her to help to spare others the pain that her family went through.

Ann Schweninger was a numerary living at the same center with Tammy and remembered the day of Tammy’s departure. “The whole house was so upset, with everyone crying. The directors were hysterical, too. They told us that we had to pray hard for Tammy since this was her soul at stake and that we would really have to mortify ourselves.” Ann eventually decided to leave on

her own, over the opposition of the center's director, who said that her doubts would blow over.

Ann's own departure was equally painful. After she left, Opus Dei persisted in trying to re-establish contact, calling her at work, sending plaintive letters, notes and Christmas packages. At one point, Opus Dei members—thinking that Ann was staying at a friend's house—began driving by the house looking for Ann. "It was ridiculous," said Ann. Eventually, she had a lawyer write to Opus Dei threatening a court order to cease contact with her.

"The suffering I went through when I left," says Ann, "I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

If ODAN is alarmed by Opus Dei, Opus Dei is alarmed by ODAN. "Let me stress that no one is *ever* counselled not to speak to their parents." said Bill Schmitt. "Please keep in mind that some parents do not accept the faith or have had 'other' plans for their son or daughter. I do not need to point out to you that the methods these people use are highly objectionable. But we have not pressed this."

Mrs. DiNicola responded that she would have been powerless had her daughter decided to stay in Opus Dei: "We certainly weren't going to hold her physically."

At Riverside one numerary said his blood boils when he hears about ODAN, "We are approved by the Holy See! We are *not* cult-like. Those people [who were counselled] were just violated. We do pray for them, of course. But there is a lot of misunderstanding, and parents become irrational."

"It was very difficult for me," recalled Mrs. DiNicola. "I mean, here I am trying to justify all of this. How could this happen in the Catholic Church? Here's this organization with the approval of the Pope, Escrivá beatified, and there's such destruction that's happening to families because of this organization. So how to come to peace with that is so difficult."

Newsweek's Kenneth Woodward agrees, "The bishops have been pastorally irresponsible in not paying more attention to the claims of parents who feel their children have been seduced into joining something that is not good for their spiritual health.... That's not to say everybody, but there's enough of this sort of thing that it really bears investigation. And just as they owe an obligation in the very difficult case of someone who claims to have been molested by a priest—protecting the priest and the victim as equal members of the church—I think they have to pay pastoral attention to these people regardless of what kind of canonical status the organization has."

Outside the United States, some bishops have already reacted. In December 1981, after a highly critical feature about Opus Dei appeared in The London Times, Cardinal Basil Hume, O.S.B., issued public guidelines for Opus Dei in his diocese. He instructed Opus Dei not to recruit anyone under 18, to ensure that parents were informed, not to exert pressure on people to join, to respect the freedom of members to leave and to allow members to freely choose

spiritual directors. He also required Opus Dei's activities to carry a "clear indication of their sponsorship and management."

The Future of Opus Dei

Whether Opus Dei will continue to grow in the United States is difficult to predict. Its critics, including ODAN, are gaining a voice. But Opus Dei's widely acknowledged Vatican influence seems to provide a degree of protection, and its attraction for some, especially among college students, is a reminder of the desire for spirituality among Americans.

David J. O'Brien is Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at Holy Cross and author of the recent book: *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture*. He is of two minds about Opus Dei in the United States. While he admires their approach—drawing idealistic people together in a concerted manner—he thinks their appeal might be self-limiting. "They are so negative toward American culture that they can't understand how deeply our notions of freedom and individualism can go."

Members are completely devoted to The Work. "I think it's wonderful," says numerary Jim Gabriel. "Belonging to Opus Dei is living the Catholic faith to its fullest," said one supernumerary.

"Opus Dei has been approved and repeatedly encouraged to expand its apostolic outreach," said communications director Bill Schmitt, "precisely because it has practices that have proven to be sound."

But their critics are equally adamant. "I think they're very surreptitious, very ill," said the man from Columbia University. "They don't really believe in the world," said Kenneth Woodward.

"They deceive people. They're not straightforward," said former numerary Ann Schwenger at the end of our long interview. "I can attest to that."

James Martin, S.J., is contributing editor at America.

Sunday of the Second Week of Advent

Lectionary 006

Reading I

[Bar 5:1-9](#)

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery;
put on the splendor of glory from YHWH forever:
wrapped in the cloak of justice from YHWH,
bear on your head the turban
that displays the glory of the eternal name.

For YHWH will show all the earth your splendor:
you will be named by YHWH forever
the peace of justice, the glory of YHWH's worship.

Up, Jerusalem! Stand upon the heights;
look to the east and see your children
gathered from the east and the west
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that they are remembered by YHWH.
Led away on foot by their enemies they left you:
but YHWH will bring them back to you
borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones.
For YHWH has commanded
that every lofty mountain be made low,
and that the age-old depths and gorges
be filled to level ground,
that Israel may advance secure in the glory of YHWH.
The forests and every incense tree
have overshadowed Israel at YHWH's command;
for YHWH is leading Israel in joy
by the light of divine glory,
with his mercy and justice for company.

Lament

(Ps 126:1-6)

A Song of Ascents.

Profession of faith

- ¹ When YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
² Then our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues trilled with shouts of joy;
then it was said among all peoples:
YHWH has done great things for them.
³ YHWH has done great things for us,
Therefore, we rejoiced.

Petition

- ⁴ Restore our fortunes, YHWH,

like the *wadis* filled with water in the Negeb Desert.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reading II

[Phil 1:4-6, 8-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:

I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you,
because of your partnership for the gospel
from the first day until now.

I am confident of this,
that the one who began a good work in you
will continue to complete it
until the day of Christ Jesus.

God is my witness,
how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer:

that your love may increase ever more and more
in knowledge and every kind of perception,
to discern what is of value,
so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
filled with the fruit of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ
for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel

[Lk 3:1-6](#)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,
and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee,
and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,
and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,
during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,
the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.

John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,
as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:
A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the way of YHWH,
make straight his paths.
Every valley shall be filled
and every mountain and hill shall be made low.
The winding roads shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Homily

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and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Homily

The Birth of Jesus - Mass During the Day Lectionary 016

A Hymn (Isa 52:7-10)

Creation story

How beautiful upon the mountains the feet of messengers bringing good news,
Messengers announcing peace,
Bearing good news,
Announcing salvation,
Proclaiming to the people of Zion: *Your divine patron is coming!*

Call to worship

Let your sentries **cry out**.
Let them **shout for joy**.

Creation story

They see right in front of their eyes
YHWH returning to the city of Zion.

Call to worship

Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem!

Creation story

YHWH comes to comfort the people,
Our divine patron comes to liberate Jerusalem.
YHWH has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the peoples;
All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our divine patron.

Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)



Narmer with upraised *right hand and holy arm* wielding a war club

*3100-2890 BCE
Egyptian Museum,
Cairo*

Call to worship

¹**Sing** to YHWH a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of YHWH are victorious.¹¹

²YHWH has achieved victory;

YHWH has retaliated for the household of Jacob in the sight of all.

³YHWH is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to YHWH, all the earth;

Break forth into songs of joy.

Sing hymns.

⁵**Sing hymns** to YHWH with the lyre –

Sing with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶**Sing** with trumpets and horns –

Make a joyful noise before YHWH, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas and all that fills it **roar** –

The world and those who live in it **shout.**

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands;**

¹¹ The raised hand and divine arm is an Egyptian metaphor alluding to the portrayal of pharaohs poised to strike the enemies of Egypt with a battle club.

Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹in the presence of YHWH,

Creation story

YHWH is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with justice,
Our divine patron will judge the peoples impartially.

(Heb 1:1-6)

Brothers and sisters:

In times past, our divine patron spoke in partial and various ways
to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, our divine patron has spoken to us through the Son,
who is heir to all things
and through whom the cosmos was created,
who is the reflection of divine glory,
a divine image,
and who sustains everything by his creative word.
When the Son accomplished purification from sins,
he took his seat at the right hand of the Creator on high,
as far superior to the angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did our divine patron ever say:

You are my son; this day I have begotten you? or I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me?

Our divine patron presents the firstborn to the world with the proclamation: *Let all the angels of the heavens worship him.*

(John 1:1-18)

When YHWH began to create with a Word,
the Word was with our divine patron,
and the Word and YHWH were one.

The Word was with YHWH when our divine patron began to create.

All things came to be through the Word,
and without the Word nothing came to be.

What came to be through the Word was living,
and all life was the light of the human race;

the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
A messenger named John was sent from YHWH.
John came as a witness, to testify to the Light,
so that all might believe through the Light.
John was not the Light,
but came to give witness to the Light.
A good Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to those who believe in his name,
who were born not by natural generation
nor by human choice nor by a man's decision
but of God.
And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.
John testified to him and cried out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said,
"The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me."
From his fullness we have all received,
grace in place of grace,
because while the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side,
has revealed him.

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Lectionary 17

Annunciation to Hannah

(1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28)

In those days Hannah conceived, and at the end of her pregnancy bore a son whom she called “Samuel” (Saul), since he was the “answer to a prayer”.

The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household to offer the customary sacrifice to Yahweh and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, "Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before Yahweh and to remain there forever; I will offer him as a Nazirite for life."

Once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the sanctuary of Yahweh in Shiloh.

After the boy's father had sacrificed the young bull, Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said: "Pardon, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to Yahweh. I prayed for this child, and Yahweh granted my request. Now I, in turn, give him to Yahweh; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to Yahweh." ¹²

Hannah left Samuel there.

¹² The “sacrifice of Samuel” = the “sacrifice of Isaac”

A Lament

(Ps 128:1-6)

A Pilgrimage Lament

- ¹ Happy is everyone who lives morally, ¹³
Who walks the Way of Yahweh.
- ² You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
You shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.
- ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;
Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.
- ⁴ Thus shall the fathers of households be blessed
Who live morally.
- ⁵ Yahweh bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
- ⁶ May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

¹³ NRSV: fears Yahweh

Teaching on the Decalogue

(Col 3:12-21)

Brothers and sisters

As those called by the Father of Jesus to be holy and beloved:

1. Put on heartfelt **compassion**,
2. Put on **kindness**
- 3, Put on **humility**
4. Put on **gentleness**
5. Put on **patience** -- bearing with one another and forgiving one another, If one has a grievance against another; as the Father of Jesus has forgiven you, so must you also do.

6. Over all these put on **love**, that is, the bond of perfection.

7. Let the **peace** of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body.

8. **Be thankful.**

9. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you** richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to the Father of Jesus.

10. Whatever you do, in word or in deed, **do everything in the name of Jesus, the Lord,** giving thanks to the Father of Jesus through him.

Parable of Jesus, the Prodigal Son

(Luke 2:41-52)

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom.

After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances.

Not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them;¹⁴ and his mother kept all these things in her heart.¹⁵

And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and before man.

¹⁴ Obedience to parents is wise; abandoning parents is foolish.

¹⁵ The Jesus who taught: Leave your father and mother.

Homily

Family defined by what holds it together: Love

Karina Bland

(The Arizona Republic Dec 29, 2012)

<http://www.azcentral.com/2012/review/news/articles/20121228story-of-year-bland.html>

Helen Handler was just 15 years old when she stepped off a crowded rail car into a gray, foggy morning at Auschwitz in 1944. It was the last time she would ever see her mother, her two brothers and her grandparents.

In the living room of her upstairs apartment earlier this year, the 84-year-old Holocaust survivor told me that when your family is taken from you, you can piece together another one.

In fact, you have to.

Family is the most important thing, Handler told me, and then she leaned forward, put her hand over mine to stop me scribbling in my notebook, and looked me right in the face: *Remember that*.

I promised I would.

And as I reflected on 2012, her words came back to me.

From the time my son was little, we've talked about out how families can be different - little like ours, just me and Sawyer, or big like Jack's with two parents and four kids.

Some families have two parents at home, like Scott and Kat, or Michael's two mothers, or one, like ours, or a grandmother in charge like Brennan's Mimi.

I pointed out blended families, step-brothers and half-sisters, kids like Kevin and Reshma who were adopted, and two sisters raising their best friend's daughters.

And I told my son that whatever the shape or size, a family is a family, as long as they love each other.

Not everyone feels that way, I know.

But in the stories I wrote this year, as a columnist and a reporter, the importance of family surfaced again and again, giving evidence that what I had told my son was real. Many were stories of people building families.

Like Steven and Roger Ham, partners for 19 years, who pieced together their large family - 12 children, all adopted from foster care, even though Arizona does not allow same-sex couples to marry or adopt, or for a same-sex partner to adopt a partner's children.

Steven and Roger wanted a family, and there were so many children who needed one. They planned to adopt just one child, but little Michael had four siblings and a cousin, all in state care.

And then they couldn't say no, not to any of the others.

But legally, the 10 children adopted in Arizona were bound only to Steven. Two other children were adopted in Washington, which allows same-sex couples to adopt, so both dads' names appear on their birth certificates.

The Hams don't need anyone else's approval to know they are a family. The kids call Steve "Daddy" and Roger "Papa."

But this year the men were able to readopt the 10 children in Washington state.

Mostly, the kids thought it was weird because they already are adopted, and their dads already their parents.

We were already a family, Michael, 14, says.

But now the children's birth certificates will have both men's names on them, and Vanessa, 17, says that is important. It means it is official. No one can ever take them away.

No one likely could, even if they tried, take away any of the abused children who are under the watch of a group called *Bikers Against Child Abuse*.

The bikers roar up the children's streets, gunning their engines, and standing, big and scary, in their driveways.

If children feel threatened, or even just scared, the bikers will stand guard. All night if they have to. They bikers will escort the children to school and watch until they're safely inside, or if the children have to testify against their abusers in court, they will go too.

The children become the bikers' younger brothers and sisters, and bikers take care of their own.

We tell them that we will keep them safe, Pipes, the group's state president, says.

Because that's what families do.

For Helen Handler, the people in the concentration camp became her second family, and they looked out for one another, as best they could.

Later she would marry someone who would understand, a fellow Holocaust survivor, and they had a son. Over the years, she has collected friends who feel like family, a following from her public appearances at schools, and a little dog too.

I understand why Handler says it is so important to build a family. Family, however you define it, provides a safe home base, something to circle the wagons around, a foundation.

So that when the world plucks at the edges of your family, you don't fall apart.

That's the tragedy of it. You never know what family means until you lose one, Handler says.

And that can happen anytime as we were so horribly reminded a couple of weeks ago when 20 children, all just 6 or 7, and six adults - their teachers, school psychologist, the principal - were slaughtered in a shooting massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

Roxanna Green of Tucson knows what it is like to come home empty-handed from a hospital to an empty bedroom, the pink polka-dot comforter still rumpled the way her little girl left it.

Her 9-year-old daughter, Christina-Taylor, was shot and killed when a different gunman splayed a grocery store parking lot with bullets on a sunny Saturday morning.

Almost two years later, Green still listens for the sounds of her daughter's laughter in the house. It is too quiet without her.

Sitting in a bookstore in Tempe with Green in May, stacks of the book she wrote about her daughter on the table in front of her, I watched a man approach slowly, and then speak rapidly, nervously: *Hello. I'm so incredibly sorry for your loss. I don't even know what to say.*

It's OK, Green responded, smiling at him.

It will never be OK. But not even the loss of a precious person can pull a family apart if they hold tight to each other.

Even when a family loses that someone slowly, over time, and piece by piece.

Just four years after Nick and Donna Baker of Peoria were married in 2006, Donna was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease at age 48.

And the life she and Nick had imagined for themselves - the travel, the adventures - began to unravel.

Now Donna is 51, and Nick steadfastly continues to take care of her, doing the holiday baking, putting up lists around the house that outline step-by-step how to do the laundry.

They find humor where they can. Donna posted on Facebook: *I swear if my memory was any worse, I could plan my own surprise party.*

Nick promised in sickness and in health, until death do us part, and he meant it.

Because families are forever.

That's what I tell Sawyer too.

I can fit my immediate family on the couch, including the dog and even now that Sawyer is 5-foot-11. Yet the family I built for us couldn't all fit into our house at the same time.

Friends who come every year on Christmas Eve for the annual pajama exchange, bringing the same soup. Uncle Greg and Aunt Judie who aren't really related to us but feel like they are.

Sawyer's older half-brother never misses any of his plays (OK, he missed one but that was my fault because I forgot to tell him. He's never let me forget it.) And while he has a real Nana (my mom), he also has a Nedda, a Mimi and a Grandma Lou, none of whom are actually related.

But family is not only who you are related to but to whom you can relate, the people who show up at the emergency room late at night, or let your dog out when you can't get home before he would pee on the carpet.

The friend you call to borrow a dress for a wedding because you've outgrown all your own. The ones who listen instead of preach, and who you invite for wine at the end of a hard week.

My family is there, always, and it continues to grow.

My father died almost 14 years ago, and every year I buy a round of drinks at his favorite watering hole, the Silver Pony Bar & Grill, on the Marine Corps birthday, like he used to do, in his honor.

This year two Marines joined me and a third, a father of seven who was finishing up chemotherapy, called to tell me that I could be his daughter too.

It made me feel loved.

Remember that.

Christmas freak-out melts under connection's glow

Karina Bland
(*Arizona Republic* December 15, 2013)

<http://www.azcentral.com/insiders/karinabland/2013/12/15/christmas-freak-out-melts-under-connections-glow/>

I climbed into Karen's SUV, squeezing between 11-year-old Sophia and 21-year-old Savannah in the back-back. (In this group, at 48, I still qualify

among the three youngest and am therefore relegated to crawl over the middle row of seats to reach the third.)

I clutched a shopping list in my fist.

In the row in front of me were three more women — Savannah’s mother, Cheryl, my mother and Marianne.

Karen was up front with her husband, John, who would drop us near the Tempe Arts Festival and — because he’s a smart man who has learned from experience — speed away without even glancing in the rear-view mirror.

There were 16 shopping days until Christmas. We were on a mission. In the back-back, I scanned my list — did I forget anyone?

My heart was pounding. I had kept my usual Christmas freak-out contained until almost two weeks before the holiday. Usually I start much sooner, and for sure by Thanksgiving, give or take a few days. But Thanksgiving this year was late in the month, and so was I.

Just like every year, I have too much going on — work, grocery shopping and laundry, tap class, driving my son back and forth to rehearsal — and no spare time, or energy. I was snapping off the radio every time a holiday song came on. I ignored the catalogs arriving in the mail.

But then Gary, who lives two doors down, strung lights on the eaves of his house (*grrrr*), holiday cards began showing up in my mailbox (sigh), and my Facebook news feed started filling with pictures of trees decorated and lit.

“Halls are decked!” Robyn wrote. (I felt like decking her.)

I know, I sound like kind of a Grinch. I’m not. Not really.

Ever since I’ve been an adult (which really didn’t seem to happen until I became a parent), I’ve had an awkward relationship with Christmas. I love the trappings of it — the lights, wrapping paper and bows, the inflatable Santa on the roof — and the traditions. But I hate the harried pace that leaves me little time to actually enjoy it.

I take each house covered in lights, every batch of cookies to come out of the oven, every present wrapped as a poke between my shoulder blades. Hurry *up*.

Every year, I swear that I will do it better *this time*. I will start earlier. I will be organized. And every year finds me in the back-back of Karen’s SUV on the way to the arts festival, panicked and clutching a list.

My annual freak-out has become a tradition really, much like new pajamas on Christmas Eve, a LifeSavers Sweet Storybook in our stockings, and shopping at the arts festival.

“Is it a requirement to own a dog if you live in Tempe?” my mom asked as we wandered among the white tents. She lives in the West Valley.

No, but it seemed like that. There were dogs wearing plaid jackets, sweaters and even a green elf costume. Dogs were tucked into purses, zippered into strollers (really!) and tugging at leashes.

Three hours in, I had crossed only three names off my list (22 to go). We huddled as women shopping in groups do, on Fifth Street, waiting for Karen and Sophia to catch up.

I watched a couple walking a golden retriever in one direction on Fifth Street; the dog wore a harness with a patch on it that said “service dog.” And from the other direction came a couple with a little girl in a wheelchair. They all stopped as if on cue; the dog sat.

The little girl had pale skin and dark hair with bangs. As the two sets of adults talked above her — introductions made, questions asked and answered — and as rivers of people moved by on either side, the girl reached out for the dog’s ear.

I watched, wary, but the dog just leaned closer, big eyes on the little girl.

She raised both eyebrows at the dog, clearly delighted, and studied the canine’s sweet face. She buried a hand in the long fur along the dog’s neck and then pressed her forehead to the dog’s.

The girl was smiling; the dog seemed to do the same, pink tongue lolling out.

It was only the two of them, their connection instant and easy, *just-you-and-me*, even with all the activity and craziness around them.

They were locked in a fleeting moment of joy, this girl who seemed far too little to have to work out physical challenges, outside in the sun, the smell of cinnamon and sugar in the air, flanked by people who love her; and this dog, one among so many dogs that day, but somehow special.

Joy radiated from them, nose-to-nose in the middle of the street. And it washed over me, too, as I stood there with my purse and my shopping bag and my 22-people-to-go list. I realized how ridiculous it was that I was freaking out about buying presents. *Things*.

I couldn’t pull myself away.

I realized I was crying, and it surprised me because I was grinning, too. I turned to see my mother and Marianne push up their glasses and wipe away tears too. We smiled at each other, nodding. We got it.

Moments like this are fleeting and so easily missed when we are studying a list instead of looking at the world. I was lucky to catch this one. My tears weren’t because I felt sorry for the girl or was moved at the therapy dog’s reaction. They came from a deeper place.

This joyful child and this lovely dog taught me something that day, reminded me of what life is about, and made me understand what it is that I miss when I am so frantic about things.

Do I pay enough attention?

I stuffed my list into my pocket. I was done freaking out about Christmas. I would worry less about what I need to get and be more grateful for what I already have.

I felt lighter.

Lying across my bed that night, the house dark except for the glow of my smartphone, I clicked “proceed to checkout” and crossed one-two-three-four people off my list. Free shipping at another Web site, and one-two-three more taken care of.

Two things I had been thinking about for my mom, and then I was finished. I rolled over, smiling, to sleep, visions of UPS trucks dancing in my head.

The next day, instead of fussing over when we would take a Christmas-card photo together, I thumbed through the pictures I already had on my iPhone and ordered cards with the best one. (We can discuss actually getting them addressed and in the mail later. I was on a *roll*.)

And I sent an e-mail to the regulars at my Christmas Eve gathering, suggesting that if they were waiting for a better offer, it was late in the season and unlikely to come, so they should please reply with their uncontrollable excitement and with what dish they were bringing.

Christmas will be great. Nothing to freak out about.

The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Lectionary: 018

Blessing

(Num 6:22-27)

Yahweh said to Moses: *Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: This is how you shall bless the Israelites.*

May Yahweh bless you.

May Yahweh keep you!

May Yahweh smile upon you.

May Yahweh be gracious to you!

May Yahweh look upon you kindly.

May Yahweh you peace!

So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites,
and I will bless them.

A Hymn & A Lament

(Ps 67:1-7)

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

Petition

- ¹ May our divine patron be gracious to us.
May our divine patron bless us.
May our divine patron smile upon us,

Selah

- ² So that *Your Way* may be known upon earth;
So that *Your Saving Power* may be known among all peoples.¹⁶

Call to worship

- ³ Let the peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all the peoples praise you.
⁴ Let the nations be glad;
Let all the nations sing for joy.

Creation story

- Because you judge the peoples with equity,
You guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
⁵ Let the peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all the peoples praise you.
⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
Our divine patron has blessed us.

Petition

- ⁷ May our divine patron continue to bless us.

Call to worship

Let all the ends of the earth revere our divine patron.

¹⁶ NRSV: nations

Kerygma

(Gal 4:4-7)

Brothers and sisters:

When the fullness of time had come, 'Abba sent the heir of the divine household, who was born of a woman, and who was born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children of the household.

As proof that you are members of the household, 'Abba sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out: *'Abba, Father!*

Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a member of the household, and if a member of the household, then also chosen to inherit the household through 'Abba.

Birth Story

(Luke 2:16-21)

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they announced the *keryma* message that had been told them about this child.

All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising 'Abba for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named *Jesus*, the name given him by the divine messenger before he was conceived in the womb.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up to a new year – 2014!
Thank you for do-overs, second chances, new beginnings.
Inspire me to embrace faith with joy, once again.
Give me a happy faith, which brings me hope, not despair.

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord (Lectionary: 020)

A Hymn (Isa 60:1-6)

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

² For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³ Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

⁷ All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you,
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;
they shall be acceptable on my altar,
and I will glorify my glorious house.

⁸ Who are these that fly like a cloud,
and like doves to their windows?

⁹ For the coastlands shall wait for me,
the ships of Tarshish first,
to bring your children from far away,
their silver and gold with them,
for the name of the Lord your God,
and for the Holy One of Israel,
because he has glorified you.

¹⁰ Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I struck you down,
but in my favor I have had mercy on you.

¹¹ Your gates shall always be open;
day and night they shall not be shut,
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,
with their kings led in procession.

¹² For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.

¹³ The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
the cypress, the plane, and the pine,
to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will glorify where my feet rest.

¹⁴ The descendants of those who oppressed you
shall come bending low to you,
and all who despised you
shall bow down at your feet;
they shall call you the City of the Lord,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ Whereas you have been forsaken and hated,
with no one passing through,
I will make you majestic forever,
a joy from age to age.

¹⁶ You shall suck the milk of nations,
you shall suck the breasts of kings;

and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

¹⁷ Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze,
instead of stones, iron.

I will appoint Peace as your overseer
and Righteousness as your taskmaster.

¹⁸ Violence shall no more be heard in your land,
devastation or destruction within your borders;
you shall call your walls Salvation,
and your gates Praise.

God the Glory of Zion

¹⁹ The sun shall no longer be
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.

²⁰ Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.

²¹ Your people shall all be righteous;
they shall possess the land for ever.
They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands,
so that I might be glorified.

²² The least of them shall become a clan,
and the smallest one a mighty nation;
I am the Lord;
in its time I will accomplish it quickly. ¹⁷

¹⁷ **HYMN (ISA 66:16-24)**

The mother motif appears frequently in the world of the Bible. In the Enuma Elish Stories, Tiamat, as Mother Huber, conceives an army of hideous monsters. In the European children's story, Mother Hubbard has "so many children she doesn't know what to do." Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840–93) uses the same motif in casting Mother Ginger in his ballet, *The*

Nutcracker. This hymn (Isa 66:7–17) uses the mother motif to describe the Jerusalem that Yahweh will rebuild. The “breasts” (Isa 66:11), the “knees” or “arms” (Isa 66:12), of Jerusalem are the ridges of Mt. Moriah and Mt. Ophel to the east and of Mt. Zion to the west, separated by the Tyropaeon Valley, across which the city climbs. Since 3000 b.c.e., these twin ridges have hung like breasts and have stretched out like arms of the hills of Judah to embrace and to nurse the people of Jerusalem.

The standard denouement in creation stories is a covenant. Here the denouement also describes Yahweh freeing prisoners, returning exiles to their countries of origin, and raising the dead from their graves. This hymn is a good example of an emancipation episode in a creation story. The emancipation reenacts the creation of humanity. Consequently, this hymn and the creation stories in the book of Genesis share many of the same motifs. In both traditions, Yahweh endows humans with Eden as their home. Here, the creator endows the exiles, who are newly created humans, with Jerusalem. The expulsion from Eden, like the expulsion from Jerusalem, is not a punishment, but a preparation for a divine mission. The people primeval leave Eden to evangelize their world, just as the exiles from Jerusalem are sent to the corners of their world to “announce my glory” (Isa 66:19).

The hymn asks the people of Judah: “Where do we wait while the old world is being destroyed?” Most human communities believe that some special place is their natural, God-given home. The painful experiences of travelers, refugees, and exiles all testify to the disorientation that develops in communities away from home.

Yahweh’s coming does not bring personal salvation, but social justice. Justice is not a world without pain, but a society without prisons. The exiles are anointed to announce that all prisoners are free. Their role is not just to open the doors of prisons, but to share the life of the imprisoned. Their preaching is not door to door, but the silent campaign of living in this world with reverence and commitment. They are called to sense the gentle presence of Yahweh in all times. They are called to work for social justice in the public life, realizing that the way they will live will affect others. The exiles are called to live without mindlessly oversimplifying the challenges of living, and without mercilessly overpowering others. Yahweh comes not to wrap the exiles in the splendid isolation of a protected environment where they will see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. For Isaiah, the exiles are invited to share in Yahweh’s work. Salvation is not what Yahweh has done for the exiles, but their realizing how much Yahweh will expect them to do for others.

The end of the exile is a time for the silent contemplation and recognition that the people of every land are one, and of what a difference the exiles will make in the lives of other peoples. They are not called to be patronizing or arrogant, but grateful for this interdependence. The exiles are called to joyfully and confidently acknowledge how often their own pain and suffering can open their hearts and make tender their feelings toward the sufferings of others. Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004)370-371.

¹⁸ Only the petition element of a lament remains here in Ps 72. Most psalms are laments. Standard laments have five components: a complaint, a petition, a vow, a declaration of innocence, and a confession of faith. The core of most laments is a complaint describing the suffering of the household. Complaints express the anger of a clan at Yahweh for breaking the covenant in which Yahweh promised to protect its villages from their enemies. This anger is not simply an internal emotion. It is a legal protest filed in a public forum. Complaints do not simply help the households vent their feelings. Complaints are a form of judicial outrage. The clan has suffered a loss, and it is demanding that Yahweh compensate it for its loss.

Of Solomon.

- ¹ Give the king your justice, my divine patron,
and your righteousness to a king's heir.
- ² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

- ⁵ May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

- ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May his foes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.

- ¹² For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.

Mourners were the midwives of the dead. Like midwives, mourners washed and anointed the bodies of the dead. Like midwives who swaddled the newborn, mourners shrouded the dead. Like midwives who celebrated the birth of the newborn with hymns, mourners announced the passage of the dead with laments. The lamenting of mourners was not simply a clinical symptom of pain, but a legal petition for admittance into the afterlife. As the legal representatives of the dead, mourners used laments to petition the long dead to accept the newly deceased as members of their household. Just as the primal scream of the newborn was understood as a legal petition to enter a household in the clan, the lament of mourners was considered to be a primal scream on behalf of the dead. It was a legal petition for admittance to the world of the dead. Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 272-273.

¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

¹⁵ Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.

¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.

¹⁷ May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun.
May all nations be blessed in him;
may they pronounce him happy.

¹⁸ Blessed be Yahweh, the divine patron of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name for ever;
may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

²⁰ The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

(Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6)

Brothers and sisters:
You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace
that was given to me for your benefit,
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Birth Stories of Jesus

(Matt 2:1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
in the days of King Herod,
behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
“Where is the newborn king of the Jews?
We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage.”
When King Herod heard this,
he was greatly troubled,
and all Jerusalem with him.
Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,
He inquired of them where the messiah was to be born.
They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea,
for thus it has been written through the prophet Micah:
*And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel.*”¹⁹
Then Herod called the magi secretly
and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance.
He sent them to Bethlehem and said,
“Go and search diligently for the child.
When you have found him, bring me word,
that I too may go and do him homage.”
After their audience with the king they set out.
And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.
They were overjoyed at seeing the star,
and on entering the house
they saw the child with Mary his mother.
They prostrated themselves and did him homage.

¹⁹ Note the MT and the quotation in Matthew are not from the same tradition.

*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days. (Mic 5:2)

Then they opened their treasures
and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they departed for their country by another way.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. You have made every one of us a mystic. We may or may not realize it, we may not even like it. But whether we know it or not, whether we accept it or not, mystical experience is always there, inviting us on a journey of ultimate discovery. We have been given the gift of life in this perplexing world to become who we ultimately are: creatures of boundless love, caring compassion, and wisdom. Existence is a summons to the eternal journey of the sage - the sage we all are, if only we could see.²⁰ Help me today to realize my gift, as Jesus ultimately realized his gift.

In Isaiah's Book of Psalms, this hymn (Isa 60:1-22) questions not so much how the people of Judah will see Yahweh, but rather how the people of Judah will reveal Yahweh. "Nations shall walk by your light" (Isa 60:3) commissions them to contribute their light to the light of the world.

Yahweh will appear in Jerusalem, but not as a divine warrior. In the book of Judges and some of the teaching traditions in the Bible, the appearance of Yahweh signals the beginning of the great war that will bring the old world to an end. Yahweh's appearance is described as a series of battle commands like "Light the signal fire." In this hymn, however, Yahweh appears as "a light of safety to the mothers and their children, to those who go down to the sea in ships, to those who come from Sheba." Not only will the exiles go home, but they will make a home for all nations.

The command: "Rise up!" brings the mourning of the exiles to a close. Ordinary life in the new world now begins. This is the word of the midwife to the newborn: "Open your eyes!" This is the light in the face of a human, and the light of a star rising. This is the same light that led the Hebrews out of Egypt, but that will now be their light to lead others to freedom. No longer will armies march against Jerusalem, but pilgrims will stream into the city. The people taken as hostages and those who fled as refugees return to Jerusalem. They will cross the desert on camels and the sea in ships.

²⁰ Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions* (Novato CA: New World Library, 1999).

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Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Lectionary: 021

Reading 1 is [42:1-4, 6-7](#)

Thus says the LORD:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
upon whom I have put my spirit;
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,
not crying out, not shouting,
not making his voice heard in the street.
a bruised reed he shall not break,
and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,
until he establishes justice on the earth;
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

A Hymn

(Ps 29:1-11)

Dedicated to David

Call to worship

- ¹ Ascribe to Yahweh, O members of the divine assembly,²¹
ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
² Ascribe to Yahweh the glory of the divine name;
worship Yahweh in holy splendor.

Creation story

- ³ The voice of Yahweh is over the primeval sea;
the God of glory thunders,
Yahweh, over these mighty waters.
⁴ The voice of Yahweh is powerful;
the voice of Yahweh is full of majesty.
⁵ The voice of Yahweh breaks the cedars;
Yahweh breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
⁶ He makes the Lebanon mountains skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
⁷ The voice of Yahweh flashes forth flames of fire.
⁸ The voice of Yahweh shakes the desert;²²
Yahweh shakes the desert of Kadesh.
⁹ The voice of Yahweh causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in the Temple creaks: *Glory!*
¹⁰ Yahweh sits enthroned over the primeval sea ²³
Yahweh sits enthroned as ruler forever.

Petition

- ¹¹ May Yahweh give strength to the people!
May Yahweh bless the people with peace!

²¹ NRSV: heavenly beings

²² NRSV: desert

²³ NRSV: the flood

reading 2 [acts 10:34-38](#)

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying:

“In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.

Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.

You know the word that he sent to the Israelites

as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all,

what has happened all over Judea,

beginning in Galilee after the baptism

that John preached,

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth

with the Holy Spirit and power.

He went about doing good

and healing all those oppressed by the devil,

for God was with him.”

Gospel [mt 3:13-17](#)

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.
John tried to prevent him, saying,
“I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?”
Jesus said to him in reply,
“Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”
Then he allowed him.
After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him.
And a voice came from the heavens, saying,
“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Homily

Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, published his memoir *Duty* (January 2014). Critics accused him of being unnecessarily frank in his assessments of an on-going war in Afghanistan, President Obama, Vice President Biden and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

On CBS Sunday Morning, Gates defended his candor by saying he hoped it would focus on the unnecessary gridlock in Congress, the Whitehouse and the Pentagon – even over the simplest issues.

Many Catholic today who have withdrawn from active participation in the parishes and dioceses may have lacked the determination of people like Gates and Nugent to stand up to the gridlock in the Catholic Church created by the same kind of radical conservatives that have taken control of public life in the USA.

Rev. Robert Nugent, Priest Who Counseled Gay Catholics, Dies at 76

Paul Vitello
(NYTimes 1.9.2014)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/us/rev-robert-nugent-priest-who-counseled-gay-catholics-dies-at-76.html>

The Rev. Robert Nugent, a Roman Catholic priest who spent more than 30 years counseling gay and lesbian Catholics and their families until the [Vatican](#) silenced him in 1999, died on Jan. 1 in Milwaukee. He was 76.

The cause was lung cancer, said Sister Jeannine Gramick, a nun who worked with him in founding [New Ways Ministry](#), a group advocating full acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the church and in society.

Before his censure — in a ruling written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI six years later — Father Nugent had walked a fine line between obedience to church doctrine and what he said was a calling to minister to a group at the margins of orthodox Catholic faith.

New Ways Ministry, which he and Sister Gramick started in 1977 in a storefront office in Mount Rainier, Md., sought to push back those margins. It provided counseling and group retreats to help explain church doctrine to gay and lesbian Catholics (and their often-devastated parents); tried to help them come to grips with a dogma that described homosexual sex as an “intrinsic evil”; and, more broadly, made it an article of faith that despite appearances it was still possible to be both a Catholic and a gay person.

The ministry gave its founders a platform from which they tried to open communication on a topic the church considered closed. In the two decades before they were ordered to stop, they lectured widely and met often with bishops, theologians and heads of national Catholic organizations in efforts to widen their perspective on gays in the fold.

For his efforts, Father Nugent was censured by the church for being too accommodating toward a behaviorally “disordered” population, and scolded by his gay and lesbian flock for being too orthodox.

Responding to complaints from American conservative clergy, Vatican officials first warned Father Nugent against imparting “ambiguous” information in his workshops. They then barred him in 1978 from performing sacramental duties like confession and communion. New Ways Ministry, which was never officially sanctioned by the church, came under a Vatican investigation in 1988.

In Roman Catholic dogma, “homosexual orientation” is not a moral wrong in itself (though it “may indicate a tendency toward evil”), and the church instructs its members to show compassion and respect toward gays and lesbians. But it regards homosexual intercourse as “a violation of divine and natural law,” because it cannot lead to procreation, and thus considers it an “intrinsic evil” and a mortal sin.

Father Nugent, who took pains to assure superiors of his fealty to the church and its doctrines, had come to adopt a more accepting view. “People don’t choose to be gay or lesbian,” he told an interviewer in 1997. “They must be recognized for who they are.”

He and Sister Gramick tended to skirt the “intrinsic evil” message, said Francis DeBernardo, a layman who became executive director of New Ways Ministry in the mid-1980s, after the church authorities initially ordered them to give up their leadership roles. “Whether people were having morally approved or unapproved sex was not the focus of the ministry,” Mr. DeBernardo said.

Cardinal Ratzinger, as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vatican office charged with safeguarding church teaching, said — in effect — that it should have been. Barring Father Nugent and Sister Gramick from any further involvement in the organization in 1999, he described their New Ways approach as “erroneous and dangerous” on several counts. By questioning “the definitive and unchangeable nature of Catholic doctrine in this area,” he said, Father Nugent and Sister Gramick had “caused confusion among the Catholic people.” By soft-pedaling the church’s position on homosexuality, he added, they had also failed to provide people “struggling with homosexuality” with the benefits of the church’s “true teaching.”

Pope Benedict’s successor, Francis, has expressed a more welcoming view, though the doctrine remains the same. “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?” Pope Francis said in July. The remark gave Father Nugent “great consolation,” Sister Gramick said.

Forbidden to minister to gay and lesbian Catholics, Father Nugent returned to pastoral duties in 2000 at St. John the Baptist Church in New Freedom, Pa., where he remained until retiring last year. Sister Gramick is executive co-director of the [National Coalition of American Nuns](#), a small liberal group.

In a letter published in 1999 in the newsletter of his priestly order, [Society of the Divine Savior](#), Father Nugent said he had never regretted having “some role in shaping attitudes and ministries for gay and lesbian people.” His ministry raised hackles, he conceded, but had “been well worth the risks taken.”

Charles Robert Nugent was born in Norristown, Pa., on July 31, 1937. He graduated from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia and was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1965. He entered the Salvatorian order, as the society is known, in 1977.

Father Nugent and Sister Gramick began working together in the early 1970s. A member of the order School Sisters of Notre Dame, she ran a counseling project for lesbian and gay Catholics at Villanova University, outside Philadelphia, and he began helping out while studying there for a master’s degree in library science.

When Father Nugent entered a church hospice in Milwaukee last year, Sister Gramick visited him often, she said, passing the time by reading aloud from letters from people he had pastored over the years. Many were from Catholic parents thanking him for his help in becoming reconciled with a gay son or daughter.

“He changed people’s lives,” Sister Gramick said.

Second Sunday of Lent

Lectionary: 027

(Gen 15:1-20 DCB)

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’² But Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.’⁴ But the word of the LORD came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.’⁵ He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’⁶ And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7 Then he said to him, 'I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.'⁸ But he said, 'O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'⁹ He said to him, 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.'¹⁰ He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years;¹⁴ but I will bring judgement on the nation that they serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions.¹⁵ As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.'

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.'

A Lament

(Ps 27:1-14 DCB)

Dedicated to David

Profession of Faith

¹ Yahweh is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
Yahweh is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh —
my adversaries and foes —
they shall stumble and fall.

³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

Petition

⁴ One thing I asked of Yahweh,
that will I seek after:
to live in the House of Yahweh
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of Yahweh,
and to inquire in the Temple.

Profession of faith

⁵ For Yahweh will hide me in the sanctuary
in the day of trouble;
Yahweh will conceal me under the cover of the Tabernacle;
My divine patron will set me high on a rock.

Vow

⁶ Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in the Tabernacle

sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to Yahweh.

Petition

- ⁷ Hear, O Yahweh, when I cry aloud,
 be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸ *Come, my heart says, seek the face of your divine patron!*
 Your face, Yahweh, do I seek.
⁹ Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
 you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not abandon me,
 O divine patron of my salvation!
¹⁰ Even if my father and mother abandon me,
 Yahweh will adopt me.

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Yahweh,
 lead me on a level path because of my enemies.
¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
 false witnesses have risen against me,
 they are breathing out violence.

- ¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living.
 ¹⁴ Wait for Yahweh;
 be strong, and let your heart take courage;
 wait for Yahweh!

(Phil 3:17—4:1 DCB)

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters,
and observe those who thus conduct themselves
according to the model you have in us.

For many, as I have often told you
and now tell you even in tears,
conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction.

Their God is their stomach;
their glory is in their “shame.”

Their minds are occupied with earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven,
and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will change our lowly body
to conform with his glorified body
by the power that enables him also
to bring all things into subjection to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters,
whom I love and long for, my joy and crown,
in this way stand firm in the Lord.

(Luke 9: 28-36 DCB)

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up Mt. Tabor to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. Peter and his companions fell into a deep sleep, and when they awoke they saw Jesus in his glory. Then Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spoke with Jesus of his exodus and what he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus: Teacher, it is good that we are here. Let us pitch three tents -- one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Peter did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came over them, and they became frightened.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said: *This is heir. Listen to him.*²⁴

After the voice had spoken, Jesus was alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

²⁴ ¹⁶And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' (Matt 3:13-17)

Homily

When Bankers Rule, an Easy Essay by Peter Maurin²⁵

Modern society has made the bank account the standard of values.

When the bank account becomes the standard of values, the banker has the power.

- When the banker has the power, the technician has to supervise the making of profits.
- When the banker has the power, the politician has to assure law and order in the profit-making system.
- When the banker has the power, the clergyman is expected to bless the profit-making system or to join the unemployed.
- When the banker has the power, the Sermon on the Mount is declared unpractical.
- When the banker has the power, we have an acquisitive, not a functional society.

Sunday of Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 31

(1 Sam 16:1-13)

The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' ²Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord."' ³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' ⁴Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' ⁵He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the

²⁵ Peter Maurin (1877-1949) was French born, Catholic social activist who founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933 with Dorothy Day. Maurin expressed his ideas through short pieces of verse that became known as *Easy Essays*.

sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.' 7But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' 8Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 9Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 10Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' 11Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' 12He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' 13Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

A Hymn

(Ps 23:1-6)

*creation story*²⁶

When Yahweh is shepherd of my household, I shall not want.

 Yahweh grazes its sheep in green pastures;

Yahweh leads them to still waters;

 Yahweh restores my life.

Yahweh leads the sheep in right paths

 For the sake of the name of Yahweh.

Even though the sheep walk in the valley of darkness,

 I fear no evil;

For Yahweh is always with me;

 Your rod and your staff protect me.

You prepare a table before me;

 You set a table in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

 My bowl overflows.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me

 All the days of my life;

My household shall dwell in the house of Yahweh

 My whole life long.

²⁶ This famous hymn has only a creation story, no call to worship.

Reading 2 [EPH 5:8-14](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness
and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention
the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says:
“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

Gospel JN 9:1-41

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.
His disciples asked him,
“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,
that he was born blind?”
Jesus answered,
“Neither he nor his parents sinned;
it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.
We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day.
Night is coming when no one can work.
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”
When he had said this, he spat on the ground
and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes,
and said to him,
“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” —which means Sent—.
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,
“Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”
Some said, “It is, “
but others said, “No, he just looks like him.”
He said, “I am.”
So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”
He replied,
“The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes
and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’
So I went there and washed and was able to see.”
And they said to him, “Where is he?”
He said, “I don’t know.”

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath.
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.
He said to them,
“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.”
So some of the Pharisees said,
“This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath.”
But others said,
“How can a sinful man do such signs?”

And there was a division among them.
So they said to the blind man again,
“What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?”
He said, “He is a prophet.”

Now the Jews did not believe
that he had been blind and gained his sight
until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight.
They asked them,
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?
How does he now see?”
His parents answered and said,
“We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.
We do not know how he sees now,
nor do we know who opened his eyes.
Ask him, he is of age;
he can speak for himself.”
His parents said this because they were afraid
of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed
that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ,
he would be expelled from the synagogue.
For this reason his parents said,
“He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind
and said to him, “Give God the praise!
We know that this man is a sinner.”
He replied,
“If he is a sinner, I do not know.
One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.”
So they said to him,
“What did he do to you?
How did he open your eyes?”
He answered them,
“I told you already and you did not listen.
Why do you want to hear it again?
Do you want to become his disciples, too?”
They ridiculed him and said,
“You are that man’s disciple;
we are disciples of Moses!
We know that God spoke to Moses,
but we do not know where this one is from.”

The man answered and said to them,
“This is what is so amazing,
that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes.
We know that God does not listen to sinners,
but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him.
It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind.
If this man were not from God,
he would not be able to do anything.”
They answered and said to him,
“You were born totally in sin,
and are you trying to teach us?”
Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,
he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”
He answered and said,
“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”
Jesus said to him,
“You have seen him,
the one speaking with you is he.”
He said,
“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.
Then Jesus said,
“I came into this world for judgment,
so that those who do not see might see,
and those who do see might become blind.”

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this
and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?”
Jesus said to them,
“If you were blind, you would have no sin;
but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

Homily

BOOK REVIEW | BOOKENDS

How Would a Book Like Harold Bloom's 'Western Canon' Be Received Today?

PANKAJ MISHRA and DANIEL MENDELSON

Each week in Bookends, two writers take on questions about the world of books. This week, Pankaj Mishra and Daniel Mendelsohn discuss how a book like Harold Bloom's "Western Canon," published 20 years ago, would be received today.

Pankaj Mishra

In a 1915 sketch, the critic Randolph Bourne satirized the Ivy League professor who lives in his wood-paneled study the "literary life, grave, respected and serene," and regards "modern ideas a futile Babel." Bourne's target was **John Erskine, later the founder of the "Great Books" curriculum at Columbia,** whom he described as a "mournful relic of irrevocable days." Recoiling from oppressively Anglophile pedagogues, Bourne envisaged a "transnational America" that acknowledged its distinctive ethnic and cultural pluralism.

Three years later, Bourne was dead, and the United States emerged from the First World War as one of the most powerful and high-minded countries on earth, the true inheritor of the ostensibly Western values of reason, freedom and democracy that European countries, implicated in slaughter at home and imperial brutality abroad, could no longer convincingly claim for themselves.

Erskine's "Great Books" curriculum advanced what Bourne called a "carefully deodorized and idealized education." It may have been closing time in the gardens of Europe. But a new empire of sweetness and light arose after the war across the Atlantic, and its most formidable paladins were literary critics with their new canons. In the 1920s and '30s, **the study of literature — led by bow-tied men on East Coast campuses — became central to the cultural self-definition of a budding superpower's elites.**

Published in 1994, Harold Bloom's "The Western Canon" could barely suppress its nostalgia for a time when the English department was the jewel in the crown of the humanities, and the literary critic with his refined sensibilities seemed the model public intellectual. The long struggle against the totalitarian

“East,” which had helped make the “West” seem a coherent entity from Plato to NATO, had ended. Since the 1960s, feminists, left-leaning theorists, African-Americans and other minorities had challenged the entrenched verities of academia and journalism.

Bloom’s book shared its tone of grievance with Allan Bloom’s “Closing of the American Mind” (1987) and its presentiment of decline and disorder with Samuel P. Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations” (1996). Harold Bloom disavowed any political purpose: “All that the Western canon can bring one is the proper use of one’s own solitude.” Yet he routinely condemned what he called the “school of resentment” — a catchall term for all those uncouth malcontents who disrupted the aesthetic experience of literature with the futile Babel of modern ideas.

Bloom gallantly defended his cherished canon from vulgarly political and often subliterate assaults. But he could not see that intellectual and cultural life in the West since the 1960s has been enriched by the representatives of a long invisible majority, even if some of them pointed too stridently to discrepancies in the self-congratulatory narratives of powerful white men. Their contributions have steadily expanded our notions of religion, literature and philosophy.

“The Western Canon” itself did not offer a more capacious and complex idea of culture than the one vended by English departments in the 1930s. Bloom actually seemed less intellectually venturesome than the New Humanist Irving Babbitt, a dedicated student of Buddhist and Confucian thought. Asserting that Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson were greater than any Western poet in the last century and a half, Bloom was guilty of what Edmund Wilson called “the sometimes all too conscious American literary self-glorification which is a part of our American imperialism.”

But it is Bloom’s complaints about the “Balkanization of literary studies” by the “academic rabble” that make a book like his seem very quaint in 2014. Aesthetic connoisseurship in the gardens of the West today is menaced not so much by resentful feminists as by the hard-nosed accountants of an insecure commercial society — the same one that in its moment of supreme power had allowed a few men to use their solitude to revive and deepen a fantasy of Western civilization.

Pankaj Mishra is the author of several books, including “The Romantics: A Novel,” which won the Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and “From the Ruins of Empire,” a finalist for the Orwell and Lionel Gelber Prizes in 2013. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and contributes essays on politics and literature to The New York Review of Books, The New Yorker, The Guardian of London and The London Review of Books.



Daniel Mendelsohn

Shortly after his death in 406 B.C., Euripides officially entered the literary canon — which is to say, he went straight to hell.

In Aristophanes' comedy "Frogs" (405 B.C.), the god Dionysus, dismayed by the sorry state of the Athenian theater, descends to the Underworld to retrieve Euripides, his favorite avant-garde tragedian. Once there, he finds himself judging a post-mortem literary contest: Euripides, the newcomer, has challenged the long-dead Aeschylus for the title of greatest playwright. Some zany competitions ensue. (One involves literally weighing each dramatist's words.) Persuaded to choose the playwright who will "save the city," Dionysus crowns the old-fashioned Aeschylus. As the author of the "Oresteia" ascends earthward, he designates Sophocles as his successor.

Whatever ancient theater gossip it provides, the questions "Frogs" raises are ultimately about the canon. (The play's trio of "great" tragedians — Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides — is, after all, the same threesome still taught today.) Who defines it? How do we know what's "the greatest"? And, most elusively, what are canons *for*? Do they innocently enshrine "pure" artistic excellence, or is the agenda always somehow political? ("Save the city," indeed.)

These old questions hover once again on the 20th anniversary of Harold Bloom's controversial "The Western Canon." Published at the height of the culture wars, the book ardently defended the idea of works whose aesthetic value was self-evident from what Bloom dismissed as "the school of resentment" — the feminist, deconstructionist and Marxist critics for whom a rigid curriculum of "Great Books" was anathema. To Bloom's nemeses, the canon was merely a redoubt of white, male, imperialist values: a cultural Stonehenge, as the Oxford literary critic Terry Eagleton put it, best curated by the National Trust.

What's interesting today is how dated this controversy can seem. One big difference between 1994 and now is the Internet. Bloom and his critics were writing just before the remarkable proliferation of online vehicles for cultural discussion and criticism of books, movies, theater, dance and music, which has radically altered the balance among academic, professional and amateur criticism. Today, audiences as well as critics play a lively role in establishing which works get discussed, analyzed, noticed; the boil of resentment toward the literary gods — the Dionysuses who alone were once privileged to enshrine authors — has been lanced.

From the vantage point of two decades it's clear, too, that there was justice on both sides. Much depends on whether you see canons as artificial or organic,

prescriptive or descriptive. The traditional canon — still prescribed, like intellectual medicine, on many a curriculum — is, in fact, good for you: It provides invaluable insight into the thinking in the past that has helped form the present. (Americans familiar with Enlightenment thinkers like Locke and Rousseau have a deeper understanding of their own polity because those authors profoundly influenced the founders.)

But canons also inevitably shift and expand, not merely enshrining the thought of the past but reflecting an evolving perception of the worlds and cultures we inhabit in the present. This is why a reasonable canon today will include voices that went unheard in the 18th century — or even 50 years ago: the novels of Toni Morrison, with their insistence on acknowledging the moral legacy of American slavery, or the works of Derek Walcott, with their rueful vision of the inheritance of European colonialism.

That the strident posturing of 1994 — the self-dramatizing “elegies” for the death of literature that frame Bloom’s book, his opponents’ preposterous ejection of Proust and Joyce from their syllabuses — now seems passé itself reminds us that cultural landscapes change. As, indeed, do literary reputations. Just ask Aristophanes’ Euripides, who learned to his cost that yesterday’s superstars sometimes end up croaking away in the dark.

Daniel Mendelsohn is the author of seven books, including the international best seller “The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million”; two collections of essays on books, film, theater and television; and a translation of the poetry of Cavafy. His essays and reviews have appeared frequently in The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books and The New York Times Book Review. Mendelsohn has won the National Book Critics Circle Award for memoir and the NBCC’s Nona Balakian Citation for Excellence in Book Reviewing; the National Jewish Book Award; and the George Jean Nathan Prize for Drama Criticism. His most recent book, “Waiting for the Barbarians: Essays From the Classics to Pop Culture,” was a finalist for the NBCC award in criticism and the PEN Art of the Essay prize. He teaches at Bard College.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Lectionary: 34

(Ezek 37:12-14)

Thus says the Lord GOD:
O my people, I will open your graves
and have you rise from them,
and bring you back to the land of Israel.
Then you shall know that I am the LORD,
when I open your graves and have you rise from them,

O my people!
I will put my spirit in you that you may live,
and I will settle you upon your land;
thus you shall know that I am the LORD.
I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

A Lament

(Ps 130:1-8)

A PILGRIMAGE PSALM

petition

- ¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, Yahweh.
²Yahweh, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

Complaint

- ³ If you, Yahweh, should mark iniquities,
Yahweh, who could stand?
⁴ But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

Profession of faith

- ⁵ I wait for Yahweh,
my soul waits,
in Yahweh's word I hope;
⁶ my soul waits for Yahweh
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
⁷ O Israel, hope in Yahweh!
Yahweh is steadfast love,
Yahweh is great power to redeem.
⁸ Yahweh will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

(Rom 8:8-11)

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;

on the contrary, you are in the spirit,

if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,

although the body is dead because of sin,

the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

the one who raised Christ from the dead

will give life to your mortal bodies also,

through his Spirit dwelling in you.

Gospel [JN 11:1-45](#)

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil
and dried his feet with her hair;
it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.
So the sisters sent word to him saying,
“Master, the one you love is ill.”
When Jesus heard this he said,
“This illness is not to end in death,
but is for the glory of God,
that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”
Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
So when he heard that he was ill,
he remained for two days in the place where he was.
Then after this he said to his disciples,
“Let us go back to Judea.”
The disciples said to him,
“Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,
and you want to go back there?”
Jesus answered,
“Are there not twelve hours in a day?
If one walks during the day, he does not stumble,
because he sees the light of this world.
But if one walks at night, he stumbles,
because the light is not in him.”
He said this, and then told them,
“Our friend Lazarus is asleep,
but I am going to awaken him.”
So the disciples said to him,
“Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.”
But Jesus was talking about his death,
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.
So then Jesus said to them clearly,
“Lazarus has died.
And I am glad for you that I was not there,
that you may believe.
Let us go to him.”
So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,
“Let us also go to die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,

he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,
“Where have you laid him?”
They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”
And Jesus wept.
So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”
But some of them said,
“Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man
have done something so that this man would not have died?”

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.
It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.
Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”
Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him,
“Lord, by now there will be a stench;
he has been dead for four days.”
Jesus said to her,
“Did I not tell you that if you believe
you will see the glory of God?”
So they took away the stone.
And Jesus raised his eyes and said,
“Father, I thank you for hearing me.
I know that you always hear me;
but because of the crowd here I have said this,
that they may believe that you sent me.”
And when he had said this,
He cried out in a loud voice,
“Lazarus, come out!”
The dead man came out,
tied hand and foot with burial bands,
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.
So Jesus said to them,
“Untie him and let him go.”

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary
and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Homily

He Cried Out ‘Black Power,’ Then Left for Africa

Peniel E. Joseph on His Biography of Stokely Carmichael

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http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/books/peniel-e-joseph-on-his-biography-of-stokely-carmichael.html?_r=0

With “Stokely: A Life,” the historian Peniel E. Joseph says he set out to “recover” Stokely Carmichael, the man who popularized the phrase “black power” and led the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC, a man whose diminished historical footprint, Mr. Joseph writes, “impoverishes our understanding of the most important movement in our national history.”

Coming out on Tuesday from Basic Civitas Publishers, Mr. Joseph’s book, 10 years in the making, is being billed as the first definitive biography of its subject, who later changed his name to Kwame Ture. In addition to interviews and exhaustive research in archives around the world, Mr. Joseph, a professor of history at Tufts and the founding director of its Center for the Study of Race and Democracy, had access to almost 20,000 previously unreleased pages of F.B.I. files on Ture.

And it’s a life full of choices — like moving to Africa — that many Americans might debate.

A native of Trinidad who grew up in the Bronx and attended the Bronx High School of Science, Ture spent most of the last 30 years of his life in Guinea, in West Africa, trying to fashion a revolutionary Pan-African movement. He died in Guinea in 1998 at 57.

His political life tracked the divergent paths of the modern black political struggle in the United States: He worked with mainstream civil rights activists like Dr. King; and helped start the Black Panther Party. He became increasingly radicalized and finally declared that the highest political expression of black power was Pan-Africanism.

Henry Louis Gates Jr., director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard, described Ture in an interview as “the link between the civil rights movement, as headed by Martin Luther King, and the radical black movement that emerged from within the civil rights movement through the younger generation.” Mr. Gates said Mr. Joseph’s book “completes the circle and the history of the black movement.”

Some scholars and activists believe that the book will invite debate about Ture’s actions and legacy. Some of that debate, they said, will turn on how Mr. Joseph interprets the factors that led Ture to leave the country in 1969. It was a dramatic time: The Black Panthers were engaged in a violent struggle, Dr. King had just been assassinated in Memphis (in 1968), and Ture was being harassed by the F.B.I.

Ture’s name change, the biography notes, reflects his admiration for the Guinean president Sékou Touré and Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. But in embracing them and leaving for Africa, did he leave black Americans behind?

Clayborne Carson, the director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford, who knew Ture and has read excerpts from Mr. Joseph’s book, said he believed Mr. Joseph’s assessment could prompt such questions.

“When he became an advocate for Kwame Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism, did he turn from being an organizer who has an impact on African-American causes to being an ideologue?” Mr. Carson asked in an interview. “An argument could be made that he got so wrapped up in a particular ideology that he thought was the right one, the correct path for African-Americans and for Africans, but not many people followed him down that line.”

Mr. Joseph writes that by settling in Guinea, “a country with less political freedom than the one he had left behind,” and supporting the authoritarian President Touré, Ture embraced ideology “at the expense of his identity as an intellectual maverick and political contrarian.” And Ture’s “vision of an idealized Africa,” Mr. Joseph writes, “bound by a unifying culture, ideology and economic system, seemed to at times veer toward magical thinking.”

In an interview, the writer and scholar Ekwueme Michael Thelwell called that assertion “reductive and superficial,” adding that that description is the opposite of Ture’s “realistic understanding of the depth of the problems facing an emerging Africa.”

But Mr. Thelwell, who completed Ture's autobiography "Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)" (2003), said he was relieved by his quick impression of Mr. Joseph's book.

"Biographies of luminaries of our peoples' struggle — particularly those advertised by their publishers as 'definitive' — need be approached with caution," he said in an email. "They tend to be a mixed bag of literary conceit, prevailing intellectual fashion and political bias."

Mr. Joseph said he set out to paint an evenhanded portrait. His book presents Ture as charismatic, at once intellectual and folksy, funny and angry, glamorous and defiant. He married the South African singer Miriam Makeba (introduced to him by Harry Belafonte), pushed his friend Dr. King to denounce the Vietnam War, worked with the voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer and hung out with the social activist Tom Hayden. His womanizing is noted in the book, as is Makeba's affair with Sékou Touré. The couple later divorced.

Mr. Joseph presents Ture as, above all, a superb organizer who helped put together "and participate in every major civil rights demonstration and development in America between 1960 and 1965, the second half of the movement's heroic period."

One of the reasons Ture left the United States, the book suggests, was because of relentless hounding by the government. One F.B.I. memo Mr. Joseph cites calls for a "whispering campaign" with overtones that Ture was being rewarded by the American government for his efforts, rewards that allowed him to buy a mansion, avoid military service and enjoy a regal life with women. The government explored deporting him or trying him for treason for his antiwar chants and spread a rumor that he worked for the C.I.A.

In an interview, Mr. Joseph said that if Ture has received less attention than some other civil rights leaders, it was largely because he went to Africa and was not martyred like Dr. King and Malcolm X, both killed at 39. And in the sound-bite landscape, Mr. Joseph said, the complexity of Ture "makes him a difficult subject," one that he relished introducing to a new generation.

"His major contribution was pushing the envelope in terms of racial discourse," Mr. Joseph said. "He's the person who, by talking about not just black power but antiwar activism and anti-imperialism, has got a critique against not just racial but economic injustice. He pushes the entire society to take a better and bigger look at itself."

Many of Ture's larger-than-life contemporaries are still alive and still outspoken. They are protective of a man whose views were often misunderstood or distorted in an effort to neutralize him and the movement, they said. "Stokely was one of the most brilliant, captivating, decent, committed leaders of our generation of the '60s," Kathleen Neal Cleaver, the former Black Panther activist, said in an interview.

Ms. Cleaver, who teaches legal history at Emory University and at Yale, lived in Algeria for a time with her husband, the Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver, who fled the United States to avoid charges of attempted murder. (They later divorced; he died in 1998.) She described the appeal of Africa for black activists as strong but problematic.

"On some level, everyone is attracted to Africa," she said. "On another level, people want to make a difference in the United States. How do you balance that?"

But Ture, she said, made a life for himself in Guinea. "I never had the sense," she said, "that he regretted his choices."

For Mr. Joseph, Ture was appealing because he spent his life making difficult choices. "I really like the fact that he evolves and he changes," Mr. Joseph said, "and even when he's making mistakes and errors, he's always interesting."

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Lectionary: 35 and 38

(Isa 50:4-7)

The Lord GOD has given me
a well-trained tongue,
that I might know how to speak to the weary
a word that will rouse them.
Morning after morning
he opens my ear that I may hear;
and I have not rebelled,
have not turned back.
I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield

from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

A Lament

(Ps 22:1-31)

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm dedicated to David.

Petition

- ¹ My Divine patron, my Divine patron, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
² O my Divine patron, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Profession of Faith

- ³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
⁴ In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
⁵ To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

Complaint

- ⁶ But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
⁷ All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
⁸ ‘Commit your cause to the Yahweh; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!’

Profession of faith

- ⁹ Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.
¹⁰ On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my Divine patron.

Petition

- ¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

Complaint

12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
16 For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;
17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
18 they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

Petition

19 But you, O Yahweh, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!
21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!

Vow

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
22 I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
23 You who fear Yahweh, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of your divine patron, all you offspring of Israel!
24 For Yahweh did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
My divine patron did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.
25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who live morally.²⁷

²⁷²⁷ NRSV: fear him.

- ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Yahweh.
May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Yahweh;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before Yahweh.
- ²⁸ For dominion belongs to the Yahweh,
and Yahweh rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ To Yahweh, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before my divine patron shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for my divine patron.
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve Yahweh;
future generations will be told about the Yahweh,
- ³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that Yahweh has done it.

(Phil 2:6-11)

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

(Matt 26:14—27:66)

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot,
went to the chief priests and said,
“What are you willing to give me
if I hand him over to you?”
They paid him thirty pieces of silver,
and from that time on he looked for an opportunity
to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,
the disciples approached Jesus and said,
“Where do you want us to prepare
for you to eat the Passover?”
He said,
“Go into the city to a certain man and tell him,
The teacher says, “My appointed time draws near;
in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.””
The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered,
and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening,
he reclined at table with the Twelve.
And while they were eating, he said,
“Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”
Deeply distressed at this,
they began to say to him one after another,
“Surely it is not I, Lord?”
He said in reply,
“He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me
is the one who will betray me.
The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him,
but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.
It would be better for that man if he had never been born.”
Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply,
“Surely it is not I, Rabbi?”
He answered, “You have said so.”

While they were eating,
Jesus took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and giving it to his disciples said,
“Take and eat; this is my body.”
Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,

“Drink from it, all of you,
for this is my blood of the covenant,
which will be shed on behalf of many
for the forgiveness of sins.
I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine
until the day when I drink it with you new
in the kingdom of my Father.”
Then, after singing a hymn,
they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them,
“This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken,
for it is written:
*I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed;*
but after I have been raised up,
I shall go before you to Galilee.”
Peter said to him in reply,
“Though all may have their faith in you shaken,
mine will never be.”
Jesus said to him,
“Amen, I say to you,
this very night before the cock crows,
you will deny me three times.”
Peter said to him,
“Even though I should have to die with you,
I will not deny you.”
And all the disciples spoke likewise.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane,
and he said to his disciples,
“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”
He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,
and began to feel sorrow and distress.
Then he said to them,
“My soul is sorrowful even to death.
Remain here and keep watch with me.”
He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying,
“My Father, if it is possible,
let this cup pass from me;
yet, not as I will, but as you will.”
When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep.
He said to Peter,

“So you could not keep watch with me for one hour?
Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again,
“My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass
without my drinking it, your will be done!”
Then he returned once more and found them asleep,
for they could not keep their eyes open.
He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time,
saying the same thing again.
Then he returned to his disciples and said to them,
“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?
Behold, the hour is at hand
when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners.
Get up, let us go.
Look, my betrayer is at hand.”

While he was still speaking,
Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived,
accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs,
who had come from the chief priests and the elders
of the people.
His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying,
“The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him.”
Immediately he went over to Jesus and said,
“Hail, Rabbi!” and he kissed him.
Jesus answered him,
“Friend, do what you have come for.”
Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.
And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus
put his hand to his sword, drew it,
and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear.
Then Jesus said to him,
“Put your sword back into its sheath,
for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.
Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father
and he will not provide me at this moment
with more than twelve legions of angels?
But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled
which say that it must come to pass in this way?”
At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,
“Have you come out as against a robber,
with swords and clubs to seize me?”

Day after day I sat teaching in the temple area,
yet you did not arrest me.
But all this has come to pass
that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled.”
Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus led him away
to Caiaphas the high priest,
where the scribes and the elders were assembled.
Peter was following him at a distance
as far as the high priest’s courtyard,
and going inside he sat down with the servants
to see the outcome.
The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin
kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus
in order to put him to death,
but they found none,
though many false witnesses came forward.
Finally two came forward who stated,
“This man said, ‘I can destroy the temple of God
and within three days rebuild it.’”
The high priest rose and addressed him,
“Have you no answer?
What are these men testifying against you?”
But Jesus was silent.
Then the high priest said to him,
“I order you to tell us under oath before the living God
whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.”
Jesus said to him in reply,
“You have said so.
But I tell you:
From now on you will see ‘the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of the Power’
and ‘coming on the clouds of heaven.’”
Then the high priest tore his robes and said,
“He has blasphemed!
What further need have we of witnesses?
You have now heard the blasphemy;
what is your opinion?”
They said in reply,
“He deserves to die!”
Then they spat in his face and struck him,
while some slapped him, saying,

“Prophesy for us, Christ: who is it that struck you?”
Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard.
One of the maids came over to him and said,
“You too were with Jesus the Galilean.”
But he denied it in front of everyone, saying,
“I do not know what you are talking about!”
As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him
and said to those who were there,
“This man was with Jesus the Nazorean.”
Again he denied it with an oath,
“I do not know the man!”
A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter,
“Surely you too are one of them;
even your speech gives you away.”
At that he began to curse and to swear,
“I do not know the man.”
And immediately a cock crowed.
Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken:
“Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.”
He went out and began to weep bitterly.

When it was morning,
all the chief priests and the elders of the people
took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.
They bound him, led him away,
and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned,
deeply regretted what he had done.
He returned the thirty pieces of silver
to the chief priests and elders, saying,
“I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.”
They said,
“What is that to us?
Look to it yourself.”
Flinging the money into the temple,
he departed and went off and hanged himself.
The chief priests gathered up the money, but said,
“It is not lawful to deposit this in the temple treasury,
for it is the price of blood.”
After consultation, they used it to buy the potter’s field
as a burial place for foreigners.
That is why that field even today is called the Field of Blood.

Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah
the prophet,
*And they took the thirty pieces of silver,
the value of a man with a price on his head,
a price set by some of the Israelites,
and they paid it out for the potter's field
just as the Lord had commanded me.*

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and he questioned him,
“Are you the king of the Jews?”
Jesus said, “You say so.”
And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders,
he made no answer.
Then Pilate said to him,
“Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?”
But he did not answer him one word,
so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast
the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd
one prisoner whom they wished.
And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.
So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them,
“Which one do you want me to release to you,
Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?”
For he knew that it was out of envy
that they had handed him over.
While he was still seated on the bench,
his wife sent him a message,
“Have nothing to do with that righteous man.
I suffered much in a dream today because of him.”
The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds
to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus.
The governor said to them in reply,
“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”
They answered, “Barabbas!”
Pilate said to them,
“Then what shall I do with Jesus called Christ?”
They all said,
“Let him be crucified!”
But he said,
“Why? What evil has he done?”
They only shouted the louder,

“Let him be crucified!”

When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all,
but that a riot was breaking out instead,
he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd,
saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood.

Look to it yourselves.”

And the whole people said in reply,

“His blood be upon us and upon our children.”

Then he released Barabbas to them,
but after he had Jesus scourged,
he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium
and gathered the whole cohort around him.

They stripped off his clothes
and threw a scarlet military cloak about him.

Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head,
and a reed in his right hand.

And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying,
“Hail, King of the Jews!”

They spat upon him and took the reed
and kept striking him on the head.

And when they had mocked him,
they stripped him of the cloak,
dressed him in his own clothes,
and led him off to crucify him.

As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon;
this man they pressed into service
to carry his cross.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha
—which means Place of the Skull —,

they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall.
But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink.

After they had crucified him,
they divided his garments by casting lots;
then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

And they placed over his head the written charge against him:
This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Two revolutionaries were crucified with him,
one on his right and the other on his left.

Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying,

“You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,
save yourself, if you are the Son of God,
and come down from the cross!”
Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said,
“He saved others; he cannot save himself.
So he is the king of Israel!
Let him come down from the cross now,
and we will believe in him.
He trusted in God;
let him deliver him now if he wants him.
For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”
The revolutionaries who were crucified with him
also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land
until three in the afternoon.
And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*”
which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Some of the bystanders who heard it said,
“This one is calling for Elijah.”
Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge;
he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed,
gave it to him to drink.
But the rest said,
“Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.”
But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice,
and gave up his spirit.

Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary
was torn in two from top to bottom.
The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened,
and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised.
And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection,
they entered the holy city and appeared to many.
The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus
feared greatly when they saw the earthquake
and all that was happening, and they said,
“Truly, this was the Son of God!”
There were many women there, looking on from a distance,
who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him.

Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening,
there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph,
who was himself a disciple of Jesus.
He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus;
then Pilate ordered it to be handed over.
Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen
and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock.
Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb
and departed.
But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

The next day, the one following the day of preparation,
the chief priests and the Pharisees
gathered before Pilate and said,
“Sir, we remember that this impostor while still alive said,
‘After three days I will be raised up.’
Give orders, then, that the grave be secured until the third day,
lest his disciples come and steal him and say to the people,
‘He has been raised from the dead.’
This last imposture would be worse than the first.”
Pilate said to them,
“The guard is yours;
go, secure it as best you can.”
So they went and secured the tomb
by fixing a seal to the stone and setting the guard.

Homily

Carl Siciliano, a Roman Catholic who lived in two Benedictine monasteries and has spent over 30 years serving the homeless, invited Pope Francis to the Ali Forney Center to meet LGBT young people who were abandoned and had their lives devastated because of their parent's religious beliefs influenced by the Church's harsh stands and teachings against being gay. In 2012, Siciliano invited Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, to meet LGBT youth at the Ali Forney Center. Dolan, however, replied to the letter and did not accept the invitation to meet some of his young constituents.

<http://www.redletterchristians.org/ny-times-letter-calls-pope-francis-end-harm-lgbt-youth/>

Your Holiness,

I write to you as a Roman Catholic, a former Benedictine monk and as a gay man who has spent over 30 years serving the homeless, first as a member of the Catholic Worker Movement, and now as the founder and Executive Director of the Ali Forney Center, America's largest center for homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth based in New York City.

I write on behalf of the homeless LGBT youths I serve. I ask you to take urgent action to protect them from the devastating consequences of **religious rejection**, which is the most common reason LGBT youths are driven from their homes. At the heart of the problem is that the church still teaches that **homosexual conduct is a sin, and that being gay is disordered**. I hope that if you understand how this teaching tears families apart and brings suffering to innocent youths, you will end this teaching and prevent your bishops from fighting against the acceptance of LGBT people as equal members of society.

I hope that you will open your heart to the suffering of our youths. As LGBT youths are finding the courage to speak the truths of their hearts at younger ages, epidemic numbers are being rejected by their families, and driven to homelessness. The number of youths enduring this cruel fate is staggering; last year at least 200,000 LGBT youths experienced homelessness in the United States. **LGBT youths make up 40% of the homeless youth population in this country, despite comprising only about 5% of the overall youth population.**

A recent study of family rejection found that parents with high religious involvement were significantly less accepting of their LGBT children. Over the past decade thousands of LGBT youths have come to the Ali Forney Center seeking safe shelter, from across our nation and the globe, bearing witness to having been driven from their homes by religious parents who believed they were evil and sinful.

What these youths endure is horrific. They endure the torment of being unloved and unwanted by their parents, combined with the ordeals of hunger, cold and sexual exploitation while homeless. LGBT youths who are rejected by their families are eight times more likely to attempt suicide than LGBT youths whose parents accept them.

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest and most influential Christian organization in the world. By teaching that homosexual conduct is a sin, and that the homosexual orientation is disordered, it influences countless parents and families in societies across the globe to reject their children. In the name of these children, and in light of the love and compassion at the heart of the message of Jesus, I ask that you end this teaching.

Jesus Christ is never recorded as having said a word in judgment or condemnation of homosexuality or of LGBT people. He spoke of a loving, compassionate God, and commanded his followers to act with love and compassion. Jesus spoke of God as a loving parent who would never abandon his children.

There are biblical writings endorsing conduct now recognized as wrong; passages endorsing the rape of enemies' wives and the murder of their children, endorsing slavery and even genocide. None of those biblical instructions are maintained as church teachings, as they are recognized to be cruel and immoral, and reflective of the ignorance of more primitive times. I ask you to recognize that the condemnation of homosexuality is also cruel and wrong, and rooted in a primitive, obsolete understanding of human sexuality. I ask you to join the growing number of church communities and religious denominations who have chosen to welcome and embrace us with love and acceptance.

A teaching's wisdom and efficacy must be judged in part by its outcome. The teaching that homosexual conduct is a sin has a poisonous outcome, bearing fruit in many Christian parents who abandon their LGBT children to homelessness and destitution. How could a good seed yield such a bitter harvest?

For me this tragedy has many human faces. I see Justin, whose mother, before throwing him out of his home, summoned a priest who held him to the ground and tried to drive the devil out of the 16 year old boy. Or Terry, who was sent to a Catholic religion class where the instructor set him aside as someone "possessed by demons". When his mother threw him out, she said that she would rather he die in the streets than live in her home if he was gay.

I recall Maria, whose family drove her to a forest far from her home and abandoned her, throwing her from the car, because being a lesbian made her “evil”. I think of the boy whose name I never learned whose father was so disgusted by homosexuality that he threw his son out of his home and said he would kill him and bury him in the backyard if he tried to return.

I greatly respect you as a leader who has shown deep concern for the plight of the poor. I invite you to the Ali Forney Center, to meet our abandoned youths and see for yourself how their lives have been devastated and made destitute by religious rejection. I believe that there is no more compelling witness to the harmfulness of the condemnation of homosexuality than the consequent suffering plainly visible in the eyes of our homeless LGBT youths.

We share a belief in a God of love. I know in my heart that what my kids have suffered is ultimately a violation against love. How tragic it is that the church, through its teaching, would contribute to such a violation. Surely God loves his children more than teachings.

I hope that you will take up my offer to come to the Ali Forney Center and meet the youths we serve. And I hope that we can find common ground in seeking that they be protected and loved.

Sincerely,
Carl Siciliano

Holy Saturday

At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

Lectionary: 41

(Gen 1:1—2:2)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.

Then God said,
“Let there be light,” and there was light.
God saw how good the light was.
God then separated the light from the darkness.
God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”

Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day.

Then God said,

“Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters,
to separate one body of water from the other.”

And so it happened:

God made the dome,

and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it.

God called the dome “the sky.”

Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

Then God said,

“Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin,
so that the dry land may appear.”

And so it happened:

the water under the sky was gathered into its basin,
and the dry land appeared.

God called the dry land “the earth, “
and the basin of the water he called “the sea.”

God saw how good it was.

Then God said,

“Let the earth bring forth vegetation:

every kind of plant that bears seed
and every kind of fruit tree on earth
that bears fruit with its seed in it.”

And so it happened:

the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed
and every kind of fruit tree on earth
that bears fruit with its seed in it.

God saw how good it was.

Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

Then God said:

“Let there be lights in the dome of the sky,
to separate day from night.

Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years,
and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky,
to shed light upon the earth.”

And so it happened:

God made the two great lights,
the greater one to govern the day,
and the lesser one to govern the night;
and he made the stars.

God set them in the dome of the sky,
to shed light upon the earth,
to govern the day and the night,
and to separate the light from the darkness.
God saw how good it was.
Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

Then God said,
“Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures,
and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky.”
And so it happened:
God created the great sea monsters
and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems,
and all kinds of winged birds.
God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying,
“Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas;
and let the birds multiply on the earth.”
Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said,
“Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures:
cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds.”
And so it happened:
God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle,
and all kinds of creeping things of the earth.
God saw how good it was.
Then God said:
“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,
the birds of the air, and the cattle,
and over all the wild animals
and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.”
God created man in his image;
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
God blessed them, saying:
“Be fertile and multiply;
fill the earth and subdue it.
Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,
and all the living things that move on the earth.”
God also said:
“See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth
and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food;

and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air,
and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground,
I give all the green plants for food.”
And so it happened.
God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.
Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.
Since on the seventh day God was finished
with the work he had been doing,
he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

A Hymn (Ps 33:1-12)

Call to worship

- ¹ *Rejoice* in Yahweh, you righteous.
 Praise befits the upright.
² *Praise* Yahweh with the lyre;
 make melody to your divine patron with the ten-stringed harp.
³ *Sing* to your divine patron a new song;
 play skillfully on the strings,
 shout loudly.²⁸

Creation story

- ⁴ For the word of Yahweh is upright,
 all the work of your divine patron is done faithfully.
⁵ Your divine patron loves righteousness and justice;
 the earth is full of the steadfast love of Yahweh.
⁶ By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
 all the stars by the breath of the mouth of your divine patron.
⁷ Yahweh gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;²⁹
 Your divine patron put the oceans in storehouses.
⁸ Let all the earth live morally;

²⁸ Seven calls to worship here

²⁹ waters above the *raqia firmament*

- let all the peoples of the world stand in awe of their divine patron.
- ⁹ For their divine patron spoke, and it came to be;
Their divine patron commanded, and it stood firm.
- ¹⁰ Yahweh brings the plans of the peoples to nothing;
Their divine patron frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- ¹¹ The plans of Yahweh stand for ever,
the thoughts of heart of Yahweh for all generations.
- ¹² Happy is the people whose divine patron is Yahweh,
the people whom Yahweh has chosen as a heritage.

A Lament

(Ps 33:13-22)

Profession of faith

- ¹³ Yahweh looks down from heaven;
Yahweh sees all humans.
- ¹⁴ From where Yahweh sits enthroned,
Yahweh watches all the inhabitants of the earth —
- ¹⁵ Yahweh fashions the hearts of all;
Observes all their deeds.
- ¹⁶ A ruler is not saved by a great army;
a warrior is not delivered by great strength.
- ¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
by its great might it cannot save.
- ¹⁸ Truly the eye of Yahweh is on those who live morally,
on those who hope in the steadfast love of Yahweh,
- ¹⁹ to deliver their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

Petition

- ²⁰ Our soul waits for Yahweh;
Yahweh is our help and shield.
- ²¹ Our heart is glad in our divine patron,
We trust in the holy name of Yahweh.
- ²² Let your steadfast love, O Yahweh, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Reading 2 [GN 22:1-18](#)

God put Abraham to the test.
He called to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am, “ he replied.

Then God said:

“Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love,
and go to the land of Moriah.

There you shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you.”

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey,
took with him his son Isaac and two of his servants as well,
and with the wood that he had cut for the holocaust,
set out for the place of which God had told him.

On the third day Abraham got sight of the place from afar.

Then he said to his servants:

“Both of you stay here with the donkey,
while the boy and I go on over yonder.

We will worship and then come back to you.”

Thereupon Abraham took the wood for the holocaust
and laid it on his son Isaac’s shoulders,
while he himself carried the fire and the knife.

As the two walked on together, Isaac spoke to his father Abraham:

“Father!” Isaac said.

“Yes, son, “ he replied.

Isaac continued, “Here are the fire and the wood,
but where is the sheep for the holocaust?”

“Son,” Abraham answered,

“God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust.”

Then the two continued going forward.

When they came to the place of which God had told him,
Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.

Next he tied up his son Isaac,

and put him on top of the wood on the altar.

Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But the LORD’s messenger called to him from heaven,

“Abraham, Abraham!”

“Here I am!” he answered.

“Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the messenger.

“Do not do the least thing to him.

I know now how devoted you are to God,

since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son.”

As Abraham looked about,

he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket.

So he went and took the ram

and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Abraham named the site Yahweh-yireh;
hence people now say, AOn the mountain the LORD will see.”

Again the LORD’s messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said:
“I swear by myself, declares the LORD,
that because you acted as you did
in not withholding from me your beloved son,
I will bless you abundantly
and make your descendants as countless
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore;
your descendants shall take possession
of the gates of their enemies,
and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessingC
all this because you obeyed my command.”

crisis (Gen 21:1–10*)

Yahweh kept the stipulations of the Covenant with Sarah, who conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. Abraham named the son to whom Sarah gave birth “Isaac” (Hebrew: *tsahaq*), and circumcised him when he was eight days old, as Yahweh had stipulated. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born and when Sarah sang:

*“Yahweh has made me laugh (Hebrew: tsahaq);
Everyone who hears will laugh with me. . . .
Who would have said Sarah will nurse a child?
Yet I have borne Abraham a son in his old age.”*

The child grew. On the day he was weaned Abraham celebrated a great feast. Then Sarah saw the son to whom Hagar the Egyptian had given birth with Abraham sexually abusing (Hebrew: *metsaheq*) son Isaac (Gen 26:8*; 39:14–17*; Judg 16:25*).

climax (Gen 21:11–18*)

So she said to Abraham, “Expel this slave with her son, for the son of this slave shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” Sarah’s indictment of Ishmael troubled Abraham. But Yahweh said to Abraham: “Do not worry about this young man Ishmael and the slave Hagar. Do whatever Sarah asks you to do, because it is Isaac’s children who will remember (Hebrew: *qara*) you. As for the son of the slave, I will make a great people of him as well, because he is your son.” So Abraham rose early in the morning. . . .

climax (Gen 22:1–10*)

Abraham planted a sacred tree at Beersheba, which he dedicated to Yahweh, Our Creator Everlasting (Hebrew: *el olam*). Abraham remained a stranger in the Land of the Philistines for a long time. Some time later, Yahweh appeared (Hebrew: *nissah*) to Abraham and said: “Abraham.” “Here I am,”

Abraham responded. Then, Yahweh gave Abraham this command: “Take your son, your heir, Isaac, and depart for the Land of Moriah, where you will offer sacrifice on the hill which I will reveal to you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning. . . .

. . . saddled an ass, took his son, Isaac, two slaves, and the wood that he had cut for the sacrifice. Then he departed for the sanctuary that Our Creator would reveal to him.

On the third day, Abraham saw the sanctuary in the distance. Then Abraham ordered his slaves: “Stay here and take care of Ishmael (Hebrew: *hamor*). This young man and I will go on ahead. After we offer the sacrifice, we will return.” Abraham let Isaac carry the wood for the sacrifice. Abraham himself carried the flint and steel to light the fire. As the two of them were walking along together, Isaac called out to his father, Abraham: “My father.” “Here I am, my son,” Abraham replied. “Look. There is fire and wood, but there is no sheep for the sacrifice.” “My son, Our Creator, will see to it that there is a sheep for the sacrifice.” The two of them continued walking along together. When they came to the sanctuary that Yahweh had chosen, Abraham built an altar, and laid firewood on it. Then he raised the steel knife in his hand to sacrifice his son.

denouement (Gen 22:11–14*)

But the messenger of Yahweh called out from the heavens, “Abraham, Abraham!” He said, “Here I am.” “Do not sacrifice this young man. Do not harm him. Yahweh, the divine patron of your household, knows that you have placed your heir in his hands.” Abraham looked around and saw a ram caught by its horns in the maquis brush. So he went and took the ram and sacrificed it in place of his son. Abraham named the sanctuary “Where I looked for our Creator,” where people now sing: “On this mountain Our Creator will look after you.”

denouement (Gen 22:15–19*)

Again the messenger of Yahweh called to Abraham from the heavens. This is the word of Yahweh: “Because you would not withhold even your heir from me, I will bless you abundantly and make your children as countless as the stars of the sky and the sand on the shore. I will give your children the cities of their enemies. I will bless all the nations of the earth with your children because you obeyed my command.” Abraham returned to his slaves, and they set out together for Beersheba, where Abraham made his home.

Figure 21 Story of Abraham on Mt. Moriah (Gen 21:1–14* + 22:1–19*)³⁰

Responsorial Psalm [PS 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11](#)

³⁰ Benjamin, D. C. (2004). *The Old Testament Story* (66). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

R/ (1) **You are my inheritance, O Lord.**

O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.
I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

R/ **You are my inheritance, O Lord.**

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

R/ **You are my inheritance, O Lord.**

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

R/ **You are my inheritance, O Lord.**

Reading 3 [EX 14:15-15:1](#)

The LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me?
Tell the Israelites to go forward.
And you, lift up your staff and, with hand outstretched over the sea,
split the sea in two,
that the Israelites may pass through it on dry land.
But I will make the Egyptians so obstinate
that they will go in after them.
Then I will receive glory through Pharaoh and all his army,
his chariots and charioteers.
The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,
when I receive glory through Pharaoh
and his chariots and charioteers.”

The angel of God, who had been leading Israel’s camp,
now moved and went around behind them.
The column of cloud also, leaving the front,
took up its place behind them,
so that it came between the camp of the Egyptians
and that of Israel.
But the cloud now became dark, and thus the night passed
without the rival camps coming any closer together
all night long.
Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and the LORD swept the sea
with a strong east wind throughout the night
and so turned it into dry land.

When the water was thus divided,
the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land,
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

The Egyptians followed in pursuit;
all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers went after them
right into the midst of the sea.

In the night watch just before dawn
the LORD cast through the column of the fiery cloud
upon the Egyptian force a glance that threw it into a panic;
and he so clogged their chariot wheels
that they could hardly drive.

With that the Egyptians sounded the retreat before Israel,
because the LORD was fighting for them against the Egyptians.

Then the LORD told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea,
that the water may flow back upon the Egyptians,
upon their chariots and their charioteers."

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and at dawn the sea flowed back to its normal depth.

The Egyptians were fleeing head on toward the sea,
when the LORD hurled them into its midst.

As the water flowed back,
it covered the chariots and the charioteers of Pharaoh's whole army
which had followed the Israelites into the sea.

Not a single one of them escaped.

But the Israelites had marched on dry land
through the midst of the sea,
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel on that day
from the power of the Egyptians.

When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore
and beheld the great power that the LORD
had shown against the Egyptians,
they feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:
I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

Responsorial Psalm [EX 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18](#)

R/ (1b) **Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.**

I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;

horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

He is my God, I praise him;
the God of my father, I extol him.

R/ Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

The LORD is a warrior,
LORD is his name!

Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea;
the elite of his officers were submerged in the Red Sea.

R/ Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

The flood waters covered them,
they sank into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in power,
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the enemy.

R/ Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

You brought in the people you redeemed
and planted them on the mountain of your inheritance
the place where you made your seat, O LORD,
the sanctuary, LORD, which your hands established.
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

R/ Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

Reading 4 [IS 54:5-14](#)

The One who has become your husband is your Maker;
his name is the LORD of hosts;
your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
called God of all the earth.

The LORD calls you back,
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
a wife married in youth and then cast off,
says your God.

For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great tenderness I will take you back.

In an outburst of wrath, for a moment
I hid my face from you;
but with enduring love I take pity on you,
says the LORD, your redeemer.

This is for me like the days of Noah,
when I swore that the waters of Noah
should never again deluge the earth;
so I have sworn not to be angry with you,
or to rebuke you.

Though the mountains leave their place
and the hills be shaken,
my love shall never leave you
nor my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the LORD, who has mercy on you.
O afflicted one, storm-battered and unconsoled,
I lay your pavements in carnelians,
and your foundations in sapphires;
I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of carbuncles,
and all your walls of precious stones.
All your children shall be taught by the LORD,
and great shall be the peace of your children.
In justice shall you be established,
far from the fear of oppression,
where destruction cannot come near you.

A Lament

(Ps 30:1-12)

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the Temple. Of David.

Vow

¹ I will extol you, Yahweh, for you have rescued me from death,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

Profession of faith

² Yahweh, my divine patron, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

³ Yahweh, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

Call to worship

⁴ Sing praises to Yahweh, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to the holy name.

Creation story

⁵ For the anger of Yahweh lasts only a moment;
the favor of Yahweh is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

Declaration of innocence

⁶ When I prospered, I said:
I shall never be moved.
⁷ By your favor, Yahweh,
you had established me as a strong mountain;

Complaint

You hid your face;
I was dismayed.

Petition

⁸ To you, Yahweh, I cried,
and to Yahweh I made supplication:
⁹ *What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?*
¹⁰ *Hear, Yahweh, and be gracious to me!
Yahweh, be my helper!*

Vow

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
¹² so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
Yahweh, my divine patron, I will give thanks to you for ever

Reading 5 [IS 55:1-11](#)

Thus says the LORD:
All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread,
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David.
As I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of nations,
so shall you summon a nation you knew not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
because of the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.
Let the scoundrel forsake his way,
and the wicked man his thoughts;
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;

my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

Responsorial Psalm [IS 12:2-3, 4, 5-6](#)

R/ (3) **You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.**

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R/ **You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.**

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R/ **You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.**

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.

Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R/ **You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.**

Reading 6 [BAR 3:9-15, 32-4:4](#)

Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life:
listen, and know prudence!
How is it, Israel,
that you are in the land of your foes,
grown old in a foreign land,
defiled with the dead,
accounted with those destined for the netherworld?
You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom!
Had you walked in the way of God,
you would have dwelt in enduring peace.
Learn where prudence is,
where strength, where understanding;
that you may know also
where are length of days, and life,
where light of the eyes, and peace.
Who has found the place of wisdom,
who has entered into her treasuries?

The One who knows all things knows her;
he has probed her by his knowledge
The One who established the earth for all time,
and filled it with four-footed beasts;
he who dismisses the light, and it departs,
calls it, and it obeys him trembling;
before whom the stars at their posts
shine and rejoice;
when he calls them, they answer, "Here we are!"
shining with joy for their Maker.
Such is our God;
no other is to be compared to him:
He has traced out the whole way of understanding,
and has given her to Jacob, his servant,
to Israel, his beloved son.
Since then she has appeared on earth,
and moved among people.
She is the book of the precepts of God,
the law that endures forever;
all who cling to her will live,
but those will die who forsake her.
Turn, O Jacob, and receive her:
walk by her light toward splendor.
Give not your glory to another,
your privileges to an alien race.
Blessed are we, O Israel;
for what pleases God is known to us!

A Lament (Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
the firmament proclaims the handiwork of Yahweh.
- ² One day tells stories to another,
One night hands on its traditions to the next.³¹
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words;

³¹ NRSV: Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

their voice is not heard;
4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens Yahweh has pitched a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,³²
like an athlete joyfully runs a course.

6 Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
its circuit to the end of them;
nothing is hidden from its warmth.

7 The instructions of Yahweh are perfect,
reviving the soul;
the teachings³³ of the Yahweh are sure,
making students wise;
8 the precepts of the Yahweh are right,
making minds rejoice;
the commandment of the Yahweh is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 living morally³⁴ is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Yahweh are true
completely righteous.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even fine gold in abundance;
sweeter also than honey,
dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

11 Moreover by them is your slave warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their sins?
Clear me from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your slave³⁵ also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
14 Let my mouth's words and my heart's prayer be acceptable to you,

³² Hebrew: *huppah*

³³ NRSV: decrees

³⁴ *Fear of Yahweh*

³⁵ NRSV: servant

O Yahweh, who births me and delivers me from my enemies.

Reading 7 [EZ 36:16-17A, 18-28](#)

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:
Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their land,
they defiled it by their conduct and deeds.
Therefore I poured out my fury upon them
because of the blood that they poured out on the ground,
and because they defiled it with idols.
I scattered them among the nations,
dispersing them over foreign lands;
according to their conduct and deeds I judged them.
But when they came among the nations wherever they came,
they served to profane my holy name,
because it was said of them: “These are the people of the LORD,
yet they had to leave their land.”
So I have relented because of my holy name
which the house of Israel profaned
among the nations where they came.
Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord GOD:
Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel,
but for the sake of my holy name,
which you profaned among the nations to which you came.
I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations,
in whose midst you have profaned it.
Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD,
when in their sight I prove my holiness through you.
For I will take you away from among the nations,
gather you from all the foreign lands,
and bring you back to your own land.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.
You shall live in the land I gave your fathers;
you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

A Lament

(Ps 42:1-11)

To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites

Petition

¹ As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, my divine patron.
² My soul thirsts for my divine patron,
for my life-giving divine patron.
When shall I come and behold
the face of my divine patron?

Complaint

³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your Our divine patron?'

Profession of faith

⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of my divine patron,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in my divine patron; for I shall again praise Yahweh,
my help ⁶and my divine patron.

Declaration of innocence

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
From the land of the Jordan River,
From Mt. Hermon and Mt Mizar.
⁷ Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows

have gone over me.

⁸ By day Yahweh commands steadfast love,
and at night the song of Yahweh is with me,
-- a prayer to the divine patron of my life.

Complaint

⁹ I say to my divine patron, my rock -- my midwife
'Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?'

¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
'Where is your divine patron?'

Profession of faith

¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in our divine patron; for I shall again praise Yahweh,
my help and my divine patron.

Epistle [ROM 6:3-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his,
we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

We know that our old self was crucified with him,
so that our sinful body might be done away with,
that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.

We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.

As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;

as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23](#)

R/ **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

R/ **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

R/ **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R/ **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel [MT 28:1-10](#)

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake;
for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven,
approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.

His appearance was like lightning
and his clothing was white as snow.

The guards were shaken with fear of him
and became like dead men.

Then the angel said to the women in reply,
“Do not be afraid!

I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.
He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.

Come and see the place where he lay.

Then go quickly and tell his disciples,

‘He has been raised from the dead,
and he is going before you to Galilee;
there you will see him.’

Behold, I have told you.”

Then they went away quickly from the tomb,

fearful yet overjoyed,
and ran to announce this to his disciples.
And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.
They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.
Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid.
Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,
and there they will see me."

Homily

Is Easter 'Happy'?

[Rev. Dr. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite](#)

Professor of Theology, Chicago Theological Seminary

Huffington Post (04.18.2014)

Thistlethwaite has a Ph.D. from Duke University, an M.Div. from Duke Divinity School and a B.A. from Smith College. An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ since 1974, she has been a translator for two different translations of the Bible. Thistlethwaite is currently working on a new book: *Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Just War, Just Peace and the Global War on Women* (Palgrave).

Happy Easter! You hear it everywhere, in malls, in streets, and in churches. But is the Christian celebration of Easter really a happy occasion?

Easter is profoundly misunderstood as "Happy" unless we understand the entire drama of resistance to suffering and death, and the shocking cost of that resistance, that Easter entails. Encountering the depths of the worst human life holds can then lead to the astonishment of Easter, the 'nevertheless' of triumph, the central liturgical moment of the Christian year.

Easter is "Happy" in the same way that Pharrell's *Happy*, a song written for an animated film, has become a way to express resistance by people living under repressive regimes, or under threat. As a pro-Western Ukrainian protester said in 2014: *I am here for the sake of future generations, not for myself. I may be killed. I will fight as long as I can for a better tomorrow.* Pharrell perhaps never intended "Happy" to be more than a catchy summer hit, but even a perfectly-oiled pop machine can't account for the creative capacity of the whole world. *Happy* came into the world apolitical, but it's something more now — it's a song of resilience and resolve under incredible hardship.

As Jesus was about to be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said: *Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me.* (Mark 14:48)

In other words, Jesus knew he was risking arrest for his actions, risking even being killed. Jesus had spent day after day during Passover arguing with the scribes and chief priests, calling them out for their arrogance, and ultimately taking action against the economic injustices of the Temple by overturning the tables of the moneychangers.

It's not surprising Jesus was arrested. In fact, it seems Jesus was saying, *What took you so long?*

Then the Roman military power whipped Jesus, and then crucified him, one of the cruelest forms of execution. Crucifixion combines torture and death and produces the spectacle of pain that warned others not to resist, a specific form of oppressive power at which the Romans so excelled.

Easter is *Happy* because it is celebration of the resistance in spite of risk, and ultimate triumph of Jesus of Nazareth against the militaristic, power obsessed Roman Empire. By the way he lived and taught, Jesus vividly showed the difference between the *Kingdom of God* and the *Kingdom of Caesar*.

The Christian celebration of Easter is trans-tragic, because if we miss what Jesus was struggling against, we can never experience what makes Easter *Happy*.

There is so much suffering in today's world, from South Korea and Syria and the Ukraine, to hospital rooms and homes and in the streets where the homeless struggle daily. How can we say *Happy Easter* in the face of so much suffering, seen and unseen?

We can only say *Happy Easter* if we know and we live Easter as resistance and strive to confront unjust suffering wherever it is happening.

Happy Easter to you!

The Resurrection of the Lord

The Mass of Easter Sunday

Lectionary: 42

(Acts 10 10:34-43)

34 Then Peter began to speak to them:

I truly understand that Our Godparent shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation Our Godparent embraces anyone who acts morally and does what is right. ³⁶You know the message Our Godparent sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus, our messiah — that Our Godparent is the divine patron of all.

³⁷The message of Jesus spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how Our Godparent anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for Our Godparent was with him.

³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but Our Godparent raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by Our Godparent as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by Our Godparent as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23](#)

R. (24) **This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

R. **This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

“The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.”

R. **This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. **This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Reading 2 [COL 3:1-4](#)

Brothers and sisters:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above,
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ your life appears,

then you too will appear with him in glory.

Or 1 [COR 5:6B-8](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough?

Clear out the old yeast,

so that you may become a fresh batch of dough,
inasmuch as you are unleavened.

For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.

Therefore, let us celebrate the feast,

not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness,
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

OrLK 24:1-12

At daybreak on the first day of the week
the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus
took the spices they had prepared
and went to the tomb.
They found the stone rolled away from the tomb;
but when they entered,
they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
While they were puzzling over this, behold,
two men in dazzling garments appeared to them.
They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground.
They said to them,
“Why do you seek the living one among the dead?
He is not here, but he has been raised.
Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee,
that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners
and be crucified, and rise on the third day.”
And they remembered his words.
Then they returned from the tomb
and announced all these things to the eleven
and to all the others.
The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James;
the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles,
but their story seemed like nonsense
and they did not believe them.
But Peter got up and ran to the tomb,
bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone;
then he went home amazed at what had happened.

OrLK 24:13-35

At an afternoon or evening Mass

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus’ disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
He asked them,
“What are you discussing as you walk along?”
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
“Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem

who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?”
And he replied to them, “What sort of things?”
They said to him,
“The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his body;
they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see.”
And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?”
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, “Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”
So he went in to stay with them.
And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.
With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.
Then they said to each other,
“Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”
So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together

the eleven and those with them who were saying,
“The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”
Then the two recounted
what had taken place on the way
and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States, second
typi

Homily

As messengers we need to choose words carefully. Words like *God, fear him, Lord, acceptable* and even *him* do more harm than good news should today. We need to speak of *Our Godparent, acting morally, divine patron and embracing* if our message is to be meaningful today – if it is to be truly good news, not righteousness.

Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy)

Lectionary: 45

Reading 1 [ACTS 5:12-16](#)

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

R. (1) **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Let the house of Israel say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

Let the house of Aaron say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

Let those who fear the LORD say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

R. **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

I was hard pressed and was falling,
but the LORD helped me.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

The joyful shout of victory
in the tents of the just:

R. **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;
let us be glad and rejoice in it.

R. **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Reading 2 [REV 1:9-11A, 12-13, 17-19](#)

I, John, your brother, who share with you
the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus,
found myself on the island called Patmos
because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus.
I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day
and heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, which said,
"Write on a scroll what you see."
Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me,
and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands
and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man,
wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest.

When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead.
He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid.
I am the first and the last, the one who lives.
Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever.
I hold the keys to death and the netherworld.
Write down, therefore, what you have seen,
and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards."

Inauguration of the Twelve (John 20:19-31)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the people of Judea, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them: *Peace be with you.* When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Teacher.

Jesus said to them again: *Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.* When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, *Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.*

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him: *We have seen the Teacher.*

But Thomas said to them: *Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them.

Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.

But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Homily

The disciples hid ...*for fear of the people of Judea*. People of faith are to *fear* only God. The Hebrew word *fear* means to do the right thing, even when there are no enforcers around. To *fear* is to *act morally*.

Jesus comes to them not as their *Lord*, but as their *Teacher* to remind them to say and to do what he has taught them even now that he has departed.

The test of a true disciple is to be able to live as Jesus lived -- to do what Jesus did -- without the fear of hell or the desire for heaven. Jesus did what 'Abba, his Father, had sent him to do, even though he was rejected, arrested, tortured and executed by suffocation over long painful hours on a cross.

The challenge for us today is: *Can We?* Our answer should be – in the words of Cesar Chavez: *Si se Puede!* Barak Obama translated Chavez' slogan to make it his own during the 2008 presidential campaign: *Yes, We Can!*

Thomas demands proof that doing what Jesus did will prompt 'Abba to raise us from the dead. There is, however, no proof. We do what Jesus did without a guarantee that we will be rewarded. That is faith. Good behavior with a guaranteed reward is a business contract. Good behavior – acting morally – is prophetic, not profitable.

Third Sunday of Easter

Lectionary: 048

A Trial of Peter and John

(Acts 5:27-41)

Indictment

27 When the high priest arraigned Peter and John, they had them stand before the Sanhedrin. The high priest questioned them: ²⁸ *We gave you strict orders not to teach in the name of Jesus, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us.*

²⁹ Peter and the Apostle answered: *We must obey YHWH rather than any human authority.* ³⁰*The divine patron of our ancestors raised Jesus up – the Jesus whom you hung from a tree.* ³¹*YHWH exalted him at the right hand as our teacher and savior, so that he might call Israel to repentance and forgive our sins.* ³²*We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom YHWH has given to the faithful.*

Sentence

³³ When the high priest and the Sanhedrin heard their testimony, they were enraged and wanted to put them to death.

Appeal

³⁴But one Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be taken outside for a short time. ³⁵Then he said to them: *Fellow-Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men.*

³⁶*For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared.*

³⁷*After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.*

³⁸*So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail;* ³⁹*but if it is from YHWH, you will not be able to overthrow them — in that case you may even be found fighting against YHWH!*

Mitigation

The Sanhedrin was convinced by Gamaliel, ⁴⁰and when they had called the apostles back, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹As they left the Sanhedrin, Peter and John rejoiced that they were considered worthy to be shamed for the sake of the name of Jesus.

Inaugurations of Saul and Ananias

(Acts 9:1-20 DCB)³⁶

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the followers of our teacher, went to the high priest² and asked him for letters of introduction to the Jewish communities in Damascus, so that if he found any who followed the Way of Jesus -- men or women -- he has the authority to arrest them and extradite them to Jerusalem for trial as heretics.

Crisis of Saul's Story (Acts 9: 3-4)

Lure

³Now as Saul was traveling to Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

Investigation

⁴He fell to the ground,

Climax of Saul's Story (Acts 9: 4-5)

Greeting

Then Saul heard a voice saying: *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*

Kenosis

⁵Saul asked: *Who are you?*

First Denouement of Saul's Story (Act 9:6-9)

Commission

The voice answered: *I am the Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'*

Compliance Report

⁷The men who were travelling with Saul stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one.

³⁶ // *Traditions about Moses*

⁸Saul got up, and though his eyes were open, he could not see. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Climax of Ananias' Story (Act 9:10)

Greeting

¹⁰ Now there was a follower of the Way of Jesus in Damascus named Ananias. Our teacher called to him in a vision: *Ananias!*

Ready Formula

Ananias answered: *Here I am, Teacher.*

Denouement of Ananias' Story (Act 9:11-16)

Commission

¹¹Our teacher said to Ananias: *Get up and go to the Decumanus Maximus, which runs east-west across the city,³⁷ and at the house of Judas look for a man from Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.'*

Demurrals

¹³Ananias answered: *Teacher, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your followers in Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest anyone who invokes your name.*

Talisman

¹⁵Our teacher said to Ananias: *Go, for Saul is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and rulers and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.*

Second Denouement of Saul's Story (Act 9:17-19)

³⁷ Latin: *Via Recta* – the *Decumanus Maximus* or major east-west street in Damascus. The street is some 30 yards wide and almost a mile long. There are covered porticos on each side which are lined with shops. Travelers entered Straight Street through the three arched Gate of the Dawn on the east side of the city. Mounted traffic entered through the large center arch, pedestrians through the two smaller, side arches.

Commission

¹⁷So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said: *Saul, my brother, Our Teacher Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.* ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and his sight was restored.

Compliance Report

Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days Saul stayed with the followers of Jesus in Damascus, ²⁰ and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the communities of Jews: saying: *Jesus is the heir of the people of YHWH.*

A Lament

(Ps 30:1-12 DCB)³⁸

*A Psalm for the Consecration of the Temple
Dedicated to David*

Vow

¹ I will **extol** you, YHWH,

You have drawn me up,
You did not let my enemies rejoice over me.

Profession of faith

² I cried to you, YHWH, my divine patron, for help,
You have healed me.

³ You, YHWH, brought me up ³⁹from the Pit of *Sheol*,
You restored me to life from among those gone down to that Pit.

⁴ **Sing praises** to YHWH, you his faithful ones,
Give thanks to the holy name.

⁵ The anger of YHWH lasts only a day.
The favor of YHWH lasts a lifetime.
Weeping may spend the night.
Joy always arrives at dawn.

Declaration of innocence

⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity:
I shall never be moved.

⁷ By your favor, YHWH,
You had kept me as a strong mountain;

Complaint

You hid your face;
I was dismayed.

Petition

³⁸ // *Stories of Adam and Eve*

³⁹ NRSV: my soul

⁸ I cried out to you, YHWH,
I pleaded to you, YHWH, for help.
⁹ *What profit is there in my death?
If I go down to the Pit of Sheol?
Can my ashes praise you?
Can my remains tell the people stories of your faithfulness?*
¹⁰ Answer my prayer, YHWH,
Be gracious to me, YHWH
Be a helper to me like the woman you created in the Garden! ⁴⁰

Vow

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing;
You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹² So that I may praise you and not be silent.
I will give thanks to you, YHWH, my divine patron, for ever

⁴⁰ The Hebrew word here (*ezer*) is a title of the woman in a *Story of the 'Adam as a Man a Woman* (Gen 2:20-24). *Helper* is not a patronizing term in the Bible, it is one of YHWH's titles (Deut 33:1-7; Ps 33:20-22; 121:1-2).

Rev 5:11-14⁴¹

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²singing with full voice,

‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!’

¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

‘To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!’

¹⁴And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshipped.

Inauguration of Peter, Thomas, Nathanael

(John 21:1-19 DCB)⁴²

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his followers at the Sea of Tiberius. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin,⁴³ Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons – James and John, and two other disciples.

Simon Peter said to them: *I am going fishing.*

Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two other followers of Jesus said: *We are coming with you.*

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but his followers did not realize that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them: *My sons, have you caught anything to eat?*

They answered: *No.*

So he said to them: *Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.*

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the Follower Whom Jesus Loved said to Peter: *It is our teacher.*

When Simon Peter heard that it was their teacher, he tucked in his tunic into his loin cloth, for he was not wearing a cloak, and jumped into the sea.

The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about 100 yards, dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.

Jesus said to them: *Bring some of the fish you just caught.*

⁴² // *The Parable of Jonah*

⁴³ NRSV: *Didymus*

So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of the fish Jesus had saved from the chaos of the Sea, and even though there were so many, not one fish was lost.⁴⁴

Jesus said to them: *Come, have breakfast.*

None of the disciples dared to ask him: *Why are you here?* Even though they realized it was their Teacher.

Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish as well.

This was now the third time his followers saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead.

An Inauguration of Peter

(John 21:15-19 DCB)

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter: *Simon, son of John, will you follow me as faithfully as Thomas, Nathanael and these others?*⁴⁵

Simon Peter answered: *Yes, Teacher, you know that I will follow you faithfully.*

Jesus said to him: *Feed my followers.*

Jesus then said to Simon Peter a second time: *Simon, son of John, will you follow me faithfully?*

Simon Peter answered him: *Yes, Teacher, you know that I will follow you faithfully.*

Jesus said to him: *Herd my sheep.*

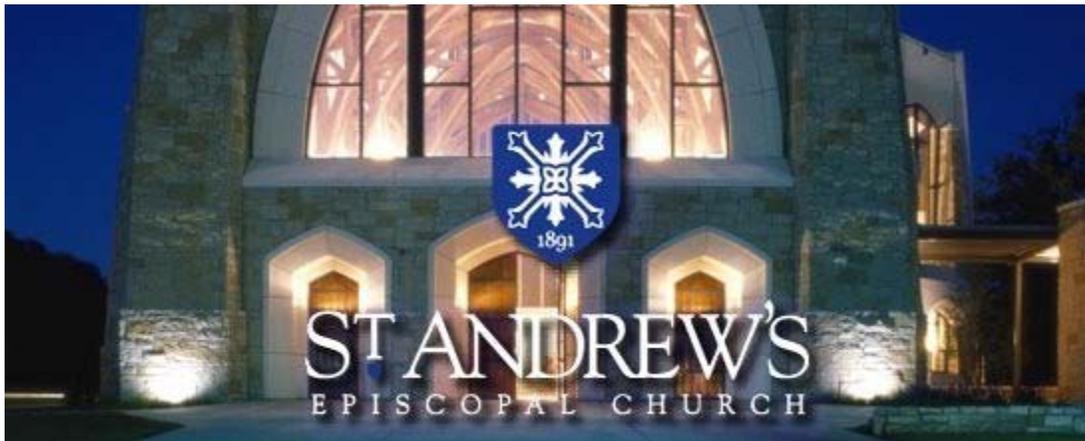
Jesus said to Simon Peter a third time: *Simon, son of John, will you follow me faithfully?*

⁴⁴ Neil J. McEleney, "153 Great Fishes (John 21:11): Gematriacal Atbash," *Biblica* 58, no. 3 (1977, 1977), 411-417.

⁴⁵ NRSV: *love*

Peter was angry that Jesus had said to him a third time: *Will you follow me faithfully?* So he answered: *Teacher, you know that I will follow you faithfully.*

Jesus said to him: *Pasture my sheep. Trust me.*⁴⁶ *When you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go wherever you wanted. As you age, you will hold out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.* Our teacher said this to describe the death by which Peter would testify to his faith.⁴⁷ When he had said this, our teacher said to Peter: *Follow me.*



Amarillo TX
April 10, 2016

8AM Eucharist

LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE SIMPLY BY WATCHING GOD WORK
(Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30: 1-12; John 21: 1-19)

9:30-10:15 AM Sunday School for Adults, Part One

Q&A WITH DON C. BENJAMIN, PH.D.

**WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT
...BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK**

Bring your questions – write them down beforehand or at class. Drop them in the box,
and let the discussion begin.

⁴⁶ NRSV: *Amen, amen, I say to you,*

⁴⁷ NRSV: *...by what kind of death he would glorify God.*

10:30 AM Eucharist

LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE SIMPLY BY WATCHING GOD WORK
(Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30: 1-12; John 21: 1-19)

4:00-5:30 PM Sunday School for Adults, Part Two

EVE, MOSES, JONAH
THE OLD STORIES BEHIND THE READINGS FOR TODAY'S EUCHARIST

If you want to prepare beforehand, read the *Story of the 'Adam as a Man and a Woman* (Gen 2:20-24), the *Inauguration of Moses on Mt. Horeb* (Exod 2:23—4:23) and the *Parable of Jonah* (Jonah 1:1—4:11). If not, just come and enjoy hearing the stories you know like you have never heard them before.

6PM Holy Eucharist

LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE SIMPLY BY WATCHING GOD WORK
(Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30: 1-12; John 21: 1-19)

Homily

The readings today remind us that, in spite of the desire we all have to leave the world better than when we came, we are also called to pay attention to what God is doing in the world, not to what we want to do. Living a faith-filled life is paying attention – so that we can realize that we do not make things happen or that we are not called to bless or curse what happens. We are called to watch and testify – to contemplate the divine work going on around us.

There are six days in each week for action; the seventh is a day for contemplation.⁴⁸

We are reminded of just how difficult it is to simply pay attention every time someone tells us that a mutual friend needs us. He has lost his job. She is being divorced. A child has died. A lab test reports bad news. We know we need to be with our friend, but we delay. Not because we are insensitive but because we know that we cannot make their suffering stop. We want to do something, and if we cannot, we do not want to sit there in front of our failure. Therefore, today's readings remind us of our vocation to enjoy letting God do, while we watch.

INAUGURATION OF SAUL AND ANANIAS (ACTS 9:1-20 DCB)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ When Don Sr. died in 1988. I cried. I missed him, and I felt so sorry that this oldest member of our family was gone. Then I realized, now I was the oldest in our family. Not that the position came with any money or any respect. No one has ever come to me for advice. But maybe that is not what it means to be the oldest. I did not know what to do. Just as the followers of Jesus did not know what to do when he died. I thought my father was going to be there forever. So did the followers of Jesus.

In time I learned that being the oldest gives me the responsibility of paying attention to what is going on in the lives of my family. My brother, Jim, is retiring. My niece, Erin, and her husband, Ben, are having their second child. My sister, Chris, and her husband, Don, are moving back to Arizona from Oklahoma. None of us has heard from my sister, Cynthia, since mother died in 2001.

⁴⁹ A Trial of Peter and John (Acts 5:27-41 DCB)

Gamaliel inspires us all to let God do what God is doing. So often we feel compelled to take charge and run the world around us, instead of simply watching God work. It is not up to us to save the world, to reform the church. This is divine work. Our work is to pay attention. To respond when necessary, but not to judge, condemn and execute.

We can call out. We can praise God for having delivered us from our enemies. This is suitable work.

Notice how many times in the inaugurations of Saul and Ananias, today's reading refers to seeing and not seeing. Saul cannot see Jesus in the Christians he persecutes, and then he cannot see at all except a vision of his healer.

Saul's followers can hear the voice, but see nothing.

Ananias sees Saul as an enemy of his teacher, Jesus, who is commissioning him to heal Saul.

Eventually, both Saul and Ananias see clearly that their vocation is not to do something, but rather to watch what their godparent is doing in them and in their worlds through Jesus.

A LAMENT (Ps 30:1-12 DCB)

Our meditation on the first reading is from the book of Psalms. This lament also captures the struggle we all face to let go, and to let God. Having the confidence that our godparent will be there for us is always threatened when we set deadlines. Help me now. Heal me before my next birthday.

Unlike our habit of translating suffering into separation from our godparent, the Hebrews were absolutely confident that even in suffering, YHWH was working, and that we should be watching.

The lament uses a remarkable metaphor to remind for us that YHWH is there – in good times and bad. YHWH is portrayed as our *helper* or *advocate*. The *Story of the 'Adam as a Man and a Woman* in Genesis certifies that there is still no *helper*, no *partner*, no *helpmeet* for the *'adam*. *Helper* is not a patronizing term in the Bible; it is one of Yahweh's titles in both Deuteronomy (Deut 33:1–7), Psalms (Ps 33:20–22; 121:1–2) and elsewhere. For example, in Exodus (Exod 18:4) Moses prays: *The divine patron of my father, who delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh, was My Helper.*

The woman – and, by extension, our life partners, whom YHWH creates, and whom the lament emphasizes represents YHWH in our lives pays attention to what our godparent is doing in us, and through us in the world around. They make no demand that we change, or make a difference. There is no judgement that who we are or what we do is good or bad. Our life partners are people who contemplate the God in us and around us. They are sacraments for us, because they remind us that faith is not only doing, but watching – not an easy task, but as important a commission for people of faith today as it was for Saul and Ananias in the beginning.

INAUGURATION OF PETER, THOMAS, NATHANAEL AND TWO OTHERS (JOHN 21:1-19 DCB)

No doubt sensing his failure as a follower of Jesus, Peter in today's gospel announces to the others that he is going back to a work where he knew he could do something – fishing. Fishing was good work, but most of all fishing allows those who fish to do something. So off he, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two others go, and soon realize they fail as painfully at fishing on this day, as they failed at following Jesus during his trial.

Then the gentle Jesus appears to them calling them *children* -- not minors – but as in Proverbs, his *students*. They still had much to learn.

Embracing the faith is a commitment to a life of learning, and we can only learn if we stop and pay attention to what God is doing in us and around us.

Before his execution Jesus had inaugurated Peter, Thomas, Nathanael and the others to new lives. They had left fishing, and began testifying to what their godparent was doing through Jesus. The trauma of the arrest, torture and execution of Jesus, however, had left them paralyzed. They abandoned

their new lives and went back to their old lives – fishing. They did not want to testify to watching failure. They wanted to work for success.

When they realized that Jesus – better translated *their Teacher* than *their Lord* – has found them, they are stunned. They were afraid to face death, but they are also embarrassed that they had abandoned Jesus.

Nonetheless, Jesus is not punishing. He simply begins teaching them all over again. The message is simple. I can teach you to fish, or I can teach you to testify.

When Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and the others stop concentrating on what they are doing, and begin paying attention to what their godparent is in Jesus, the results change from disastrous to miraculous. More fish than they can haul into the boat.



So Simon Peter got out of the boat, and hauled the net to the shore. It was full of large fish, 153 of them (NRSV) the Gospel accord to John notes. The numbers here are not an inventory of the day's catch. They are a code – a gematriacal atbash like the DaVinci Code by Dan Brown -- for an

early Christian creed: *Jesus Christ is our divine patron*. This creed abbreviates the better known *ichthys* (iota+theta+upsilon+sigma) creed: *Jesus is the Christ, the son of our divine patron, Our Savior*.

To translate a word or phrase into *gematriacal atbash* code the Greek acronym *iota+chi+theta* is translated into numbers: *iota=70+chi=3+theta=80* for a total of 153. Similar codes appear in Jeremiah (25:26; 51:41), Matthew (Matt 1:17), Revelation (Rev 13:18) and the Epistle of Barnabas (Barn 9:7-9).

Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and the others celebrate the renewal of their vocation as witnesses with an Easter breakfast which Jesus prepares for them on the beach of the Sea of Galilee.

Once Jesus has celebrated the inauguration of Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and the others, he repeats the ritual with Peter alone. Jesus takes Peter back in time to the moment when he denied Jesus, and patiently lets Peter say the words he should have said on the night of Jesus' arrest.

Jesus does not ask Peter if he is more faithful than the rest of his followers, but rather can Peter be as faithful as those who have now renewed their promise to be. Peter is inaugurated to testify to what his godparent is

doing in him and around him. The other who will lead Peter is the godparent of Jesus.

As in the traditions about the storm on the Sea of Galilee and the exorcism where the hogs plunge into the Sea, here the Sea of Galilee represents the waters of chaos (Gen 1:1) from which YHWH calls the cosmos. Jesus is the new YHWH whose followers like Peter call other followers out of the Sea, and even though the Sea is a fearsome opponent, Jesus prevails. The tradition not only identifies Jesus as the savior sent by YHWH, but also Peter as sent by Jesus to testify to his work.

The Easter breakfast tradition on the beach is a parallel to the Last Supper traditions. In the Last Supper traditions Jesus offers his followers bread and wine as his body and blood; on the beach Jesus offers his followers bread and fish. The followers who are fish saved from the Sea will eat Jesus the fish grilled on the beach, and consequently incarnate Jesus by testifying to the work which his Godparent is doing in Jesus.

Your rector, Jo Roberts Craig, began her journey to you as a student at St Mary's Seminary and Rice University where I was on faculty. She, Patrice and I have been friends ever since.

Shopping for a new alb for her ordination as a deacon frustrated Jo. *The companies that make albs for all these church supply stores must use a gorilla as a model. No offense to gorillas, but they me look like I'm wearing a parachute, she told me.*

The cloistered Carmelites in New Caney sew quite lovely vestments, I told Jo: I don't know how the nuns feel about women becoming priests, but they could make a beautiful alb which would fit you.

Jo and one of her young daughters went to the monastery, and the sister seamstress welcomed them both, and fitted Jo for her first alb.

The nun did not make Jo the priest who serves you today. She did not bless or curse her as a woman for wanting to be ordained. That nun just watched what God was doing in Jo's life, and in the life of the church, and so rest of us could see what her godparent was doing in her for all of us.

That is what contemplatives do – they humbly embrace a life of wonder at what our godparent is doing in them and around them. They do not take credit for it; they simply pay attention to it in a way that too many of us do not.

Today's readings are a call to contemplation – to pay attention like that Carmelite women in New Caney to what God is doing in those around us without judgement, but with a pleasure at watching God work.

And let the people of God say: AMEN

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary: 51

(Acts 13:14-52)

¹⁴Paul and Barnabas went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the Torah and the Nebi'im, the leaders of the synagogue sent them a message: *Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.*

¹⁶So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: *You Israelites, and God-fearing Gentiles, listen. ¹⁷The divine patron of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm Yahweh led them out of it.*

¹⁸For about 40 years Yahweh put up with them in the desert.¹⁹After Yahweh had destroyed seven peoples in the land of Canaan, Yahweh gave them their land as an inheritance ²⁰for about 450 years.

After that Yahweh gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹Then they asked for a monarch; and our divine patron gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who led them for 40 years.

²²When Yahweh had removed Saul, Yahweh made David their monarch. In Yahweh's testimony about David, Yahweh said: I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes. ²³Of this man's posterity our divine patron has brought to Israel a messiah, Jesus, as Yahweh promised;²⁴before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was finishing his work, he said:

Who do you suppose that I am? I am not the messiah, but the messiah is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.

²⁶My brothers, you descendants of the household of Abraham, and others who live morally, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus or understand the words of the prophets read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. ²⁸Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But our divine patron raised him from the dead; ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that what our divine patron promised to our ancestors ³³he has fulfilled for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm: You are my Son. Today I have begotten you. ³⁴As to Yahweh's raising Jesus from the dead, no more to return to corruption, Yahweh has spoken in this way: I will give you the holy promises made to David. ³⁵Therefore he has also said in another psalm: You will not let your Holy One experience corruption. ³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of our divine patron in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; ³⁷but he whom our divine patron raised up experienced no corruption. ³⁸Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; ³⁹by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you: ⁴¹Look, you disbelievers! Be amazed and perish, for in your days I am doing a work, a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.

⁴²As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next Sabbath. ⁴³When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of our divine patron.

⁴⁴The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of Yahweh. ⁴⁵But when the religious leaders of Judea saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul. ⁴⁶Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly: *It was necessary that the word of our divine patron should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles.* ⁴⁷For so Yahweh has commanded us: I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of Yahweh; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. ⁴⁹Thus the word of Yahweh spread throughout the region. ⁵⁰But the religious leaders of Judea incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. ⁵¹So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. ⁵²The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

A Hymn

(Ps 116:1-5)

A Psalm of thanksgiving

call to worship

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth.
²Worship Yahweh with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.
- ³ Know that Yahweh is our divine patron.
Yahweh made us, and we belong to Yahweh;
We are the people of Yahweh,
We are the sheep of Yahweh's pasture.
- ⁴ Enter the gates of Yahweh with thanksgiving,
Enter the courts of Yahweh with praise.
Give thanks to Yahweh,
Bless the name of Yahweh.

Creation story

- ⁵ For Yahweh is good;
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures forever,
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures to all generations.

Reading 2 [REV 7:9, 14B-17](#)

I, John, had a vision of a great multitude,
which no one could count,
from every nation, race, people, and tongue.
They stood before the throne and before the Lamb,
wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

Then one of the elders said to me,
“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress;
they have washed their robes
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“For this reason they stand before God’s throne
and worship him day and night in his temple.
The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.
They will not hunger or thirst anymore,
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.
For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne
will shepherd them
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Gospel[JN 10:27-30](#)

Jesus said:

“My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.
No one can take them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,
and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand.
The Father and I are one.”

054

Reading 1

[Acts 9:26-31](#)

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples,
but they were all afraid of him,
not believing that he was a disciple.
Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles,
and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord,
and that he had spoken to him,
and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.
He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem,
and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord.
He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists,
but they tried to kill him.
And when the brothers learned of this,
they took him down to Caesarea
and sent him on his way to Tarsus.

The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace.
It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord,
and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

Psalm 22

Plea for Deliverance from Suffering and Hostility

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;

and by night, but find no rest.

- ³ Yet you are holy,
 enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- ⁴ In you our ancestors trusted;
 they trusted, and you delivered them.
- ⁵ To you they cried, and were saved;
 in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
- ⁶ But I am a worm, and not human;
 scorned by others, and despised by the people.
- ⁷ All who see me mock at me;
 they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
- ⁸ “Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
 let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”
- ⁹ Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
 you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.
- ¹⁰ On you I was cast from my birth,
 and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
- ¹¹ Do not be far from me,
 for trouble is near
 and there is no one to help.
- ¹² Many bulls encircle me,
 strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
 like a ravening and roaring lion.
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
 and all my bones are out of joint;
 my heart is like wax;
 it is melted within my breast;
- ¹⁵ my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
 and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
 you lay me in the dust of death.
- ¹⁶ For dogs are all around me;
 a company of evildoers encircles me.
 My hands and feet have shriveled;

¹⁷ I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
¹⁸ they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!
²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
²² I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.

²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
²⁸ For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,

saying that he has done it.

Reading II

[1 Jn 3:18-24](#)

Children, let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.
Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth
and reassure our hearts before him
in whatever our hearts condemn,
for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.
Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,
we have confidence in God
and receive from him whatever we ask,
because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.
And his commandment is this:
we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and love one another just as he commanded us.
Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them,
and the way we know that he remains in us
is from the Spirit he gave us.

Gospel

[Jn 15:1-8](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.
He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.
You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.
Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own
unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
will be thrown out like a branch and wither;
people will gather them and throw them into a fire
and they will be burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.
By this is my Father glorified,
that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary: 54

Reading 1 [ACTS 14:21-27](#)

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, “It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#)

R. (cf. 1) **I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. **I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom

and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Reading 2 [REV 21:1-5A](#)

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.
The former heaven and the former earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God himself will always be with them as their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away.”

The One who sat on the throne said,
“Behold, I make all things new.”

Gospel [JN 13:31-33A, 34-35](#)

When Judas had left them, Jesus said,
“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
If God is glorified in him,
God will also glorify him in himself,
and God will glorify him at once.
My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.
I give you a new commandment: love one another.
As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.
This is how all will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”

Fifth Sunday of Easter
Lectionary: 55

Reading 1 [ACTS 14:21-27](#)

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#)

R. (cf. 1) **I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

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or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might.

R. **I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

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The former heaven and the former earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God himself will always be with them as their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away.”

The One who sat on the throne said,
“Behold, I make all things new.”

Gospel [JN 13:31-33A, 34-35](#)

When Judas had left them, Jesus said,
“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
If God is glorified in him,
God will also glorify him in himself,
and God will glorify him at once.
My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.
I give you a new commandment: love one another.
As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.
This is how all will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary: 56

(Acts 8:5-17)

⁵Philip went down [from Jerusalem] to the city of Samaria and proclaimed that Jesus was our messiah to them. ⁶The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, ⁷for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.

9 Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. ¹⁰All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying: *This man is the power of God that is called Great.*

¹¹And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place.

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ¹⁶(for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of our Teacher, Jesus). ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

A Hymn

(Ps 66:1-12)

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

Call to worship

¹ **Make a joyful noise** to our divine patron, all the earth;

² **Sing** the glory of the name of Yahweh;

Give Yahweh glorious **praise:**

³ *How awesome are your deeds!*

Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.

⁴ *All the earth worships you;*

they sing praises to you,

sing praises to your name.

Creation story

⁵ Come and see what our divine patron has done:

See how awesome Yahweh's deeds among humans are.

Selah

⁶ Yahweh turned the sea into dry land;

they passed through the river on foot.

There we rejoiced in Yahweh,

⁷ who rules by might forever,

whose eyes keep watch on the peoples —

let the rebellious not exalt themselves.

Selah

Call to worship

⁸ Bless our divine patron, O peoples,

let the sound of praise for Yahweh be heard.

Creation story

⁹ Yahweh has kept us among the living,

and has not let our feet slip.

¹⁰ For you, our divine patron, have trained us;

you have refined us as silver is refined.

¹¹ You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
¹² you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

A Lament

(Ps 66:13-20)

Vow

¹³ I will offer sacrifice in your house;
I will pay you my vows,
¹⁴ those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
¹⁵ I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Selah

¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who live morally,
and I will tell you what Yahweh has done for me.
¹⁷ I cried aloud to Yahweh,
and Yahweh was extolled with my tongue.
¹⁸ If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
Yahweh would not have listened.
¹⁹ But truly our divine patron has listened;
Yahweh has given heed to the words of my prayer.

Call to worship

²⁰ Bless our divine patron,
Because Yahweh has not rejected my prayer;
Because Yahweh has been faithful to me.

(1 Peter 3:15-18)

Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

(John 14: 15-21)

Jesus taught his disciples: *If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.*

Homily

057 Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 17, 2009

Inauguration of Cornelius

(Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48)

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage.⁵⁰ Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being."⁵¹

Then Peter proceeded to teach:

"In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him."⁵²

While Peter was still teaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to his words. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on those who were not Jewish also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God.⁵³

Then Peter responded, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?" He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.⁵⁴

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹O sing to Yahweh a new song,
for he has done marvelous things. Image of pharaoh wielding a battle axe

⁵⁰ Before Paul, Cornelius was the apostle to the Gentiles!

⁵¹ Primitive democracy in the early church

⁵² Christianity universalizes Judaism, and Peter endorses it.

⁵³ Ecstasy is a sign of divine presence. Why? First Diaspora Judaism

⁵⁴ Reverse of the order of these sacraments today which is baptism confirmation, not confirmation baptism.

Yahweh's right hand and Yahweh's holy arm
have gained Yahweh victory.⁵⁵

²Yahweh has made known victory;

Yahweh is vindicated in the sight of the nations.

³Yahweh has remembered steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, Yahweh.

⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy

⁹at the presence of Yahweh, who comes to judge the earth.

Yahweh will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

A Teaching

(1 John 4:7-10)

Commentary

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God;⁵⁶ everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent the only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.⁵⁷ In

⁵⁵ Image of pharaoh wielding a battle axe

⁵⁶ Explanation of what Jesus teaches in John 15

⁵⁷ Only Son = the heir to the household; child sacrifice! John Main's Christian Meditation – not something we do, but an awareness of what God is doing in us.

this is love: not that we have loved God, but that God loved us and sent the Son as expiation for our sins.⁵⁸

A Teaching

(John 15:9-17)

Teaching

Jesus taught his disciples:

"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

Commentary

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.⁵⁹ This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary 058?

(Acts 15: 1-29)

¹⁵Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'²And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and

⁵⁸ Luther's theology of redemption; Jesus saves us; we do not save ourselves.

⁵⁹ Shalom – joy is being alive!

debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. ³So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. ⁴When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.'

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. ⁷After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. ⁸And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; ⁹and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. ¹⁰Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'

¹² The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has related how God first looked favourably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. ¹⁵This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

¹⁶ "After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;
from its ruins I will rebuild it,
and I will set it up,

¹⁷ so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—
even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called.

Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things ¹⁸known from long ago."

¹⁹Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. ²¹For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.'

²² Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch

with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, ²³with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, ²⁵we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: ²⁹that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.’

A Hymn

A hymn sung with stringed instruments dedicated to our ruler

Call to worship

¹ Testify that our divine patron has been gracious to us,
Reveal the face of YHWH shining upon us,

Selah

² Proclaim the way of YHWH upon earth,⁶⁰
Tell of the saving power of our divine patron among all peoples.⁶¹

³ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all the peoples praise you.

⁴ Let all peoples be glad,
Let all the earth sing for joy,

Creation story

For you judge the peoples with equity,
guide all peoples upon earth.

⁶⁰ *Way* is the Hebrew word comparable to *religion, way of life* or *world view* in English

⁶¹ Announce the deliverance of the Hebrews all over the known world.

Selah

⁵ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all peoples praise you.

⁶ Proclaim: *YHWH has harvested the Hebrews from slavery* all over the earth,⁶²
Tell of the saving power of our divine patron among all peoples.

Call to Worship

⁷ May our divine patron continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere Yahweh.

A Time Voyage

(Rev 21: 10-23)

¹⁰And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth cornelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth

⁶² NRSV: *The earth has yielded its increase; Our divine patron has blessed us.*

amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

²² I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

(John 14:23-29)

Jesus taught his disciples:

Saying

“Whoever loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.
Whoever does not love me does not keep my words;
yet the word you hear is not mine
but that of the Father who sent me.

Commentary

“I have told you this while I am with you.
The Advocate,⁶³ the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I told you.
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Not as *Pax Romana* gives do I give it to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.
You heard me tell you,
‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’
If you loved me,
you would rejoice that I am going to the Father;
for the Father is greater than I.
And now I have told you this before it happens,
so that when it happens you may believe.”

⁶³ Muhammad?

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

59

May 13, 2010

The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus,
I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught
until the day he was taken up,
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit
to the apostles whom he had chosen.
He presented himself alive to them
by many proofs after he had suffered,
appearing to them during forty days
and speaking about the kingdom of God.
While meeting with them,
he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem,
but to wait for “the promise of the Father
about which you have heard me speak;
for John baptized with water,
but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

When they had gathered together they asked him,
“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”
He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons
that the Father has established by his own authority.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”

When he had said this, as they were looking on,
he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.
While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going,
suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them.
They said, “Men of Galilee,
why are you standing there looking at the sky?
This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven
will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

Psalm 47 (a hymn)

Call to worship

Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to your Creator with loud songs of joy.

Creation Story

For Yahweh, the Most High, is awesome,
a great king over all the earth.
He subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
He chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom he loves.⁶⁴

Our Creator has gone up with a shout,
Yahweh with the sound of a trumpet.

⁶⁴ “pride” here means the “seed” or “descendants” of Jacob – a euphemism.

Call to worship

Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Creation Story

Call to worship

For God is the king of all the earth;

Call to worship

sing praises with a psalm.

Call to worship

God is king over the nations;
God sits on his holy throne.
The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
he is highly exalted.

Eph 1:17-23

Brothers and sisters:
May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,

give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation
resulting in knowledge of him.
May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened,
that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call,
what are the riches of glory
in his inheritance among the holy ones,
and what is the surpassing greatness of his power
for us who believe,
in accord with the exercise of his great might:
which he worked in Christ,
raising him from the dead
and seating him at his right hand in the heavens,
far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion,
and every name that is named
not only in this age but also in the one to come.
And he put all things beneath his feet
and gave him as head over all things to the church,
which is his body,
the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Lk 24:46-53

Jesus taught disciples:

“Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day
and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
would be preached in his name
to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
You are witnesses of these things.
And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you;
but stay in the city
until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany,
raised his hands, and blessed them.⁶⁵
As he blessed them he parted from them

⁶⁵ Today Eizariya on West Bank. Tomb of Lazarus

and was taken up to heaven.
They did him homage
and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
and they were continually in the temple praising God.

059 Ascension of the Lord

May 21, 2009

A Time Voyage (Acts 1:1-11)

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them.

They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."

A Hymn (Ps 47:1-9)

¹Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to our divine patron with loud songs of joy.

²For Yahweh, the Most High, is awesome,
a great ruler over all the earth.

³Yahweh subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.

⁴Yahweh chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob to whom Yahweh is faithful.

⁵Our divine patron has gone up with a shout,
Yahweh-- with the sound of a trumpet.

⁶Sing praises to our divine patron, sing praises;
sing praises to our ruler, sing praises.

⁷For our divine patron rules all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm.

⁸Our divine patron rules over the nations;
Our divine patron sits on a holy throne.

⁹The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the divine patron of Abraham.

For the shields of the earth belong to our divine patron;
Yahweh is highly exalted.

Profession of Faith

(Eph 1:17-23)

Brothers and sisters:

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him.

May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is
the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory
in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness
of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might,
which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead
and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality,
authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this
age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and

gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Commission

(Mark 16:15-20)

Jesus commissioned his disciples:

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.

These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out evil spirits, they will speak new languages. They will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink poison, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of his Father.⁶⁶ But they went forth and preached everywhere, while Jesus worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 064

Reading [1IS 49:3, 5-6](#)

The LORD said to me: You are my servant,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.
Now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
that Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;

⁶⁶ Reuniting heaven and earth; a clear designation that Jesus was heaven-sent. A time voyage as in the book of Daniel.

I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

A Lament

(Ps 40:1-17)

To the leader. A Psalm Dedicated to David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I waited patiently for Yahweh;
My divine patron leaned down and heard my cry.
- ² Yahweh drew me up from *Sheol*,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
- ³ Yahweh put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our divine patron.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in Yahweh.
- ⁴ Wise⁶⁷ are those who make
Yahweh their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false divine patrons.
- ⁵ You have multiplied, Yahweh, my divine patron,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.
- ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,
but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt-offering and sin-offering
you have not required.
- ⁷ Then I said: *Here I am! In the scroll it is written:*
⁸ I delight to do your will, O my divine patron;
your instruction is within my heart.

Vow

- ⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;

⁶⁷ NRSV: Happy

see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Yahweh.
10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.

Petition

11 Do not, O Yahweh, withhold your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe for ever.

12 For evils have encompassed me without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.

13 Be pleased, O Yahweh, to deliver me;
O Yahweh, make haste to help me.

14 Let all those be put to shame and confusion
who seek to snatch away my life;
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt.

15 Let those be shamed who say to me: *Aha, Aha!*

16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation say continually: *Great is Yahweh!*

17 As for me, I am poor and needy,
but Yahweh takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
do not delay, O my Divine patron.

Reading 2 [1 COR 1:1-3](#)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
to the church of God that is in Corinth,
to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel [JN 1:29-34](#)

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
He is the one of whom I said,
‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.’
I did not know him,
but the reason why I came baptizing with water
was that he might be made known to Israel.”
John testified further, saying,
“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.
I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,
‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Homily

How fascinating that if John had not preached to Jesus, Jesus would never have embraced his own vocation as our messiah. We cannot be our own spiritual directors; we only grow when others see in us, something we cannot see in ourselves.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 67

Reading [1IS 8:23-9:3](#)

First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun
and the land of Naphtali;
but in the end he has glorified the seaward road,
the land west of the Jordan,
the District of the Gentiles.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:
for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

A Lament

(Ps 27:1-14)

Dedicated to David

Profession of Faith

¹ Yahweh is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
Yahweh is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh —
my adversaries and foes —
they shall stumble and fall.

³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

Petition

⁴ One thing I asked of Yahweh,
that will I seek after:
to live in the House of Yahweh
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of Yahweh,
and to inquire in the Temple.

Profession of faith

⁵ For Yahweh will hide me in the sanctuary
in the day of trouble;
Yahweh will conceal me under the cover of the Tabernacle;
My divine patron will set me high on a rock.

Vow

⁶ Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in the Tabernacle

sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to Yahweh.

Petition

- ⁷ Hear, O Yahweh, when I cry aloud,
 be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸ *Come, my heart says, seek the face of your divine patron!*
 Your face, Yahweh, do I seek.
⁹ Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
 you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not abandon me,
 O divine patron of my salvation!
¹⁰ Even if my father and mother abandon me,
 Yahweh will adopt me.

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Yahweh,
 lead me on a level path because of my enemies.
¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
 false witnesses have risen against me,
 they are breathing out violence.

- ¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living.
 ¹⁴ Wait for Yahweh;
 be strong, and let your heart take courage;
 wait for Yahweh!

(1 Cor 1:10-17)

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ.' ¹³Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

(Matt 4:12-17)

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the River Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen* (Isa 9:1-2).

From that time on, Jesus began to preach: *Turn your lives around.*⁶⁸ *A new and divine world order*⁶⁹ *is at hand.*

⁶⁸ NAB: Repent

⁶⁹ NAB: Kingdom of Heaven

Homily

Thank you 'Abba for getting me up this morning. Thank you for being at my side in these dark hours as the day begins. You find us all even without light, and wait patiently with us for the dawn. Stay with me until this day ends, as you did with Jesus through all the dark times.

Any relationship survives only when both partners want what the other wants as much as the other wants it. Unilateral pursuit of one's own interests drives couples apart more quickly than infidelity.

Fourteen quotations emphasizing that events in the life of Jesus fulfill traditions in ancient Israel are a critical element in the structure of the gospel according to Matthew. The confirmations demonstrate that Jesus has, indeed, been sent by God. Here an excerpt from a *Trial of Ahaz* (Isa 7:1–12:6) where Isaiah attempts to persuade the ruler of Judah to let Yahweh protect Judah against the impending invasion by Syria and Israel.

When Isaiah announces the verdict of Yahweh and the divine assembly against Judah (Isa 7:10–25; 8:5–8), he is not a traitor. His verdicts against Judah's enemies (Isa 8:1–4; 9:7–20; 17:1–6; 28:1–4) and announcements of the ultimate restoration of Judah under an ideal monarch from the household of David (Isa 9:1–6) demonstrate his patriotism.

For Ahaz, only the strong will survive. With the help of Assyria, Judah will survive. For Isaiah, only the weak — the widow, the orphan, and the stranger — survive. With the help of Yahweh, even this newborn will survive. War destroys nothing but the armies and supplies that Judah has stockpiled in an effort to protect and feed itself. The child survives because it depends completely upon Yahweh for food and protection. Judah collapses because it does not. Here, Zebulun and Naphtali who were always the first villages to be overrun in an invasion, will be the first delivered by the ruler of Judah whom Yahweh will send.

Isaiah's proposal is revolutionary. The two pantomimes are powerful. The pregnant who bear children and the parents who rear them testify that only the weak survive. The silent courage of the powerless continues to challenge the powerful; who believe that war alone can feed and protect the land and its people.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 072

Inauguration of Jeremiah in his Mother's Womb

(Jer 1:4-19)

4 Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'

6 Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.' 7 But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a boy"; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.

8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.'

9 Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me,

'Now I have put my words in your mouth.

10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'

11 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see a branch of an almond tree.' 12 Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.' 13 The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, 'What do you see?' And I said, 'I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.'

14 Then the Lord said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. 15 For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the Lord; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And I will utter my judgements against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. 17 But you, gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them. 18 And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you;

but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.

Reading 1 [JER 1:4-5, 17-19](#)

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:
Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I dedicated you,
a prophet to the nations I appointed you.

But do you gird your loins;
stand up and tell them
all that I command you.
Be not crushed on their account,
as though I would leave you crushed before them;
for it is I this day
who have made you a fortified city,
a pillar of iron, a wall of brass,
against the whole land:
against Judah's kings and princes,
against its priests and people.
They will fight against you but not prevail over you,
for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

A Lament

(Ps 71:1-24)

Petition

- ¹ In you, YHWH, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
- ² In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
- ³ Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress, to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- ⁴ Rescue me, O my Divine patron, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.

Profession of faith

- ⁵ For you, YHWH, are my hope,
my trust, YHWH, from my youth.
- ⁶ Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.
- ⁷ I have been like a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.
- ⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all day long.

Petition

- ⁹ Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
do not forsake me when my strength is spent.

Complaint

- ¹⁰ For my enemies speak concerning me,
and those who watch for my life consult together.
- ¹¹ They say, 'Pursue and seize that person
whom our divine patron has forsaken,
for there is no one to deliver.'

Petition

- ¹² My divine patron, do not be far from me;

My divine patron, make haste to help me!

¹³ Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed;
let those who seek to hurt me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.

Vow

¹⁴ But I will hope continually,
and will praise you yet more and more.

¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.

¹⁶ I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord Divine patron,
I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

Profession of faith

¹⁷ O divine patron, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

¹⁸ So even to old age and grey hairs,
My Divine patron, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might
to all the generations to come.

Your power ¹⁹and your righteousness, my divine patron,
reach the high heavens.

You who have done great things,
My divine patron, who is like you?

²⁰ You who have made me see many troubles and calamities
will revive me again;
from the depths of the earth
you will bring me up again.

²¹ You will increase my honor,
and comfort me once again.

Vow

²² I will also praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, my Divine patron;
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.

²³ My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praises to you;
my soul also, which you have rescued.

²⁴ All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help,

for those who tried to do me harm
have been put to shame, and disgraced.

Reading 21 [COR 12:31—13:13](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

If I speak in human and angelic tongues,
but do not have love,
I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.
And if I have the gift of prophecy,
and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge;
if I have all faith so as to move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.
If I give away everything I own,
and if I hand my body over so that I may boast,
but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind.
It is not jealous, it is not pompous,
It is not inflated, it is not rude,
it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.
If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing;
if tongues, they will cease;
if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing.
For we know partially and we prophesy partially,
but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.
When I was a child, I used to talk as a child,
think as a child, reason as a child;
when I became a man, I put aside childish things.
At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror,
but then face to face.
At present I know partially;
then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.
So faith, hope, love remain, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.

Gospel[LK 4:21-30](#)

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying:
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”
And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”
He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb,
‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say,
‘Do here in your native place
the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”
And he said, “Amen, I say to you,
no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
Indeed, I tell you,
there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”
When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built,
to hurl him down headlong.
But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for getting me up this morning. Be with the people of Superior AZ as they wake today. Bless these miners and their family who for three generations have dug out the copper that runs through the wires in my home, runs my computers and my car. Let them be a hope-filled and happy people. Help me not to forget them, and the tiny houses clinging to the slopes of the Superstition Mountains where they live and raise their children.

An Inauguration of Jeremiah in His Mother's Womb dates his call from the first moment of his conception. There was never a moment in the life of Jeremiah when he was not a prophet. The Egyptians used a similar motif and portrayed Amun like YHWH calling Tutankhamun (1333-1323 BCE) from the womb of a lotus flower.



The inauguration considers the physical position of Jeremiah's fetus in his mother's womb to be his acceptance of his prophetic vocation. The fetal position is one of humility or dependence (Greek: *kenosis*), and the relationship of a fetus and its mother models the appropriate relationship between Judah and YHWH, a relationship that Jeremiah would work to restore.

In the inauguration, YHWH is cast as Jeremiah's midwife. YHWH negotiates the marriage covenant between Jeremiah's mother and father, which includes the stipulation that they would have a son. This is the connotation of the words *...before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I set you apart* (Jer 1:5). YHWH palpates the uterus of Jeremiah's mother to determine that she is in fact pregnant, and that her fetus is correctly positioned. YHWH delivers Jeremiah from his mother's womb. YHWH sings a hymn celebrating the birth of this special child, who was to be the voice of YHWH guiding Judah during the terrible days after 614 BCE., while Assyria and Babylon struggled over Syria-Palestine. Like Paul, the follower of Jesus, Jeremiah would be a *Prophet to all Peoples* (Jer 1:5).

Jeremiah, like other candidates commissioned for divine missions, demurs by pleading that he cannot speak for YHWH. He does not simply mean that fetuses cannot physically speak, but that no human can responsibly speak for YHWH. Moses pleads that: *I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant; I am slow of speech and tongue* (Exod 4:10). Likewise, Isaiah demurs by saying: *I am a man of unclean lips* (Isa 6:5).

YHWH reassures Jeremiah by touching his mouth, and customizing it for his work as a prophet. Jeremiah now has a mouth uniquely designed for speaking a divine word. YHWH also promises Jeremiah: *I am with you* (Jer 1:8). YHWH will not only train Jeremiah for his mission, but be right there to coach him through every confrontation with the rulers of Judah.

Although, in life, Jeremiah did not go immediately from his mother's womb to his divine work, here the call of Jeremiah is immediately consummated by two divinations against Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 1:11–19). Divinations are pantomimes that interpret omens or spontaneous occurrences.

Pantomimes are a form of movement-art like dance. There are at least three kinds of pantomime in the Bible. First, prophets can mime with a single action. In the *Pantomime of the Unwashed Clothes* (Jer 13:1–11) Jeremiah buys, and wears, an item of clothing, but does not take care of it. These pantomimes have the same sensational effect on the audience as newspaper headlines. They are shocking, and trigger questions in their audiences. The answers develop into commentaries notarized with the formula: *Word of YHWH* (Jer 16:11).

Second, prophets can mime with repeated or sustained movements. Jeremiah remains unmarried (Jer 16:1–4), and does not attend funerals (Jer 16:5–7) or weddings (Jer 16:8–9). His celibacy is a form of asceticism.

Third, prophets can mime, not as actors, but as docents or guides, who interpret the actions of others such as a wine maker (Jer 13:12–14) or a potter (Jer 18:1–12). They draw the attention of their audiences past the surface of wine-making or pottery-making to its deep significance. Divinations belong to this third type of pantomime.

In the first divination, Jeremiah sees an almond tree bloom. Most farming cultures watch for the blooming of a particular tree to announce that the growing season is under way. The Hebrews watched for the blooming of the almond tree to define their growing season. They called it the *watching tree*, whose blossoms looked like eyes. They watched for the tree, which watched for the growing season to get under way. YHWH tells Jeremiah that the divine assembly has not only sentenced Judah and Jerusalem to death for repeatedly violating its covenant, but also that the events that will execute the sentence are already under way. When the almond tree blooms, the harvest is inevitable, and the old world of Judah and Jerusalem is about to be destroyed.

In the second divination, Jeremiah sees a cooking pot tip over on the fire. He sees the burning logs under a pot of boiling water collapse, tipping the pot and instantly scalding the land south of it in a river of steam and boiling water. Like a parent who turns to see a child pull a pan of boiling water off the stove, Jeremiah is a paralyzed witness to a disaster he can do nothing to change. He recovers consciousness slowly as the steam clears, and realizes that, in just such an instant, Babylon will sweep out of the north like a flood of boiling water and wash Judah and Jerusalem away.⁷⁰

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 075

Inauguration of Isaiah at Jerusalem

(Isa 6:1-8)

crisis (Isa 6:1-2)

Lure: During King Uzziah's funeral, YHWH, our Creator, sat enthroned high above the Temple. The hem of YHWH's cloak draped into the sanctuary. Six-winged seraphim served as honor guard. Two wings covered their faces. Two covered their sexual organs. Two kept them aloft.

Investigation: I stared in amazement.

climax (Isa 6:3-5)

Greeting: "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH Sabaoth," one seraph after the other cried out. "The land of Judah is full of YHWH's glory."

Kenosis: The Pillars of the Earth trembled at the sound of their voices. The House of YHWH filled with dust. I began to mourn. "Shame on me. I am only one human among many, yet I have seen YHWH Sabaoth with my own eyes."

denouement episodes (Isa 6:6-13)

Stay of execution: Then a seraph flew to me, holding a red-hot piece of charcoal taken with tongs from the altar. Like a metalworker, the seraph forged my mouth with the coal.

⁷⁰ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 374-376.

“See,” the seraph said, “now all the dross has been removed, and your mouth is strong as iron.”

Then I heard YHWH saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will speak for the divine assembly?”

Ready formula: “Here I am,” I said, “send me.”

Commission: Then YHWH gave me this commission: “Order the people of Judah to listen carefully, but not to understand; to look intently, but recognize nothing. Harden the hearts of this people. Like an embalmer preparing the body of the dead for burial, plug their ears and shut their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes will see, their ears hear, their hearts understand, and they will repent and be healed.”

Demurral: “How can this be?” I asked.

Talisman: YHWH will remove the people from the land. The cities will have no citizens. The houses will have no households. There will be no life in the land. Yet if only a tithe of the people of Judah survives, this stump of the sacred tree, this holy oak will bloom again, unless YHWH burns it out as well.

Compliance report: . . .

A Lament

(Ps 138:1-8)

Of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I give you thanks, YHWH, with my whole heart;
 Before the members of the divine assembly I sing your praise;
- ² I bow down towards your holy Temple
 I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and faithfulness;
 for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
- ³ On the day I called, you answered me,
 You increased my strength of soul.
- ⁴ All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, YHWH,
 for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the YHWH,
 for great is the glory of the YHWH.
- ⁶ For though YHWH is high, YHWH regards the lowly;
 but the haughty YHWH perceives from far away.
- ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
 your right hand delivers me.
- ⁸ YHWH will fulfill my destiny;
 your steadfast love, YHWH, endures forever.

Petition

Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Reading 21 [COR 15:1-11](#)

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters,
of the gospel I preached to you,
which you indeed received and in which you also stand.
Through it you are also being saved,
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you,
unless you believed in vain.
For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:
that Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
that he was buried;
that he was raised on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.
After that, Christ appeared to more
than five hundred brothers at once,
most of whom are still living,
though some have fallen asleep.
After that he appeared to James,
then to all the apostles.
Last of all, as to one born abnormally,
he appeared to me.
For I am the least of the apostles,
not fit to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the church of God.
But by the grace of God I am what I am,
and his grace to me has not been ineffective.
Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them;
not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me.
Therefore, whether it be I or they,
so we preach and so you believed.

Gospel[LK 5:1-11](#)

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God,
he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.
He saw two boats there alongside the lake;
the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.
Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon,
he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore.
Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.
After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,
“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”
Simon said in reply,
“Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing,
but at your command I will lower the nets.”
When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish
and their nets were tearing.
They signaled to their partners in the other boat
to come to help them.
They came and filled both boats
so that the boats were in danger of sinking.
When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said,
“Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”
For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him
and all those with him,
and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee,
who were partners of Simon.
Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid;
from now on you will be catching men.”
When they brought their boats to the shore,
they left everything and followed him.

Homily

INAUGURATION OF ISAIAH AT JERUSALEM (ISA 6:1–13)

Despite the great respect that the prophets of ancient Israel enjoy today, in their own time they were persecuted. The *call* or *inauguration story* is an apology or defense of the prophets against their critics.

Apology is a literary technique that appears not only in eastern Mediterranean traditions like the Bible, but also in western Mediterranean traditions like the *Apology of Plato*, which defends Socrates against the criticisms that the people of Athens level against him. Apologies assume, but do not repeat, the criticisms leveled at the prophets. The *Inauguration of Isaiah at Jerusalem* (Isa 6:1–13) assumes that the people of Judah accuse Isaiah of being ambitious, of being incompetent, of being a failure, and, therefore, of being a false prophet. Inauguration stories deny some criticisms outright, and allow some criticisms to stand, but reinterpret them.⁷¹

Like most stories, inauguration stories have a crisis, a climax, and a denouement. The action in these episodes is carried out by YHWH, the protagonist, who sets out to commission a candidate as a prophet. The candidates are antagonists, who try to prevent YHWH from commissioning them.

To counter the criticism that prophets were ambitious, the crisis episode often describes candidates as fully occupied with other tasks at the time of their inaugurations. Neither Moses, nor Isaiah, nor Jeremiah, nor Ezekiel are portrayed as looking for work as a prophet when they are called by YHWH. At the time of his call, Isaiah is attending the funeral of Uzziah, not waiting for YHWH to commission him as a prophet.

The people of Judah loved Uzziah as much as they had loved David. Like David, he brought years of war to an end. Amaziah (800–783 BCE), Uzziah's predecessor, had unsuccessfully invaded both Edom and Israel, and then he was killed during a civil war (1 Kgs 14:1–20). Uzziah, in contrast, provided Judah with secure borders and a prosperous economy. These accomplishments were coupled with the lack of foreign intervention by Assyria, Syria, or Egypt that allowed Judah to thrive. Like David, Uzziah extended Judah's frontiers west into Philistia and east into Ammon and Edom. By 745 BCE, the state of

⁷¹ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).342-346

Judah ruled by Uzziah was as large as it had been under David. Nonetheless, when this popular monarch contracted leprosy, change was inevitable. Leprosy vindicated Uzziah's political opponents and discouraged his supporters. His government went to caretakers and he withdrew from public life, casting a pall over Judah.

The crisis episode also describes how YHWH lures candidates into sacred space with a theophany. The theophany attracts the attention of the candidate, who then investigates it. At the outset, the theophany is extraordinary, but not an obvious sign of the presence of YHWH. The theophany here occurs when an earthquake rattles the temple and destroys cities and villages throughout the land. Isaiah describes the dust rising from the floor of the temple, when the earthquake shakes its foundations, as the hem of YHWH's cloak. Isaiah sees only the hem of YHWH's cloak, not YHWH.

Earthquakes were frequent in the Syria-Palestine of Isaiah. They took a terrible toll in life and property. Consequently, they became signs that YHWH and the divine assembly were dismantling the old world in preparation for creating a new world (Gen 19:24–29; Exod 19:18; Num 16:30–34; 1 Sam 14:15; 1 Kgs 19:11–12). The books of Amos (Amos 1:1), Isaiah (Isa 6:4; 29:6), and Zechariah (Zech 14:5) also take this view of the earthquake in 750 BCE that shook the temple and that also completely destroyed Uzziah's royal city at Hazor north of the Sea of Galilee.

Isaiah also hears the seraphim snakes, who guard YHWH. They are comparable to the *Uraeus* snakes who guard Pharaoh. Seraphim and the cherubim are composite creatures that combine the most respected and most feared qualities of different creatures. The cherubim are part human, part ox, part lion, and part eagle. Humans were respected for their intelligence, oxen for their strength, female lions for their fierceness on the hunt, and eagles for the ability to fly (Ezek 1:1–28). The seraphim here combine the body of a snake with the flames of a fire and the wings of an eagle. They have six wings. Two wings cover their faces so that they do not violate the prohibition against seeing YHWH. Two wings cover their reproductive organs so that they do not violate the prohibition against appearing naked before YHWH (Exod 20:26). Two wings allow the seraphim to hover aloft.

The seraphim chant: *Holy, Holy, Holy* to warn pilgrims to the temple that they are entering the divine plane, which is clearly distinct from the human plane. Humans who enter the divine plane are as radically altered as humans who are exposed to radiation today. They are physically changed, and they can change or harm other humans with whom they come into contact. Most cultures physically mark off the boundaries of the divine plane. Sometimes

priests are posted at regular intervals along the path or stairway into the sanctuary. As pilgrims approach, these priests challenge them to be sure they meet the qualifications for entering sacred space (Ps 15:1–5; 24:1–10). Sometimes sanctuary land is simply fenced by a low *temenos* wall to remind pilgrims to enter advisedly. Cultures not only mark off the holy, they also mark off those who enter and then leave. When Moses leaves the presence of YHWH, he wears a mask (Exod 34:29–35), which clearly identifies him as someone who speaks for YHWH.

In the climax episode, YHWH greets the candidate who is investigating the theophany. The greeting makes it obvious that the extraordinary event is a sign of YHWH's presence.

Candidates respond by prostrating themselves. Their prostration puts candidates in the fetal position like a child in its mother's womb or a dead body in its grave. It signifies that the candidate is dead to the old world, and in position to be raised to life in a new world. The candidate dies to the old world, and is commissioned to serve as a prophet in the new. Isaiah dies like the prosperous Judah under Uzziah, which the earthquake brings to an end, but is raised from the dead to accompany an impoverished Judah under constant financial and military pressure from Assyria.

Isaiah acknowledges the end of the old order with the words: *I am a man of unclean lips* (Isa 6:5). In the Bible, being *unclean* has little, or nothing, to do with hygiene. It is a label applied to households that are politically and economically at risk, or on probation, and are no longer eligible to participate in the daily affairs of the village. To be *unclean* or *impure* is to be shamed or foolish. Isaiah affirms that, like a leper – like his now dead patron Uzziah -- his household has no standing in the new world that has just begun.

In the denouement, YHWH commissions the candidate as a prophet. Isaiah is outfitted by the seraphim for his new role with lips of iron. They manufacture this unique tool using the charcoal burner in the sanctuary as a forge. Ironworking played a significant role in the development of cultures in Syria-Palestine. It became a foundational metaphor for states that are economically sound. These new iron lips will prepare Isaiah to help the monarchs of Judah make economically sound decisions in their struggle with Assyria. The household of Isaiah is no longer unclean: *guilt has departed and . . . sin is blotted out* (Isa 6:7). It has status in the new world.

The words with which YHWH commissions Isaiah seem bizarre. They sound like the exact opposite of the words that the audience should expect.

YHWH commissions Isaiah to prevent Judah from listening to him, rather than to promote its understanding of his message.

What distorts the sound of the commission is that the world of the Bible functioned on the principle of primary causality. Western European cultures today function on secondary causality. The Hebrews considered YHWH to be the cause of everything that happened. YHWH is the primary cause of both good and evil. In Western European cultures, God is the cause of good alone. Secondary causes like the devil, the inhumanity of one person to another, and fate are considered to be the causes of evil.

Nonetheless, the last thing the Hebrews wanted to consider was that they were not under the primary care of YHWH. They would shudder to think that, when they were suffering, YHWH was not caring for them. As a matter of fact, Israel and Judah did not listen to Isaiah. Israel was invaded and destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BCE. Judah was occupied by the Assyrians from the reign of Ahaz until the reign of Hezekiah, who paid a staggering ransom to Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, for the city of Jerusalem in 701 BCE. Therefore, since Israel and Judah did not listen, the people of Judah considered YHWH to have commissioned Isaiah to tell them *...not to comprehend . . . not to understand* (Isa 6:9). Whatever happened, YHWH had caused it to happen. Despite Isaiah's failure, neither Isaiah, nor Judah, was ever out of YHWH's care and control. The inauguration does not deny that he was a failure. It simply argues that YHWH commissioned Isaiah to fail.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 76

(Sir 15:15-20)

If you choose you can keep the commandments,
they will save you;
if you trust in our divine patron,
you too shall live;
Yahweh has set before you fire and water
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.
Before all humans are life and death, good and evil,
whichever they choose shall be given to them.
Immense is the wisdom of Yahweh;

-- mighty in power, and all-seeing.
The eyes of our divine patron are on those who act morally;⁷²
Yahweh understands our every deed.
Our divine patron commands no one to act unjustly,
Yahweh gives no one a license to sin.

⁷² NRSV: fear him

A Lament

(Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹Wise are those whose way is blameless,
Wise are those who walk in the teachings⁷³ of Yahweh.
²Wise⁷⁴ are those who learn from the instructions⁷⁵ of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh without reservation,⁷⁶
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.
⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in learning from your instructions! ⁷⁷
⁶ Then I shall not be shamed,
having my eyes fixed on all your teachings.⁷⁸

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,

⁷³ NRSV: law

⁷⁴ NRSV: Happy – they will succeed in life

⁷⁵ NRSV: keep the decrees

⁷⁶ NRSV: with their whole heart = with their whole mind – without reservation

⁷⁷ NRSV: keeping your statutes

⁷⁸ NRSV: commandments

so that I may not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your statutes.

Vow

13 With my lips I declare
all the teachings of your mouth.
14 I delight in the way of your instructions
as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your stipulations,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

17 Deal bountifully with your client,⁷⁹
so that I may live and follow your word.
18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
what wondrous things your law brings forth.
19 I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
28 My soul has collapsed from grief;

⁷⁹ NRSV: servant

- Your word will raise me up.⁸⁰
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your client your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
- 40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.
- 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.
- 42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
- 43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
- 44 I will keep your law continually,

⁸⁰ William L. Moran, "Note on Psalm 119:28," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (01/01, 1953), 10-10. MT reads : *dâl^epâ napsî mittûgâ qayy^emént kid^ebâr^ekâ*. I propose to render the first colon, "My soul has *collapsed* from grief." That the proposed meaning of *dip* is not foreign to Hebrew follows from Eccl 10:18, in which *dip* appears in parallelism with *mkk*, interpreted in the light of the Ugaritic parallelism, *mkk/ngs/dlp*. For, though "the house leaks" makes good sense in the Eccl passage, still the Ugaritic parallelism must be considered. In the latter, however, any such meaning as "drip, leak" seems impossible, and though the exact meaning is hard to determine, still "collapse" cannot be wrong by much. Once, therefore, this meaning of Hebrew *dip* is recognized, the parallelism with *qayy^emēnî*; "raise me up," certainly favors, if it does not make imperative, our proposal.

for ever and ever.
45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
46 I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.
49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

Declaration of innocence

50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.
53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.
57 Yahweh is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who act morally,

of those who keep your precepts.

⁶⁴ The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

⁶⁵ You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.

⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.

⁶⁷ Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.

⁶⁸ You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.

⁶⁹ The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.

⁷⁰ Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.

⁷¹ It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.

⁷² The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.

⁷³ Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

⁷⁴ Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.

⁷⁵ I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.

⁷⁶ Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.

⁷⁷ Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.

⁷⁸ Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.

⁷⁹ Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.

⁸⁰ May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*
- 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
- 84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
- 85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
- 86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
- 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
- 88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- 91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
- 92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
- 94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
- 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.
- 97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
- 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.

100 I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

108 Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,

and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.

129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.

135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.

138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.

139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.

140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.

141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.

144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.

146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.

147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.

148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.

149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.

150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.

151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.

152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.

154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfill your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;
give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

- 171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
- 172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
- 173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
- 174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.
- 175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
- 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Reading 2 [1 COR 2:6-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,
not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.
Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
But as it is written:

*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

Gospel [MT 5:17-37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter

will pass from the law,

until all things have taken place.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments

and teaches others to do so

will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments

will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses

that of the scribes and Pharisees,

you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,

You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you,

whoever is angry with his brother

will be liable to judgment;

and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’

will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;

and whoever says, ‘You fool,’

will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,

and there recall that your brother

has anything against you,

leave your gift there at the altar,

go first and be reconciled with your brother,

and then come and offer your gift.

Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.

Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,

and the judge will hand you over to the guard,

and you will be thrown into prison.

Amen, I say to you,

you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said,

You shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you,
everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.
And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

“It was also said,
Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.
But I say to you,
whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful -
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

“Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.
But I say to you, do not swear at all;
not by heaven, for it is God’s throne;
nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
Do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’
Anything more is from the evil one.”

Or [MT 5:20-22A, 27-28, 33-34A, 37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you,
whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment.

“You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery.*
But I say to you,
everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

“Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.
But I say to you, do not swear at all.
Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’
Anything more is from the evil one.”

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up today.
Thank you for the opportunity to choose life.

My thoughts are with the men in Bauchi...

Abandoned by their families
Hunted by *shariah* police – the *hisbah*
Caned 20x by judges
Stoned by mobs

...for, *directly or indirectly*, making a *public show* of their same sex relationships
...to *sanitize* Nigeria.

Help me to see the brutality in my life,
Help me to see my victims.

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 100

A Hymn

(Zech 9:9-10)

Thus says Yahweh:

Call to worship

Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion,
shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem!

Creation story

See, your king shall come to you;
a just savior is he,
meek, and riding on an ass,
on a colt, the foal of an ass.
He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim,
the horse from Jerusalem;
the warrior's bow shall be banished,
Yahweh shall proclaim peace to all peoples.
The dominion of Yahweh shall be from sea to sea,
from the Euphrates River to [Tarshish] at the end of the earth.

A Hymn

(Ps 145:1-21)

A Hymn Dedicated to David.

Call to worship

- ¹ Extol my divine patron and ruler,
 bless the name of Yahweh for ever and ever.
- ² Bless Yahweh every day,
 Praise the name of Yahweh for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is Yahweh, therefore praise Yahweh greatly;
 the greatness of Yahweh is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall laud your works to another,
 and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
 and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
 and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
 and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Creation Story

- ⁸ Yahweh is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ Yahweh is good to all,
 the compassion of Yahweh is over all creation.

Call to worship

- ¹⁰ All your works -- give thanks to Yahweh,
 all your faithful -- bless you.
- ¹¹ Speak of the glory of your kingdom,
 tell of your power,
- ¹² Make known to all people your mighty deeds,
 the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Creation Story

Yahweh is faithful in all his words,

- and gracious in all his deeds.
- 14 Yahweh upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- 16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
- 17 Yahweh is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
- 18 Yahweh is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
- 19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.
- 20 Yahweh watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

Call to worship

- 21 My mouth --- praise Yahweh,
All flesh -- bless Yahweh's holy name for ever and ever.

(Rom 8:9-13)

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of our messiah does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if our messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of 'Abba who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, 'Abba, who raised our messiah from the dead, will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

(Matt 11:25-30)

At that time Jesus prayed this hymn:

Call to worship

Praise our Father, Creator of heaven and earth,

Creation story

*Who has hidden these things from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to little ones like me.*

*Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.
All things have been handed over to me by my Father.*

*No one knows the Son except the Father,
no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.*

Therefore,

*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
I am meek and humble of heart;*

*You will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.*

Homily

Jesus identifies with the powerless or little ones. The powerful can take care of themselves; they do not need divine support.

Sunday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time
Lectionary: 107

A Trial of the Rulers of Judah

(Jer 23:1-6)

Indictment

Woe to the shepherds,
 who mislead and scatter my sheep, says YHWH.
Thus says the YHWH, the divine patron of Israel,
 against the shepherds who shepherd my people:
You have scattered my sheep and driven them away.
 You have not cared for them,

Sentence

I will take care to punish your evil deeds.
I myself will gather the remnant of my flock
from all the lands to which I have driven them
and bring them back to their meadow;
there they shall increase and multiply.
I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them
so that they need no longer fear and tremble;
and none shall be missing, says YHWH.

Behold, the days are coming, says the YHWH,
when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David;
as ruler he shall reign and govern wisely,
he shall do what is just and right in the land.
In his days Judah shall be saved,
Israel shall dwell in security.
This is the name they give him:
YHWH our just ruler

Reading 2 [Eph 2:13-18](#)

Brothers and sisters, who follow Jesus, our Teacher,¹
you who once were far off²
but now have become near by the blood of our Teacher.

For Jesus is our peace, he who made both one
and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh,
abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims,
that he might create one new person in place of the two,
thus establishing peace,
and might reconcile both with 'Abba, his godparent,³
in one body, through the cross,
putting that enmity to death by it.
He came and preached peace to you who were far off
and peace to those who were near,
for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹ NRSV: Christ

² *Cities far away* and *cities near* in Deut 20:10-20

³ NRSV: God

Gospel [Mk 6:30-34](#)

The Twelve⁴ gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught.

He said to them,

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.”

People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat.

So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place.

People saw them leaving and many came to know about it.

They hastened there on foot from all the villages in the Galilee and arrived at the place before them.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

⁴ NRSV: apostles; see: *Council of Twelve* at Qumran (1 QS8:1-4)

Homily

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 110

A Miracle Story

(2 Kgs 4:42-44)

The father of the village of Three Acres (Aramaic: *Ba'al-shalishah*)⁵ brought Elisha, a messenger from our divine patron,⁶ 20 barley loaves made from its first fruits and fresh picked grains.

Elisha said, *Give it to the people to eat.*

But his slave⁷ objected: *How can I set this little before so many⁸ people?*

Elisha insisted: *Give it to the people to eat. For thus says YHWH: They shall eat and there shall be some left over.*

And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as YHWH had said.

⁵ NRSV: *A man came from Ba'al-shalishah*

⁶ NRSV: *the man of God*

⁷ NRSV: *servant*

⁸ NRSV: *100*

A Hymn

(Ps 145:1-21)

A Hymn Dedicated to David.

Call to worship

- ¹ Extol my divine patron and ruler,
 bless the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ² Bless YHWH every day,
 Praise the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is YHWH, therefore, praise YHWH greatly;
 the greatness of YHWH is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall laud your works to another,
 and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
 and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
 and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
 and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Creation Story

- ⁸ YHWH is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ YHWH is good to all,
 the compassion of YHWH is over all creation.

Call to worship

- ¹⁰ All your works -- give thanks to YHWH,
 all your faithful -- bless you.
- ¹¹ Speak of the glory of your kingdom,
 tell of your power,
- ¹² Make known to all people your mighty deeds,
 the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Creation Story

YHWH is faithful in every word,

- and gracious in every deed.⁹
- ¹⁴ YHWH upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- ¹⁶ You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
- ¹⁷ YHWH is just in every way,
and kind in all his doings.
- ¹⁸ YHWH is near to all who call out,
to all who call on their divine patron in truth.
- ¹⁹ YHWH fulfills the desire of all who live morally;¹⁰
YHWH also hears their cry, and saves them.
- ²⁰ YHWH watches over all who fulfill their covenant responsibilities,¹¹
but all the wicked YHWH will destroy.

Call to worship

- ²¹ My mouth --- praise YHWH,
All flesh -- bless YHWH's holy name for ever and ever.

⁹ NRSV: *...in all his wordsin all his deeds*

¹⁰ NRSV: *fear him*

¹¹ NRSV: *love him*

A Teaching on Humility

(Eph 4:1-6)

Brothers and sisters:

I, a prisoner because I live as our Teacher taught us to live,¹² urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Teacher, one faith, one baptism; one divine patron¹³ and parent,¹⁴ who is over all of us and through all of us and in all of us.

¹² NRSV: *the Lord*

¹³ NRSV: *God*

¹⁴ NRSV: *Father*

A Miracle Story

(John 6:1-15)

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip: *Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?* Jesus said this to test Philip, because he himself knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered Jesus: *Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little.*

One of the followers of Jesus,¹⁵ Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him: *There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?*

Jesus said: *Have the people recline.*

Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined in about 5 large groups.¹⁶

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his followers, *Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.*

So they collected them, and filled 12 wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat.

When the people saw the sign he had done, they said: *This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.*

Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

¹⁵ NRSV: *his disciples*

¹⁶ NRSV: 5,000 (*'elephim?'*)

Homily

'Abba, my godparent, thank you for getting me up this morning. Help me to remember that when I eat, it is you who feed me. It is Jesus who puts the food in my hands. Help me to eat gratefully, moderately – remembering all those who have no food.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 111

(Gen 18: 20-32)

In those days, Yahweh said: *The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I must go down and see whether or not their actions fully correspond to the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out.*

While Abraham's visitors walked on farther toward Sodom, Yahweh remained standing before Abraham. Then Abraham drew nearer and said: *Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? Suppose there were 50 innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place, rather than spare it for the sake of the 50 innocent people within it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to make the innocent die with the guilty so that the innocent and the guilty would be created alike! Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?*

Yahweh replied: *If I find 50 innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.*

Abraham spoke up again: *"See how I am presuming to speak to my divine patron, though I am but dust and ashes! What if there are five less than 50 innocent people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?"*

Yahweh answered: *I will not destroy it, if I find 45.*

But Abraham persisted, saying: *What if only 40 are found there?*

Yahweh replied: *I will forbear doing it for the sake of the 40.*

Then Abraham said: *Let not my divine patron grow impatient if I go on. What if only 30 are found there?*

Yahweh replied: *I will forbear doing it if I can find but 30 there.*

Still Abraham went on: *Since I have thus dared to speak to my divine patron, what if there are no more than 20?*

Yahweh answered: *I will not destroy it, for the sake of the 20.*

But Abraham still persisted: Please, let not my divine patron grow angry if I speak up this last time. What if there are at least ten there?

Yahweh replied: *For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it.*

(Col 2:12-14)

Brothers and sisters: You were buried with Jesus in baptism, in which you were also raised with Jesus through faith in the power of 'Abba, who raised Jesus from the dead. And even when you were dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, 'Abba brought you to life along with Jesus, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, 'Abba also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.

A Lament

(Ps 138:1-8)

Of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I give you thanks, Yahweh, with my whole heart;
 Before the members of the divine assembly I sing your praise;
- ² I bow down towards your holy Temple
 I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and faithfulness;
 for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
- ³ On the day I called, you answered me,
 You increased my strength of soul.
- ⁴ All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, Yahweh,
 for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the Yahweh,
 for great is the glory of the Yahweh.
- ⁶ For though Yahweh is high, Yahweh regards the lowly;
 but the haughty Yahweh perceives from far away.
- ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
 your right hand delivers me.
- ⁸ Yahweh will fulfill my destiny;
 your steadfast love, Yahweh, endures forever.

Petition

Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Gospel [LK 11:1-13](#)

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him,
“Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”
He said to them, “When you pray, say:
Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us,
and do not subject us to the final test.”

And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says,
‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,
for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,’
and he says in reply from within,
‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed.
I cannot get up to give you anything.’
I tell you,
if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship,
he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

“And I tell you, ask and you will receive;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives;
and the one who seeks, finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish?
Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?
If you then, who are wicked,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will the Father in heaven
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba my godparent, for getting me up this morning.

You are powerful, but you are gentle with us who are not.

Let me hear your words: *Do not be afraid.*

Let me hear the words of Jesus: *Young man, I say to you: Arise!*

Let me live this day with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach.

Let me live this day with open hands, not a closed fist.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 117

An Inauguration of Elijah on a Holy Mountain

(1 Kgs 19:4-8)

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree¹⁷ and sat beneath it.

Desert Broom Tree **20-30 ft height**

He prayed for death saying: *This is enough, O YAHWEH! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.*

He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then a messenger from Yahweh touched him and ordered him to get up and eat.



¹⁷ *Baccharis sarothroides*; Family: Asteraceae; Common name: desert broom; Synonym(s): broom baccharis, rosin brush, Mexican broom.

Hearth Cake

Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the messenger of Yahweh came back again, touched him, and ordered: *Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!*

He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Mt Horeb, the mountain of Elohim.



Mt Horeb in the Sinai Desert (Egypt)



A Hymn (Ps 33:1-22)

Call to worship

- 1 Rejoice in Yahweh, O you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
- 2 Praise Yahweh with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.
- 3 Sing to your divine patron a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

Creation story

- 4 For the word of Yahweh is upright,
and all the work of your divine patron is done in faithfulness.
- 5 Your divine patron loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of Yahweh.
- 6 By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
and all the stars by the breath of the mouth of your divine patron.
- 7 He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
Your divine patron put the oceans in storehouses.

- ⁸ Let all the earth live morally;
let all the peoples of the world stand in awe of their divine patron.
- ⁹ For their divine patron spoke, and it came to be;
Their divine patron commanded, and it stood firm.
- ¹⁰ Yahweh brings the counsel of peoples to nothing;
Their divine patron frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- ¹¹ The counsel of Yahweh stands for ever,
the thoughts of heart of Yahweh to all generations.
- ¹² Happy is the people whose divine patron is Yahweh,
the people whom Yahweh has chosen as a heritage.
- ¹³ Yahweh looks down from heaven;
Yahweh sees all humans.
- ¹⁴ From where Yahweh sits enthroned Yahweh watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
- ¹⁵ Yahweh who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
- ¹⁶ A ruler is not saved by a great army;
a warrior is not delivered by great strength.
- ¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.
- ¹⁸ Truly the eye of Yahweh is on those who live morally,
on those who hope in the steadfast love of Yahweh,
- ¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
- ²⁰ Our soul waits for Yahweh;
Yahweh is our help and shield.
- ²¹ Our heart is glad in our divine patron,
because we trust in the holy name of Yahweh.
- ²² Let your steadfast love, O Yahweh, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Eph 4:30—5:2

Brothers and sisters:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of Our Creator,
with which you were sealed for the day of redemption.

All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling
must be removed from you, along with all malice.

And be kind to one another, compassionate,
forgiving one another as Our Creator has forgiven you in Christ.

So be imitators of Our Creator, as beloved children, and live in love,
as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us
as a sacrificial offering to Our Creator for a fragrant aroma.

(John 6:41-51)

The leaders of Judea murmured against Jesus for saying: *I am the bread that came down from heaven.*

They complained: *Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say: I have come down from heaven?*

Jesus replied: *Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by Our Creator. Everyone who listens to 'Abba and learns from 'Abba comes to me. Not that anyone has seen 'Abba except the one who is from Our Creator; he has seen 'Abba. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, my godparent, for getting me up this morning.
Help me live today aware that our lives are a gift, not a wage.
You made the waves, the coast, the sheep, the horse and the two of us. How awesome!
You sent Jesus to teach us how to live grateful lives. How generous!

Jesus is manna – the bread which kept the Hebrews alive in the desert. In ancient Israel mothers spent many hours each day grinding grain and baking bread to feed their households.¹⁸ Like a good mother Yahweh fed the Hebrews with *manna* bread in the desert.

Manna is a desert praline created either when beetles bore through the bark of tamarisk trees allowing the sap to seep out and harden, or when a secretion of sap waste from grazing beetles themselves dry.¹⁹

Like a good mother, Yahweh teaches the Hebrews to eat only what they need, and not to hoard. The rule taught to trust that the Yahweh, who made the bread today, will make fresh bread tomorrow.

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August 20, 2006

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prov 9:1-6

¹⁸ Carol L. Meyers, "From Field Crops to Food: Attributing Gender and Meaning to Bread Production in Iron Age Israel," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M Meyers*, eds. Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 72-75.; Carol L. Meyers, "Having their Space and Eating there Too: Bread Production and Female Power in Ancient Israelite Households," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 5, no. Fall (2002), 14-44.; Carol L. Meyers, "Procreation, Production, and Protection : Male-Female Balance in Early Israel," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51, no. 4 (12/01, 1983), 569-593.

¹⁹ Bruce J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (Leiden: E J Brill, 1968). Friedrich Simon Bodenheimer, "The Manna of Sinai," *Biblical Archaeologist* 10, no. 1 (02/01, 1947), 2-6.

Wise Woman has built her house,²⁰
 She has set up her seven columns;²¹
 has dressed her meat;
 Mixed her wine;
 Set her table.
 Wise Woman has sent out her messengers;
 She calls from the heights out over the city:
 whoever is simple turn in here;
 To every fool, she says,
 Come, eat of my food,
 Drink of the wine I have mixed!²²



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²⁰ <http://www.ancient-egypt.org/index.html>

²¹ <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/EGYPT/MAAT.HTM>. Although Amon Re was ruled the divine assembly of Egypt, he was responsible for maintaining balance and order (Egyptian: ma'at). The image of Ma'at is a young woman, or a two, young, female twins. For the Egyptians the universe was ordered and logical. When everything was in place there was life; when things were out of place there was death. Ma'at was wise because she understood how the universe operated. Wise humans were people who knew their place and the places of those around them.

²² <http://laudatortemporisacti.blogspot.com/2004/10/wine-and-water.html>

As a rule, the ancient Greeks and Romans did not drink their wine pure, but mixed with water. The Romans called unmixed wine *merum*, from the adjective *merus* (unadulterated, whence English *mere*). The Greek equivalent is the adjective *akratos* (unmixed), from alpha privative and the verb *kerannymi* (mix). The Greek word for a mixing bowl, *krater* (whence Latin *cratera* and English *crater*), comes from the same verb. In English we use the word *neat*, meaning without admixture or dilution.

It was considered barbaric to drink wine neat in ancient times. Herodotus 6.84 (tr. George Rawlinson) tells this cautionary tale:

The Argives say that Cleomenes lost his senses, and died so miserably, on account of these doings. But his own countrymen declare that his madness proceeded not from any supernatural cause whatever, but only from the habit of drinking wine unmixed with water, which he learnt of the Scyths. These nomads, from the time that Darius made his inroad into their country, had always had a wish for revenge. They therefore sent ambassadors to Sparta to conclude a league, proposing to endeavour themselves to enter Media by the Phasis, while the Spartans should march inland from Ephesus, and then the two armies should join together in one. When the Scyths came to Sparta on this errand Cleomenes was with them continually; and growing somewhat too familiar, learnt of them to drink his wine without water, a practice which is thought by the Spartans to have caused his madness. From this distance of time the Spartans, according to their own account, have been accustomed, when they want to drink purer wine than common, to give the order to fill "Scythian fashion."

Likewise Plato, *Laws* 637 E (tr. Benjamin Jowett), says:

But the Scythians and Thracians, both men and women, drink unmixed wine, which they pour on their garments, and this they think a happy and glorious institution.

An exchange between one of the ambassadors (A) and Dicaeopolis (D) in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (73-78, tr. Alan H. Sommerstein) also illustrates the barbaric nature of the custom:

A: And when we were entertained, we were compelled to drink unmixed sweet wine from cups of glass and gold -- D: City of Cranaus! are you aware how these ambassadors mock you? A: Because the barbarians regard as real men only those who can eat and drink vast quantities.

A Greek or Roman who drank wine neat was more likely than not a drunkard or a glutton.

Martial 1.11 (tr. Walter C.A. Ker) criticizes one such individual:

While twice five wine-tokens are a knight's allowance, why do you, Sextilianus, all to yourself take twice ten drinks? By this time the warm water would have failed the attendants who bring it, were it not, Sextilianus, that you drink your wine unmixed.

Cum data sint equiti bis quina nomismata, quare
bis decies solus, Sextiliane, bibis?
Iam defecisset portantis calda ministros,
si non potares, Sextiliane, merum.

The 21st epigram of Ausonius is a labored pun on an old woman named Meroe after the Egyptian city of that name. After giving several examples of "significant names," Ausonius ends the poem by claiming that Meroe's name is really derived from merum (unmixed wine): And so you too, Meroe, not because you are black in color, as one who is born in Meroe on the Nile River, but because you do not dilute the wine poured into your cup with water, accustomed as you are to drink unmixed wine, pure merum.

et tu sic, Meroe, non quod sis atra colore,
ut quae Niliaca nascitur in Meroe,
infusum sed quod vinum non diluis undis,
potare immixtum sueta merumque merum.

According to Xenophanes (fragment B 5 West, tr. J.M. Edmonds) you're supposed to put the water in the mixing bowl first, then the wine:

Nor would a man pour wine first into the cup when he mingled it, but water and thereafter the liquor.

It was the function of the master of the drinking (Greek symposiarchos, Latin magister bibendi) to decide the proportion of water to wine. The master of the drinking was elected by his fellows (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.1.30) or chosen by lot (Horace, *Odes* 1.4.18 and 2.7.25-26).

Three parts water to one part wine is the proportion recommended by Hesiod, *Works and Days* 596, although the proper proportions were a matter of much dispute in antiquity.

Aristophanes, *Wealth* 1132 (tr. Alan H. Sommerstein) mentions one part water to one part wine, a strong mixture:

Ah me, the cup of fifty-fifty blend!

Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae* (*Professors at Dinner*) goes on for pages (10.426b-427a, 10.430d-431b) quoting various authorities on the question. Most recommend more water than wine, although Alcaeus, fragment Z 22 (tr. Denys Page) favors more wine than water:

The son of Semele and Zeus [Bacchus] gave wine to men for oblivion of sorrow; mix one of water to two of wine, pour them full from the brim down, let one cup jostle another.

See Denys Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 308, for a learned discussion of proportions of water to wine in antiquity.

A variation on this ancient custom is performed even today as part of the Mass, when the priest pours a few drops of water into the wine and says this prayer (Novus Ordo):

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Forsake the way of fools that you may live;
Advance in the way of the wise.”

Maat as Twins

Psalm 34: 1-23

a hymn of David after Abimelech ²³ disowned him after he pretended to be crazy

I will **ble**ss Yahweh at all times; **pr**aise shall be always in my mouth.
My soul will **gl**ory in Yahweh that the powerless may hear and be glad.
Magnify Yahweh with me; let us **exalt** his name together.

I sought Yahweh, who answered me, delivered me from all my fears.
Look to Elohim that you may be radiant with joy and your faces may not blush
for shame.

In my misfortune I called out to Yahweh who heard and saved me from
all distress.

A messenger of Yahweh, who encamps with them, delivers all who fear Elohim.

Learn to savor how good Yahweh is; happy are those who take refuge in
him.

Fear Yahweh, you holy ones; nothing is lacking to those who fear him.

The powerful²⁴ grow poor and hungry, but those who seek Yahweh lack
nothing.

Come, children,²⁵ listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.

Who among you loves life, takes delight in prosperous days?
Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking lies.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Yahweh has eyes for the just and ears for their cry.

Yahweh's face is against evildoers to wipe out their memory from the
earth.

Per huius aquae et vini mysterium eius efficiamur divinitatis consortes, qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.

That this has been part of the Mass since early times is shown by the evidence
of Justin Martyr in his first *Apology* (chapter 45), written around 150 A.D.

²³ Abimelech: a scribal error for Achish. In [1 Sam 21:13-16](#), David feigned madness before Achish, not Abimelech.

²⁴ The powerful: literally, "lions." Fierce animals were sometimes metaphors for influential people.

²⁵ Children: the customary term for students in Wisdom literature.

When the just cry out, Yahweh hears and rescues them from all distress.
Yahweh is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.

Many are the troubles of the just, but Yahweh delivers from them all.

Elohim watches over all their bones; not a one shall be broken.
Evil will slay the wicked; those who hate the just are condemned.

Yahweh redeems loyal servants; no one is condemned whose refuge is Elohim.

Eph 5:15-20

Brothers and sisters:

Watch carefully how you live,
not as fools but as wise,
making the most of the opportunity,
because these are the evil days.
Therefore, do not continue in ignorance,
but try to understand what is the will of the Father of Jesus.
And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery,
but be filled with the Spirit,
addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and playing to the Father of Jesus in your hearts,
giving thanks always and for everything
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to his Father, our Creator.

John 6:51-58

Jesus said to the crowds:

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
whoever eats this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give
is my flesh for the life of the world.”

The leaders of Judea quarreled among themselves, saying,
“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Jesus said to them,

“Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you do not have life within you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.

For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood

remains in me and I in him.
Just as the Father, our Creator, sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me
will have life because of me.
This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Twentieth Sunday of Year C

Lectionary 121

A Trial of Jeremiah

(Jer 38:4-6, 8-10)

Indictment

In those days, the princes said to the king: “Jeremiah ought to be put to death; he is demoralizing the soldiers and all the people who are left in this city, by speaking such things to them; he is not interested in the welfare of our people, but in their ruin.”

Sentence

King Zedekiah could do nothing with them, so he answered: “He is in your power.”

And so they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Prince Malchiah, which was in the quarters of the guard, letting him down with ropes. There was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

Appeal

Ebed-melech, a court official, went there from the palace and said to him: “My lord king, these men have been at fault in all they have done to the prophet Jeremiah, casting him into the cistern. He will die of famine on the spot, for there is no more food in the city.”

Then the king ordered Ebed-melech the Cushite to take three men along with him, and draw the prophet Jeremiah out of the cistern before he should die.

A Lament
(Ps 40:1-17)

<To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

- I waited patiently for Yahweh;
 - And Yahweh inclined to me and heard my cry.
- ² Yahweh drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,
 - Yahweh set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.
- ³ Yahweh put a new song in my mouth,
 - -- a song of praise to our Creator.
- Many will see and fear,
 - And put their trust in Yahweh.
- Happy are those who make Yahweh their trust,
 - who do not turn to the proud,
 - who do not go astray after false divine patrons.
- ⁵ You have multiplied, O YAHWEH my Creator, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
 - – no one can compare with you.
- Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
 - they would be more than can be counted.
- ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear.
 - Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.
- ⁷ Then I said, "Here I am; in the scroll of the book
 - it is written of me.
- ⁸ I delight to do your will, O my Creator;
 - your law is within my heart."
- ⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;
 - see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O YAHWEH.
- ¹⁰ I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
 - I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
- I have not concealed your steadfast love
 - and your faithfulness from the great congregation.
- ¹¹ Do not, O YAHWEH, withhold your mercy from me;
 - let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.
- ¹² For evils have encompassed me without number;
 - my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
- they are more than the hairs of my head,
 - and my heart fails me.
- ¹³ Be pleased, O YAHWEH, to deliver me;
 - O YAHWEH, make haste to help me.
- ¹⁴ Let all those be put to shame and confusion who seek to snatch away my life;
- let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt.

- ¹⁵ Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"
- ¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
 - may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is Yahweh!"
- ¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy,
 - but Yahweh takes thought for me.
- You are my help and my deliverer;
 - do not delay, O my Creator.

A Teaching
(Heb 12:1-4)

Brothers and sisters, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, our leader, who brings our faith to maturity. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of our Creator. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.

Sayings of Jesus
(Luke 12:49-53)

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

August 27, 2006

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 123

[Josh 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b](#)

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem,

summoning their elders, their leaders,
their judges, and their officers.
When they stood in ranks before the Creator,
Joshua addressed all the people:

“If it does not please you to serve Yahweh,
decide today whom you will serve,
the divine patrons your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River
or the divine patrons of the Amorites of Syria-Palestine where you are now
dwelling.
As for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh.”

But the people answered,
“Far be it from us to forsake Yahweh
for the service of other divine patrons.
For it was Yahweh, our Creator,
who brought us and our ancestors up out of the land of Egypt,
out of a state of slavery.
Yahweh performed those great miracles before our very eyes
and protected us along our entire journey
and among the peoples through whom we passed.
Therefore we also will serve Yahweh, for he is our Creator.”

Psalm 34: 1-23

a hymn of David after Abimelech ²⁶ disowned him after he pretended to be crazy

Call to worship

May I *ble*ss Yahweh at all times;
Let my mouth always *pr*aise my Creator
May my soul *gl*orify Yahweh;
Let the powerless *he*ar my praise;
Let them *be* glad.
Magnify Yahweh with me;
Let us *ex*alt the name of Yahweh together.

Creation story

I sought Yahweh, who answered me, delivered me from all my fears.

²⁶ Abimelech: a scribal error for Achish. In [1 Sam 21:13-16](#), David feigned madness before Achish, not Abimelech.

Look to Elohim that you may be radiant with joy and your faces may not blush for shame.

In my misfortune I called out to Yahweh who heard and saved me from all distress.

A messenger of Yahweh, who encamps with them, delivers all who fear Elohim.

Learn to savor how good Yahweh is; happy are those who take refuge in him.

Respect Yahweh, you holy ones; nothing is lacking to those who respect him.

The powerful²⁷ grow poor and hungry, but those who seek Yahweh lack nothing.

Come, children,²⁸ listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.

Who among you loves life, takes delight in prosperous days?

Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking lies.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Yahweh has eyes for the just and ears for their cry.

Yahweh's face is against evildoers to wipe out their memory from the earth.

When the just cry out, Yahweh hears and rescues them from all distress.

Yahweh is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.

Many are the troubles of the just, but Yahweh delivers from them all.

Elohim watches over all their bones; not a one shall be broken.

Evil will slay the wicked; those who hate the just are condemned.

Yahweh redeems loyal servants; no one is condemned whose refuge is Elohim.

[Eph 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to Jesus.

For the husband is head of his wife
just as Christ is head of the church,

he himself the savior of the body.

As the church is subordinate to Christ,

so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives,

even as Christ loved the church

²⁷ The powerful: literally, "lions." Fierce animals were sometimes metaphors for influential people.

²⁸ Children: the customary term for students in Wisdom literature.

and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.
So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself.
For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the church,
because we are members of his body.
For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.
This is a great mystery,
but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

[John 6:60-69](#)

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said,
"This saying is hard; who can accept it?"
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, "Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending
to where he was before?
It is the spirit that gives life,
while the flesh is of no avail.
The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not believe."
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said,
"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 126

Instructions on Honoring Teachers

(Sir 3:1-16)

- Students, listen to me, your teacher;²⁹
act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety.
- ² For Yahweh honors fathers above their students,
and Yahweh confirms a mother's right over her students.
- ³ Those who honor their teachers atone for sins,
⁴ and those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure.
- ⁵ Those who honor their father will find satisfaction in their own students,
and when they pray they will be heard.
- ⁶ Those who respect their teachers will have long life,
and those who honor their mothers obey Yahweh;
⁷ they will serve their teachers faithfully.
- ⁸ Honor your fathers by word and deed,
that their blessing may come upon you.
- ⁹ For a father's blessing strengthens his students,
but a mother's curse uproots their foundations.
- ¹⁰ Do not glorify yourself by dishonoring your father,
for your father's dishonor is no glory to you.
- ¹¹ The glory of one's father is one's own glory,
and it is a disgrace for students not to respect their mothers.
- ¹² Members of households, help your father in his old age,
and do not grieve him as long as he lives;
¹³ even if his mind fails, be patient with him;
because you have all your faculties do not despise him.
- ¹⁴ For kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
and will be credited to you against your sins;
¹⁵ in the day of your distress it will be remembered in your favor;
like frost in fair weather, your sins will melt away.
- ¹⁶ Whoever forsakes a father is like a blasphemer,
and whoever angers a mother is cursed by Yahweh.

Instructions on Humility

(Sir 3:17-24)

²⁹ *Father* and *mother* are metaphors for teachers in the world of the Bible; *children* is a metaphor for *students*.

- ¹⁷ Students, perform your tasks with humility;
then you will be loved by those whom your divine patron accepts.
- ¹⁸ The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself;
so you will find favor in the sight of Yahweh.
- ²⁰ For great is the might of Yahweh;
but by the humble he is glorified.
- ²¹ Neither seek what is too difficult for you,
nor investigate what is beyond your power.
- ²² Reflect upon what you have been commanded,
for what is hidden is not your concern.
- ²³ Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you,
for more than you can understand has been shown to you.
- ²⁴ For their conceit has led many astray,
and wrong opinion has impaired their judgment.

Instructions on Flexibility

(Sir 3:25-29)

- ²⁵ Without eyes there is no light;
without knowledge there is no wisdom.
- ²⁶ A stubborn mind will fare badly at the end,
and whoever loves danger will perish in it.
- ²⁷ A stubborn mind will be burdened by troubles,
and the sinner adds sin to sins.
- ²⁸ When calamity befalls the proud, there is no healing,
for an evil plant has taken root in him.
- ²⁹ The mind of the intelligent appreciates proverbs,
and an attentive ear is the desire of the wise.

A Hymn and A Lament

(Ps 68:1-35)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

Petition

- ¹ Let our divine patron rise up,
let the enemies of Yahweh be scattered;
let those who hate Yahweh flee.
- ² As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before our divine patron.

Call to worship

- ³ But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before our divine patron;
let them be jubilant with joy.
- ⁴ Sing to our divine patron,
sing praises to the name of Yahweh;
lift up a song to Yahweh who rides upon the clouds —
the name of our divine patron is *Yahweh* —
Exult before Yahweh.

Profession of faith

- ⁵ Father of orphans
and protector of widows is our divine patron in the Holy House.
- ⁶ Our divine patron gives the desolate a home to live in;
Yahweh leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

Creation story

- ⁷ O our divine patron, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,

Selah

- ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of our divine patron -- the divine patron of Sinai,
at the presence of our divine patron -- the divine patron of Israel.
- ⁹ Rain in abundance, Yahweh, you showered abroad;

you restored your heritage when it languished;
10 your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, Yahweh, you provided for the needy.

11 Yahweh gives the command;
great is the company of those who bore the tidings:
12 *The commanders of the armies, they flee, they flee!*
The women at home divide the spoil,
13 though they stay among the sheepfolds —
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
14 When the Almighty scattered rulers there,
snow fell on Mt. Zalmon.

15 O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
16 Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount that our divine patron desired for his abode,
where Yahweh will reside forever?

17 With mighty chariots, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
Yahweh came from Mt. Sinai into the Holy Place.
18 You ascended the high mount,
leading prisoners in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against Yahweh abiding there.

Call to worship

19 Bless Yahweh,
who daily bears us up;
Our divine patron is our salvation.

Selah

Profession of faith

20 Our divine patron is the divine patron of salvation,
and to our divine patron, Yahweh, belongs escape from death.
21 Our divine patron will shatter the heads of our enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their guilty ways.
22 Yahweh promised: *I will bring them back from Bashan,*
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
23 *so that you may bathe your feet in blood,*

so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.

- ²⁴ Your solemn processions are seen, Yahweh,
the processions of our divine patron, my leader, into the sanctuary —
²⁵ the singers in front, the musicians last,
between them -- women playing tambourines:

Call to worship

- ²⁶ *Bless our divine patron in the great assembly,
Yahweh, you who are of Israel's fountain!*

- ²⁷ There is Benjamin, the last of them, in the lead,
the elders of Judah in one group,
the elders of Zebulun,
the elders of Naphtali.

Petition

- ²⁸ Summon your might, Yahweh;
show your strength, our divine patron, as you have done for us before.
²⁹ Because of your temple at Jerusalem
rulers bear gifts to you.
³⁰ Rebuke the wild animals that live among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples.
Trample under foot those who lust after tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight in war.
³¹ Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to our divine patron.

Call to worship

- ³² Sing to Our divine patron, O peoples of the earth;
sing praises to Yahweh,

Selah

- ³³ O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, Yahweh sends out a voice, a mighty voice.
³⁴ Ascribe power to our divine patron,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.
³⁵ Awesome is our divine patron in the sanctuary,
-- the divine patron of Israel --
gives power and strength to the people.

Bless our divine patron!

Reading 2 [HEB 12:18-19, 22-24A](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You have not approached that which could be touched
and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness
and storm and a trumpet blast
and a voice speaking words such that those who heard
begged that no message be further addressed to them.
No, you have approached Mount Zion
and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and countless angels in festal gathering,
and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven,
and God the judge of all,
and the spirits of the just made perfect,
and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,
and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Duel between Jesus, Lawyers and Pharisees

(Luke 14:1-14)

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely. ²Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had peripheral edema in his legs.

³Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees: *Is it lawful to cure people on the Sabbath, or not?*

⁴The lawyers and Pharisees were silent.

So Jesus took the man with edema and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵Then he said to them: *If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a Sabbath?*

⁶The lawyers and Pharisees could not reply.

Teachings on Humility

(Luke 14:7-14)

⁷ When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he taught the guests a parable.

⁸*When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone with a higher status than you has been invited by your host; ⁹and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you: Give this person your place, and then in shame you would take the lowest place.*

¹⁰*When you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you: Friend, move up higher. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

¹² Jesus also taught his host:

When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid.

¹³*But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*

Homily

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 131

An Exile's³⁰ Lament

(Isa 50:5-9)

Profession of faith

⁴ The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

YHWH, my divine patron, opens my ear that I may hear;
I have not rebelled,
Have not turned back.
I gave my back to those who flogged me,
My cheeks to those who shaved off³¹ my beard;
My face I did not cover with my hands
To protect it from their fists and spit.

YHWH, my divine patron, is my help,
Therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
Knowing that I shall not be put to shame.
He is near who upholds my right;
If anyone wishes to oppose me,
Let us appear together.
Who disputes my right?
Let my accuser man confront me.
See, YHWH, my divine patron, is my help;
Who can prove me guilty of crime?

¹⁰ Who among you fears the LORD

³⁰ The Suffering Servant

³¹ NRSV: plucked -- to make the exiles look like children, not a men

and obeys the voice of his servant,
who walks in darkness
and has no light,
yet trusts in the name of the LORD
and relies upon his God?
¹¹ But all of you are kindlers of fire,
lighters of firebrands.
Walk in the flame of your fire,
and among the brands that you have kindled!
This is what you shall have from my hand:
you shall lie down in torment.

A Lament

(Ps 116:1-19)

Profession of faith

- ¹ I fulfill my commitments to YHWH,
Because my divine patron has heard my voice and my supplications.
² Because YHWH has listened to me,
Therefore I will call on YHWH as long as I live.

Complaint

- ³ The snares of death encompassed me;
The pangs of *Sheol* laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

Profession of faith

- ⁴ Then I called on the name of YHWH:
YHWH, I pray, save my life!
⁵ Gracious is YHWH, and righteous;
Our divine patron is merciful.
⁶ YHWH protects the powerless;³²
when I was brought low, YHWH saved me.
⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for YHWH has dealt bountifully with you.
⁸ For you have delivered me³³ from death,
My eyes from tears,
My feet from stumbling.
⁹ I walk before YHWH
I walk in the land of the living.
¹⁰ I kept my faith, even when I said:
I am greatly afflicted;
¹¹ I said in my consternation:
Everyone is a liar.

Vow

- ¹² What shall I return to YHWH
For all the bounty of my divine patron to me?
¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation

³² NRSV: simple

³³ NRSV: my soul

And call on the name of YHWH,
14 I will pay my vows to YHWH
In the presence of all the people of YHWH.

Profession of faith

15 Precious in the sight of YHWH
Is the death of those faithful to YHWH.
16 O YHWH, I am your slave;³⁴
I am your slave, the child of your slave.³⁵
You have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
And call on the name of YHWH.
18 I will fulfill my vows to YHWH
In the presence of all the people of YHWH,
19 In the courts of the house of YHWH,
In your midst, O Jerusalem.

Call to worship

Praise YHWH!

³⁴ NRSV: servant

³⁵ NRSV: serving maid

Teachings on Faith and Good Works

(James 2:14-18)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has faith but does not have works?
Can that faith save him?
If a brother or sister has nothing to wear
and has no food for the day,
and one of you says to them,
“Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, ”
but you do not give them the necessities of the body,
what good is it?
So also faith of itself,
if it does not have works, is dead.

Indeed someone might say,
“You have faith and I have works.”
Demonstrate your faith to me without works,
and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

Teachings on Prophets

(Mark 8:27-35)

Jesus and his disciples set out
for the villages of Caesarea Philippi.
Along the way he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that I am?”
They said in reply,
“John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others one of the prophets.”
And he asked them,
“But who do you say that I am?”
Peter said to him in reply,
“You are the Christ.”
Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

A Teaching on Suffering

He began to teach them
that the Son of Man must suffer greatly
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed, and rise after three days.
He spoke this openly.
Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples,
rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan.
You are thinking not as My divine patron does, but as human beings do.”
He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them,
“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow me.
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and that of the gospel will save it.”

Homily

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 132

(Exod 32:7-14)

⁷Yahweh said to Moses:

Go down at once! Your people,³⁶ whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said: These are your my divine patrons, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!

⁹Yahweh said to Moses:

I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.'

¹¹ But Moses implored Yahweh his divine patron, and said:

Yahweh, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say: It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?

Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them: I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.

¹⁴So Yahweh relented about the sentence that Yahweh had imposed on the people of Yahweh.

³⁶ Note the interplay here between Yahweh who refers to the Hebrews as *your people* -- *the people of Moses*, and Moses who refers to the Hebrews as *your people* -- *the people of Yahweh*.

A Lament

(Psalm 51:1-19)

To the leader
A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan confronted him, after he had intercourse with Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

Petition

- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, my divine patron,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Vow

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

¹⁵ Yahweh, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

¹⁹ then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Reading 21 [TM 1:12-17](#)

Beloved:

I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry.

I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant, but I have been mercifully treated because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief.

Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Of these I am the foremost.

But for that reason I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost,

Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life.

To the king of ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Parable of a Lost Sheep

(Luke 15: 1-32)

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So to them he addressed this parable.

"What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?

And when he does find it,

he sets it on his shoulders with great joy

and, upon his arrival home,

he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them,

'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'

I tell you, in just the same way

there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents

than over ninety-nine righteous people

who have no need of repentance.

Parable of a Lost Coin

"Or what woman having ten coins and losing one

would not light a lamp and sweep the house,

searching carefully until she finds it?

And when she does find it,

she calls together her friends and neighbors

and says to them,

'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.'

In just the same way, I tell you,

there will be rejoicing among the angels of God

over one sinner who repents."

Parable of a Lost Son

(Luke 15:

Then he said,

"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father,

'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.'

So the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings

and set off to a distant country
where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.
When he had freely spent everything,
a severe famine struck that country,
and he found himself in dire need.
So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens
who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.
And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed,
but nobody gave him any.
Coming to his senses he thought,
'How many of my father's hired workers
have more than enough food to eat,
but here am I, dying from hunger.
I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,
"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.
I no longer deserve to be called your son;
treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."
So he got up and went back to his father.
While he was still a long way off,
his father caught sight of him,
and was filled with compassion.
He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.
His son said to him,
'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you;
I no longer deserve to be called your son.'
But his father ordered his servants,
'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him;
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.
Take the fattened calf and slaughter it.
Then let us celebrate with a feast,
because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again;
he was lost, and has been found.'
Then the celebration began.
Now the older son had been out in the field
and, on his way back, as he neared the house,
he heard the sound of music and dancing.
He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.
The servant said to him,
'Your brother has returned
and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf
because he has him back safe and sound.'
He became angry,
and when he refused to enter the house,
his father came out and pleaded with him.
He said to his father in reply,

‘Look, all these years I served you
and not once did I disobey your orders;
yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when
your son returns,
who swallowed up your property with prostitutes,
for him you slaughter the fattened calf.’
He said to him,
‘My son, you are here with me always;
everything I have is yours.
But now we must celebrate and rejoice,
because your brother was dead and has come to life again;
he was lost and has been found.’”

Homily

Hope believes that things can change.

Whether it is Moses pleading for the Hebrews, or a women looking for a coin, hope inspired them to seek only good. Evil is only a moment, not the divinely intended state of affairs.

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 141

Reading 1 [1HB 1:2-3; 2:2-4](#)

How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin;
why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and clamorous discord.
Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets,
so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not be late.
The rash one has no integrity;
but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 22 [TM 1:6-8, 13-14](#)

Beloved:

I remind you, to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.
So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,
nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.

Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit
that dwells within us.

Saying on Obedience as Faith

(Luke 17:5-6)

The apostles asked our Teacher:³⁷ *Increase our faith.*

Our Teacher replied: *If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree: Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.*

Saying on Faith as Obedience

(Luke 17:7-10)

Who among you would say to a slave³⁸ who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field: *Come here immediately and take your place at table?*

Would you not rather say: *Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished?* *Is a slave owner grateful to a slave who did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say: We are unprofitable slaves -- we have only done what we were supposed to do.*

³⁷ NRSV: the Lord

³⁸ NRSV: your servant

Homily

'Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning.
Thank you for saying to me: *Young man, I say to you arise* (Luke 7:14).
Help me to embrace my vulnerability, not to resent it.
Help me to do my good work, not to question it.
Give me a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach.
Let me lay down my life for another.

Jesus' sayings focus on doing what characterizes people of faith. The tree and the slave both obey. Obedience is faith, and faith is obedience.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 143

Teachings on Wisdom

(Wis 7:7-11)

I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
I preferred her to scepter and throne,
and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,
nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;
because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.
Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
and I chose to have her rather than the light,
because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
Yet all good things together came to me in her company,
and countless riches at her hands.

BOOK IV
(PSALMS 90-106)

A Lament
(Ps 90:1-17)

A Prayer of Moses, the man of Our divine patron.

- ¹ YHWH, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations.
² Before the mountains were brought forth,
Before you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are our divine patron.
- ³ You turn us back to clay,³⁹
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'
- ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.
- ⁵ You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
- ⁷ For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
- ⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.
- ¹⁰ The days of our life are 70 years,
or perhaps 80, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- ¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due to you.
- ¹² So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.
- ¹³ Turn, O YHWH! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!

³⁹ NRSV: *dust*

- 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
and for as many years as we have seen evil.
- 16 Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
- 17 Let the favor of the YHWH our divine patron be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands—
prosper the work of our hands!

(Heb 4:12-13)

Brothers and sisters:⁴⁰

Indeed the word of our godparent⁴¹ is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

No creature is concealed from our god parent, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of our godparent to whom we must render an account.

⁴⁰ These titles are parallel to *son* and *daughter* in the teaching traditions of the Bible.

⁴¹ NRSV: *God*

Teachings on Detachment

(Mark 10:17-30)

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up,
knelt down before him, and asked him,
"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good?
No one is good but God alone.
You know the commandments: *You shall not kill;*
you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal;
you shall not bear false witness;
you shall not defraud;
honor your father and your mother."
He replied and said to him,
"Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."
Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him,
"You are lacking in one thing.
Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor
and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."
At that statement his face fell,
and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,
"How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were amazed at his words.
So Jesus again said to them in reply,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves,
"Then who can be saved?"
Jesus looked at them and said,
"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God.
All things are possible for God."

Peter began to say to him,
"We have given up everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,
there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters

or mother or father or children or lands
for my sake and for the sake of the gospel
who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age:
houses and brothers and sisters
and mothers and children and lands,
with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 144

[Wis 7:7-11](#)

I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
I preferred her to scepter and throne,
and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,
nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;
because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.
Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
and I chose to have her rather than the light,
because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
Yet all good things together came to me in her company,
and countless riches at her hands.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17](#)

R. (14) **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.

Return, O LORD! How long?

Have pity on your servants!

R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.

Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us,
for the years when we saw evil.

R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Let your work be seen by your servants

and your glory by their children;
and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
prosper the work of our hands for us!
Prosper the work of our hands!
R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Reading II

[Heb 4:12-13](#)

Brothers and sisters:
Indeed the word of God is living and effective,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.
No creature is concealed from him,
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him
to whom we must render an account.

Gospel

[Mk 10:17-30](#) or [10:17-27](#)

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up,
knelt down before him, and asked him,
"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good?
No one is good but God alone.
You know the commandments: You shall not kill;
you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal;
you shall not bear false witness;
you shall not defraud;
honor your father and your mother."
He replied and said to him,
"Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."
Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him,
"You are lacking in one thing.
Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor
and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."
At that statement his face fell,
and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,
"How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!"
The disciples were amazed at his words.

So Jesus again said to them in reply,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves,
"Then who can be saved?"
Jesus looked at them and said,
"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God.
All things are possible for God."
Peter began to say to him,
"We have given up everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,
there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters
or mother or father or children or lands
for my sake and for the sake of the gospel
who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age:
houses and brothers and sisters
and mothers and children and lands,
with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 145

(Isa 45:1-6)

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus,
whose right hand I grasp,
subduing nations before him,
and making kings run in his service,
opening doors before him
and leaving the gates unbarred:
For the sake of Jacob, my servant,
of Israel, my chosen one,
I have called you by your name,
giving you a title, though you knew me not.
I am the LORD and there is no other,
there is no God besides me.
It is I who arm you, though you know me not,
so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun
people may know that there is none besides me.

I am the LORD, there is no other.

Responsorial PsalmPs 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

R. (7b) **Give the Lord glory and honor.**

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all you lands.

Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. **Give the Lord glory and honor.**

For great is the LORD and highly to be praised;
awesome is he, beyond all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are things of nought,
but the LORD made the heavens.

R. **Give the Lord glory and honor.**

Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
give to the LORD the glory due his name!
Bring gifts, and enter his courts.

R. **Give the Lord glory and honor.**

Worship the LORD, in holy attire;
tremble before him, all the earth;
say among the nations: The LORD is king,
he governs the peoples with equity.

R. **Give the Lord glory and honor.**

Reading 21 Thes 1:1-5b

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians
in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
grace to you and peace.

We give thanks to God always for all of you,
remembering you in our prayers,
unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love
and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ,
before our God and Father,
knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God,
how you were chosen.
For our gospel did not come to you in word alone,
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

GospelMt 22:15-21

The Pharisees went off
and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech.
They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying,
"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man
and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.
And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion,
for you do not regard a person's status.
Tell us, then, what is your opinion:
Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?"
Knowing their malice, Jesus said,
"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?
Show me the coin that pays the census tax."
Then they handed him the Roman coin.
He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?"
They replied, "Caesar's."
At that he said to them,
"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar
and to God what belongs to God."

Homily

Matt 22:15-21 29th Sunday October 19, 1975

An outraged woman shouts at her husband in front of his 65 year old mother: "Who do you love more, me or her?"

A jealous man screams at his wife in front of her 5 year old son: "Who is more important around this house, me or him?"

And with a lying grin, Jesus' enemies offer him a dilemma... "Pay taxes and condone dictators. Withhold taxes and encourage fanatics."

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was patient with the sincere, but uncompromising with the hypocrite. Five times in the Gospel of Matthew, enemies try to pick a fight with Jesus. But today, Jesus pleads no-contest.

There is no choice between dictators and fanatics. "Take out a coin and look at the facts."

To put your image on a coin was to put a chip on your shoulder. It was a challenge. No matter who the local strongman might be, the image of the supreme master was on the money. In the ancient world, the first act of every revolutionary was to strike coins with his image. If Caesar has the power to mint, he inevitably has the power to tax. Right or wrong, it's a fact.

But there is irony in Jesus' answer. With a gentle smile, Jesus uses what sounds like conservative political philosophy to offer his enemies a chance for a radical religious conversion.

Subtly Jesus' word *image* leads his audience back to *The Story of the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth* in the book of Genesis (Gen 1:1—2:4). We are made in God's *image*. Our creator – who has power to make us, also has power to collect us.

Like Caesar at the time for taxes, God comes to each of us in aging, sickness and death, to collect his image. That is not right or wrong. It is inevitable.

Like the Herodians and the Pharisees in today's gospel, each of us will resist. Through one form of politics or another, each of us tries to cling independently to health and life, stubbornly clinging to our body and blood.

But the facts are written all over us, like Caesar's image on a coin; we are God's, and when God summons, we will render. That is the irony .- that in dying freely there is healing, that in aging there is youth, that in suffering silently, we are made whole, that in rendering we are made free. But if any of us is ultimately to our creator healed us; it will only be because we have found a model in Jesus Christ here in this Eucharist. Here is the body and blood of Jesus, freely given. Each time we eat it, we bind up the wounds which have torn us from one another and from God. And each time we send the Eucharist to those who are sick, or old, or dying, We send it with the prayer and with the reminder that they are being asked, and we will one day be asked, to render the things, the image, that is God's. Let us pray we can do it as generously as did his Son.

Una mujer ultrajada a su esposo frente a su anciana madre de 65 años:
“A quien amas más: a ella o a mí?”

Un hombre celoso grita a su esposa frente a su hijo de cinco años: “¿Quién es más importante en esta casa, él o yo?”

Y con una sonrisa mentirosa los enemigos de Jesús le proponen un dilema. “Paga impuestos y complaces a los dictadores. ¿Retiene impuestos y anima a los fanáticos?”

A través de su ministerio, Jesús fue paciente con el sincero, pero intransigente con los hipócritas. Cinco veces en el evangelio de Mateo los enemigos provocan una pelea con Jesús. Pero hoy Jesús no presenta ninguna lucha. No hay preferencia entre dictadores y fanáticos. Toma una moneda y mira los hechos.

Para poner tu imagen en una moneda fue como poner una ficha en tu hombro. Fue un desafío. No importa quien podría ser el hombre fuerte, la imagen del supremo maestro fue sobre el dinero.

En el mundo antiguo, el primer acto de todo revolucionario era encontrar monedas con su imagen. Si César tiene el poder acuñar moneda, el inevitablemente tiene el poder de recaudar impuestos. Bien o mal es un hecho.

Pero hay ironía en la respuesta de Jesús. Con una gentil sonrisa, Jesús usa lo que suena como política conservadora, filosofía para ofrecer a sus enemigos una radical conversión religiosa.

Suavemente la palabra de Jesús *imagen* nos refiere al cuento de la creación de los cielos y la tierra en Génesis (Gen 1:27). Somos hechos a imagen de Dios. El quien tiene poder de crearnos también tiene poder reconocernos.

Como Cesar en el tiempo de impuesto, Dios viene a nosotros en angustias, enfermedades y muerte, a recoger su imagen. Eso es este bien or este mal. Es inevitable.

Como los fariseos en el evangelio de hoy, cada uno nos resistiremos. Por medio de una forma de politica o otra, cada uno tratamos de apegarnos independientemente a la salud y a la vida, a nuestro cuerpo y sangre. Pero los hechos estan escritos sobre todos nosotros, como la imagen de Cesar en una moneda; nosotros somos de Dios, y cuando el tome cuentas nosotros tendremos que rendirle.

Esa es la ironia – que muriendo libremente hay alivio, que sufriendo en silencio estamos hecho todos, que rindiendonos somos liberado. Pero si alguno de nosotros es ultimado a ser curado, sera unicamente porque hemos encontrado un modelo en Jesucristo qui en la Eucaristia. Aqui esta su cuerpo y sangre, dada a nosotros. Cada vez que lo comemos, curamos las heridas las cuales no han lastimado a unos y otros y a Dios. Y cada vez que la Eucaristia es llevada a enfermos, ancianos or moribundos van con la oracion y recordatoio de que han sido llamados y que nosotros algun dia seremos llamados a entregar las cosas, la imagen que es de Dios.

Rogemos porque podamos hacerlo generosamente como lo hizo el Hijo de Dios.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 147

[Is 53:10-11](#)

The LORD was pleased
to crush him in infirmity.

If he gives his life as an offering for sin,
he shall see his descendants in a long life,
and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him.

Because of his affliction
he shall see the light in fullness of days;
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,

and their guilt he shall bear.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22](#)

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.

May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Reading II

[Heb 4:14-16](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God,

let us hold fast to our confession.

For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,
yet without sin.

So let us confidently approach the throne of grace
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Gospel

[Mk 10:35-45 or 10:42-45](#)

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him,
"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?"

They answered him, "Grant that in your glory
we may sit one at your right and the other at your left."

Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking.

Can you drink the cup that I drink
or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"
They said to him, "We can."
Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink,
and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized;
but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give
but is for those for whom it has been prepared."
When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John.
Jesus summoned them and said to them,
"You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles
lord it over them,
and their great ones make their authority over them felt.
But it shall not be so among you.
Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant;
whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.
For the Son of Man did not come to be served
but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 150B

(Jer 31:7-9)

Thus says Yahweh:
Shout with joy for Jacob,
exult at the head of the nations;
proclaim your praise and say:
Yahweh has delivered the people,
the remnant of Israel.
Behold, I will bring them back
from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world,
with the blind and the lame in their midst,⁴²
the mothers and those with child;

⁴² The blind, the lame, the pregnant are the casualties of war in the old world; in the new world, they will no longer be at risk

they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears,
but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first-born.

A Hymn

(Ps 126:1-6)

A Pilgrimage Hymn

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

³ The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reading II

Heb 5:1-6

Brothers and sisters:

Every high priest is taken from among men
and made their representative before God,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring,
for he himself is beset by weakness
and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself
as well as for the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself
but only when called by God,
just as Aaron was.

In the same way,
it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest,
but rather the one who said to him:

You are my son:
this day I have begotten you;
just as he says in another place:
You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel

[Mk 10:46-52](#)

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd,
Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus,
sat by the roadside begging.
On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth,
he began to cry out and say,
"Jesus, son of David, have p⁴³ity on me."
And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.
But he kept calling out all the more,
"Son of David, have pity on me."
Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."
So they called the blind man, saying to him,
"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."
He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.
Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?"
The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see."
Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you."
Immediately he received his sight
and followed him on the way.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 150C

Teaching on Prayer

(Sir 35:12-26)

¹² Give to the Most High as the Most High has given to you,
and as generously as you can afford.

¹³ For Yahweh is the one who repays,
and Yahweh will repay you sevenfold.

¹⁴ Do not offer Yahweh a bribe,

⁴³ Jesus begins what Jeremiah had promised; the blind shall see, and no longer be at risk.

Yahweh will not accept it;
15 Do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice;
Yahweh is a just judge,
Yahweh is impartial.

16 Yahweh will not show partiality to the poor;
Yahweh will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged.

17 Yahweh will not ignore the supplication of the orphan,
or the widow when she pours out her complaint.

18 Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek.

19 as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall?
20 One whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted,
and his prayer will reach to the clouds.

21 The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
and it will not rest until it reaches its goal;
it will not desist until the Most High responds
22 and does justice to the righteous, and executes judgement.
Indeed, the Lord will not delay,
and like a warrior will not be patient
until he crushes the loins of the unmerciful
23 and repays vengeance on the nations;
until he destroys the multitude of the insolent,
and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous;

24 until he repays mortals according to their deeds,
and the works of all according to their thoughts;

25 until he judges the case of his people
and makes them rejoice in his mercy.

26 His mercy is as welcome in time of distress
as clouds of rain in time of drought.

A Lament

(Ps 34:1-22)

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Vow

- ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times;
I will sing praise Yahweh continually.
- ² My soul boasts in Yahweh;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify Yahweh with me,
and let us exalt the name of Yahweh together.

Testimony

- ⁴ I sought Yahweh, and Yahweh answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to Yahweh, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by Yahweh,
and was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ The messenger of Yahweh encamps
around those who live morally Yahweh, and delivers them.
- ⁸ O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
happy are those who take refuge in Yahweh.
- ⁹ Live morally, holy ones of Yahweh,
for those who live morally have no want.
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing.

- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you how to live morally.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

- ¹⁵ The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous,
and the ears of Yahweh are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of Yahweh is against evildoers,

- to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh rescues them from them all.
- ²⁰ Yahweh keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- ²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² Yahweh redeems the life of the servants of Yahweh;
none of those who take refuge in Yahweh will be condemned.

Reading 22 TM 4:6-8, 16-18

Beloved:

I am already being poured out like a libation,
and the time of my departure is at hand.
I have competed well; I have finished the race;
I have kept the faith.
From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me,
which the Lord, the just judge,
will award to me on that day, and not only to me,
but to all who have longed for his appearance.

At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf,
but everyone deserted me.
May it not be held against them!
But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength,
so that through me the proclamation might be completed
and all the Gentiles might hear it.
And I was rescued from the lion's mouth.
The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat
and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom.
To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel[LK 18:9-14](#)

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.

"Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity -- greedy, dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 152

(Deut 6:2-6)

Moses spoke to the people, saying: "Fear the LORD, your God⁴⁴, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life.

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them, that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers,⁴⁵ to give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today."

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51)

R. (2) **I love you, Lord, my strength.**

I love you, O LORD, my strength,

⁴⁴ Act morally throughout the days of your lives; observe all the statutes and commandments of Yahweh which I enjoin on you, and you will live a long life.

⁴⁵ Yahweh, your divine patron

O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!

Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,
and I am safe from my enemies.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

The LORD lives! And blessed be my rock!
Extolled be God my savior.

You who gave great victories to your king
and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

Reading 2 Heb 7:23-28

Brothers and sisters:

The levitical priests were many
because they were prevented by death from remaining in office,
but Jesus, because he remains forever,
has a priesthood that does not pass away.
Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him,
since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:
holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners,
higher than the heavens.

He has no need, as did the high priests,
to offer sacrifice day after day,
first for his own sins and then for those of the people;
he did that once for all when he offered himself.
For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests,
but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law,
appoints a son,
who has been made perfect forever.

Gospel Mk 12:28b-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him,
"Which is the first of all the commandments?"

Jesus replied, "The first is this:

Hear, O Israel!

The Lord our God is Lord alone!

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.*

The second is this:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher.
You are right in saying,
'He is One and there is no other than he.'
And 'to love him with all your heart,
with all your understanding,
with all your strength,
and to love your neighbor as yourself
is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."
And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding,
he said to him,
"You are not far from the kingdom of God."
And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 156

Martyrology for a Mother and her Seven Sons

(2 Macc 7:1-14)

It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and thongs, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. ²One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, 'What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors.'

³ The king fell into a rage, and gave orders to have pans and cauldrons heated. ⁴These were heated immediately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. ⁵When he was utterly helpless, the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in a pan. The smoke from the pan spread widely, but the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, saying, ⁶'The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his song that bore witness against the people to their faces, when he said, "And he will have compassion on his servants." '

⁷ After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, 'Will you eat rather than have your body punished limb by limb?' ⁸He replied in the language of his ancestors and said to them, 'No.' Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. ⁹And when he was at his last breath, he said, 'You accursed wretch, you dismiss us

from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws.'

10 After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, ¹¹and said nobly, 'I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.'¹²As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

13 After he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. ¹⁴When he was near death, he said, 'One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!'

15 Next they brought forward the fifth and maltreated him. ¹⁶But he looked at the king, and said, 'Because you have authority among mortals, though you also are mortal, you do what you please. But do not think that God has forsaken our people. ¹⁷Keep on, and see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants!'

18 After him they brought forward the sixth. And when he was about to die, he said, 'Do not deceive yourself in vain. For we are suffering these things on our own account, because of our sins against our own God. Therefore astounding things have happened. ¹⁹But do not think that you will go unpunished for having tried to fight against God!'

20 The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. ²¹She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, ²²'I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. ²³Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.'

24 Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt, and he was suspicious of her reproachful tone. The youngest brother being still alive, Antiochus not only appealed to him in words, but promised with oaths that he would make him rich and enviable if he would turn from the ways of his ancestors, and that he would take him for his Friend and entrust him with public affairs. ²⁵Since the young man would not listen to him at all, the king

called the mother to him and urged her to advise the youth to save himself. ²⁶After much urging on his part, she undertook to persuade her son. ²⁷But, leaning close to him, she spoke in their native language as follows, deriding the cruel tyrant: 'My son, have pity on me. I carried you for nine months in my womb, and nursed you for three years, and have reared you and brought you up to this point in your life, and have taken care of you. ²⁸I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being. ²⁹Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers.'

30 While she was still speaking, the young man said, 'What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command, but I obey the command of the law that was given to our ancestors through Moses. ³¹But you, who have contrived all sorts of evil against the Hebrews, will certainly not escape the hands of God. ³²For we are suffering because of our own sins. ³³And if our living Lord is angry for a little while, to rebuke and discipline us, he will again be reconciled with his own servants. ³⁴But you, unholy wretch, you most defiled of all mortals, do not be elated in vain and puffed up by uncertain hopes, when you raise your hand against the children of heaven. ³⁵You have not yet escaped the judgement of the almighty, all-seeing God. ³⁶For our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of ever-flowing life, under God's covenant; but you, by the judgement of God, will receive just punishment for your arrogance. ³⁷I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, ³⁸and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation.'

39 The king fell into a rage, and handled him worse than the others, being exasperated at his scorn. ⁴⁰So he died in his integrity, putting his whole trust in the Lord.

41 Last of all, the mother died, after her sons.

42 Let this be enough, then, about the eating of sacrifices and the extreme tortures.

A Lament

(Ps 17:1-15)

A Prayer of David

Petition

- ¹ Hear a just cause, Yahweh;
attend to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.
- ² From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.

Declaration of innocence

- ³ If you try my heart,
if you visit me by night,
if you test me,
you will find no wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.
- ⁴ As for what others do, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
- ⁵ My steps have held fast to your way;⁴⁶
my feet have not slipped.

Profession of faith

- ⁶ I call upon you,
for you will answer me, my divine patron;

Petition

- incline your ear to me,
hear my words.
- ⁷ Wondrously show your steadfast love,
Save those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. ⁴⁷
- ⁸ Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
- ⁹ from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
- ¹⁰ They close their hearts to pity;

⁴⁶ NRSV: paths

⁴⁷ NRSV: savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

¹¹ They track me down;
now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.

¹² They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

¹³ Rise up, Yahweh,
confront them,
overthrow them!

By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,
¹⁴ from mortals -- by your hand, Yahweh --
from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.

May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them;
may their children have more than enough;
may they leave something over to their little ones.

Vow

¹⁵ As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

Reading 22 [THES 2:16-3:5](#)

Brothers and sisters:

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,
who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement
and good hope through his grace,
encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed
and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us,
so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified,
as it did among you,
and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people,
for not all have faith.

But the Lord is faithful;

he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,
you are doing and will continue to do.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the endurance of Christ.

Gospel [LK 20:27-38](#)

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying,

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us,
*If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child,
his brother must take the wife
and raise up descendants for his brother.*

Now there were seven brothers;
the first married a woman but died childless.

Then the second and the third married her,
and likewise all the seven died childless.

Finally the woman also died.

Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be?

For all seven had been married to her."

Jesus said to them,

"The children of this age marry and remarry;
but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age
and to the resurrection of the dead
neither marry nor are given in marriage.

They can no longer die,
for they are like angels;

and they are the children of God
because they are the ones who will rise.

That the dead will rise

even Moses made known in the passage about the bush,
when he called out 'Lord, '

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;
and he is not God of the dead, but of the living,
for to him all are alive."

Or [LK 20:27, 34-38](#)

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for to him all are alive."

Homily

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 159

Reading I

[Dan 12:1-3](#)

In those last days, I Daniel, heard this word of Yahweh:

"At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book.

Many of those who sleep in the clay of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.

But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

Lament (Ps 16:1-)

¹ Protect me, My Godparent,
I take refuge in you.

² I say to Yahweh, "You are my divine patron;
I have nothing apart from you."

³ Your holy people on the earth are honorable,
They are my only delight.

⁴ Those who choose another divine patron multiply their sorrows;
Their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
Their names are not upon my lips.

⁵ Yahweh is my chosen portion,
Yahweh is my cup, my lot.

⁶ The boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places for me;

My land is fertile.

⁷ I am blessed by Yahweh who is wise;
Yahweh teaches my heart at night.

⁸ I keep Yahweh always before me;
Yahweh is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

⁹ My heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
My body also rests secure.

¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
You do not let your faithful see the Pit.

¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
In your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Reading II

[Heb 10:11-14, 18](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Every priest in the Temple stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But This One, Jesus, offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of his Father; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being chosen. Where there is forgiveness of these chosen people, there is no longer any need to make offerings for sin.

Gospel

[Mk 13:24-32](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

"In those days after that tribulation
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

"And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds'
with great power and glory,
and then he will send out the angels
and gather his chosen people from the four winds,
from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree.
When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves,
you know that summer is near.
In the same way, when you see these things happening,
know that the Son of Man is near, at the gates.
Amen, I say to you,
this generation will not pass away
until all these things have taken place.
Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will not pass away.

"But of that day or hour, no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Lectionary: 162

(1 Sam 5:1-3)

In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said:
*"Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our chief,
it was you who led the Israelites out to battle and brought them back safely.*

Then Yahweh said to you: *'You shall shepherd my people Israel, and shall
be chief of the warriors of Israel.'*

When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made
an agreement with them there before Yahweh, and they anointed him king of
Israel.

(Ps 122:1-9)

A Pilgrimage Hymn dedicated to David

Call to worship

¹ I was glad when they said to me:
Let us go to the House of Yahweh!

Creation story

² Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
³ Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
⁴ To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of Yahweh,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of Yahweh.
⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.

Call to worship

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
May they prosper who love you.
⁷ *Peace be within your walls,*
and security within your towers.
⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say: *Peace be within you.*
⁹ For the sake of the House of Yahweh, our divine patron,
I will seek your good.

(Col 1:12-20)

Brothers and sisters:

Let us give thanks to the Father,
who has made you fit to share
in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.
He delivered us from the power of darkness
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.
For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;
all things were created through him and for him.
He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that in all things he himself might be preeminent.
For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,
and through him to reconcile all things for him,
making peace by the blood of his cross
through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

(Luke 23:35-43)

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said: *He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the messiah sent by our divine patron.*

Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out: *If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.*

Above Jesus' head was an inscription: *This is the King of the Jews.*

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus: *Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.*

The other criminal, however, rebuked him: *Have you no morals, for you are subject to the same sentence? Furthermore, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received fits our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.*

Then the criminal said: *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

Jesus replied: *Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Lectionary 167

Teaching of the Wise Woman (Prov 8:1-36)

...Thus says Wise Woman:

"Yahweh embraced me, the first of her creatures,
the precursor of her great works of long ago;
from of old I was poured forth,
at the first, before the earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no fountains or springs of water;
before the mountains were settled into place,
before the hills, I was brought forth;
while as yet the earth and fields were not made,
nor the first *adamah* creatures in the world.

"When Yahweh established the heavens I was there,

when she marked out the *rekia* dome over the face of the deep;
when she made firm the skies above,
when she fixed fast the foundations of the earth;
when she set for the sea its limit,
so that the waters should not transgress her command;
then was I beside her as her midwife,
and I was her delight day by day,
celebrating before her all the while,
celebrating on the surface of her earth;
and I found delight in the human race...."

Hymn to Yahweh Elohim as Creator (Ps 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9)

Call to worship

1 Yahweh, you are our divine patron;
how powerful is your name over all the earth!

Creation story

You have set your rainbow in the heavens.

2 Babes and infants proclaim your glory to your enemies;
They silence your enemies and your foes.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them;
mortals that you care for them?

5 Yet you have made them little less than divine;
You have crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
You have put all things under their feet,

7 Sheep and oxen, and wild animals;

8 Birds of the air, fish of the sea, all sea creatures.

Call to worship

9 Elohim, you are our divine patron;
How powerful is your name in all the earth!

Teaching of Paul (Rom 5:1-5)

Brothers and sisters:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
to this grace in which we stand,

and we boast in hope of the glory of God.
Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions,
knowing that affliction produces endurance,
and endurance, proven character,
and proven character, hope,
and hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Teaching of Jesus (John 16:12-15)

Jesus said to his disciples:
"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.
But when the Spirit of truth comes,
she will guide you to all truth.
She will not speak on her own,
but she will speak what she hears,
and will declare to you the things that are coming.⁴⁸
She will glorify me,
because she will explain what I have taught you.
I have taught you everything the Father has taught me;
and the Spirit of truth will explain what I have taught you."

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

Lectionary: 168

(Deut 8:1-20)

You must faithfully follow all the instructions which I teaching you today, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land which Yahweh promised under oath to your ancestors. ²Remember the long way that Yahweh, your divine patron, has led you these 40 years in the desert, in order to make you grateful, training you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would follow these instructions.

³Yahweh taught you gratitude by letting you go hungry, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors had ever seen, in

⁴⁸ Like the Wise Woman in Proverbs, the Spirit and the Church are midwives.

order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh.

⁴The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these 40 years. ⁵Know then in your heart that, as parents train their children, so Yahweh, your divine patron, trains you.

⁶Therefore keep the commandments of Yahweh, your divine patron, by walking in the ways of Yahweh and by respecting Yahweh. ⁷For Yahweh, your divine patron, is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and date honey, ⁹a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you may mine copper. ¹⁰You shall eat your fill and bless Yahweh, your divine patron, for the good land that he has given you.

¹¹ Take care that you do not forget Yahweh, your divine patron, by failing to follow the commandments, ordinances, and statutes of Yahweh, which I am teaching you today. ¹²When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then do not exalt yourself, forgetting Yahweh, your divine patron, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrible desert, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. Yahweh made water flow for you from flint rocks, ¹⁶and fed you in the desert with manna which your ancestors had never seen, to teach you gratitude and to train you, and in the end to do you good.

¹⁷Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.' ¹⁸Remember Yahweh, your divine patron, for it is Yahweh who gives you power to gain wealth, in order to confirm the covenant that Yahweh swore to your ancestors, as Yahweh is doing today. ¹⁹If you do forget Yahweh, your divine patron, and serve and worship other divine patrons, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the peoples that Yahweh is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not listen to the voice of Yahweh, your divine patron.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20](#)

R/ (12) **Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

R/ **Alleluia.**

Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem;

praise your God, O Zion.

For he has strengthened the bars of your gates;

he has blessed your children within you.

R/ **Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

R/ **Alleluia.**

He has granted peace in your borders;

with the best of wheat he fills you.

He sends forth his command to the earth;

swiftly runs his word!

R/ **Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

R/ **Alleluia.**

He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,

his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.

He has not done thus for any other nation;

his ordinances he has not made known to them. Alleluia.

R/ **Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

R/ **Alleluia.**

Reading 21 [COR 10:16-17](#)

Brothers and sisters:

The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

The bread that we break,
is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

Because the loaf of bread is one,
we, though many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.

Sequence - Lauda Sion

Laud, O Zion, your salvation,
Laud with hymns of exultation,
Christ, your king and shepherd true:

Bring him all the praise you know,
He is more than you bestow.
Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for glad thanksgiving
Is the quick'ning and the living
Bread today before you set:

From his hands of old partaken,
As we know, by faith unshaken,
Where the Twelve at supper met.

Full and clear ring out your chanting,
Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting,
From your heart let praises burst:

For today the feast is holden,
When the institution olden
Of that supper was rehearsed.

Here the new law's new oblation,
By the new king's revelation,
Ends the form of ancient rite:

Now the new the old effaces,
Truth away the shadow chases,
Light dispels the gloom of night.

What he did at supper seated,
Christ ordained to be repeated,
His memorial ne'er to cease:

And his rule for guidance taking,
Bread and wine we hallow, making
Thus our sacrifice of peace.

This the truth each Christian learns,
Bread into his flesh he turns,
To his precious blood the wine:

Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives,
But a dauntless faith believes,
Resting on a pow'r divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden
Priceless things to sense forbidden;
Signs, not things are all we see:

Blood is poured and flesh is broken,
Yet in either wondrous token
Christ entire we know to be.

Whoso of this food partakes,
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;
Christ is whole to all that taste:

Thousands are, as one, receivers,
One, as thousands of believers,
Eats of him who cannot waste.

Bad and good the feast are sharing,
Of what divers dooms preparing,
Endless death, or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation,
See how like participation
Is with unlike issues rife.

When the sacrament is broken,
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,
That each sever'd outward token
doth the very whole contain.

Nought the precious gift divides,
Breaking but the sign betides
Jesus still the same abides,
still unbroken does remain.

The shorter form of the sequence begins here.

Lo! the angel's food is given
To the pilgrim who has striven;
see the children's bread from heaven,
which on dogs may not be spent.

Truth the ancient types fulfilling,
Isaac bound, a victim willing,
Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,
manna to the fathers sent.

Very bread, good shepherd, tend us,
Jesu, of your love befriend us,
You refresh us, you defend us,

Your eternal goodness send us
In the land of life to see.

You who all things can and know,
Who on earth such food bestow,
Grant us with your saints, though lowest,
Where the heav'nly feast you show,
Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia.

Gospel [JN 6:51-58](#)

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds:
"I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
whoever eats this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give
is my flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,
"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"
Jesus said to them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you do not have life within you.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.
For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him.
Just as the living Father sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me
will have life because of me.
This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Homily

Instructions on Gratitude (8:1-20) teach that the Hebrews' land and people are not wages earned by their fathers, but blessings bestowed by YHWH.ⁱ The Hebrews must live like lap children in the arms of their divine patron, mindful of how powerless they were to feed and clothe themselves in the desert. Each instruction describes behavior which will prompt the Hebrews to remember what YHWH has done and continues to do for them. The unforgiveable sin is to forget -- to become arrogant and self-reliant -- and consequently forfeit their land and people to others. The instructions describe a lifestyle of gratitude which does not plead for blessings wanted, but acknowledges blessings received.

Theologies of a God who tests humans are common enough today, and have produced long-standing interpretations of YHWH testing the Hebrews (33:8) or the Hebrews testing the patience of YHWH (6:16).ⁱⁱ This testing theology has a long association with the oases at Massah-Meribah and the *Inauguration of Abraham on Mt. Moriah* (Gen 21:1-14+22:1-19).

Many consider the inauguration a lesson in contemporary human relationships with God and with one another, especially when those relationships are difficult and painful. They portray Abraham as both protectively carrying the fire and the knife so that Isaac will not get hurt and yet ready to sacrifice even Isaac to please his divine patron. They portray Isaac as a completely trusting victim manipulated by both parental love and parental violence. Sarah is a wife and mother resigned to the loss of both her husband and her son to their divine patron. As influential as these interpretations continue to be, they do not reflect the world of the Bible.

Abraham conducts an ordeal not to resolve a faith crisis, but to resolve the conflict as to whether Ishmael or Isaac should be his heir. The inauguration does not celebrate Abraham and Sarah for blind obedience to a divine patron who toys with their feelings by giving them a child and then by pretending to take the child away. It celebrates them as ancestors who struggled for land and children of their own in a world where slavery seemed inevitable for them. YHWH is not their enemy, but their covenant partner.

Similarly, YHWH here is not *testing* Abraham and Sarah to see if they will obey. YHWH is training or coaching them so that they can meet and survive the challenges they will face in the land. The desert trained the Hebrews to rely on YHWH, not on themselves.ⁱⁱⁱ

Supporting arguments for YHWH's generosity are drawn from curious traditions that, during their years in the desert, the Hebrews' clothes and sandals did not wear out, and neither their hair, nor their fingernails grew. Early Jewish, Christian and Muslim commentators crafted ingenious interpretations for these traditions.^{iv} Neither experience results from magic, but from motherhood. Mothers made and repaired clothes and sandals. They

also groomed hair and trimmed fingernails. These are intimate acts of parenting. Like a good mother YHWH cares for even these small details.

Mothers also spent many hours each day grinding grain and baking bread to feed their households.^v Like a good mother YHWH fed the Hebrews with *manna* bread in the desert. *Manna* is a desert praline created either when beetles bore through the bark of tamarisk trees allowing the sap to seep out and harden, or when secretions of sap waste from grazing beetles themselves dry.^{vi} Like a good mother, YHWH teaches the Hebrews to eat only what they need, and not to hoard. The instructions taught the Hebrews to trust that the YHWH, who made the bread today, will make fresh bread tomorrow.

A lifestyle of gratitude is a challenge for the Hebrews who are consistently ungrateful. The characterization in the instructions is not vindictive, but educational. The fathers considered their land conquered by Joshua to be a human accomplishment. The instructions remind them that their ancestors were blessed with land not because of their sacrifice, but in spite of their unfaithfulness. Were it not for the advocacy of Moses and the mercy of YHWH there would be no Judah. Unless the households embrace a lifestyle reflecting their blessings as divine gifts, not human accomplishments, they will be overwhelmed by their enemies.

Friday of the First Week of Advent

Lectionary: 179

An Apocalypse

(Isa 29:17-24)

Thus says YHWH, our divine patron:

In a very little while the Lebanon Mountains shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard will be as thick as a forest! On that [the] day [of YHWH] the deaf shall hear the words read to them from a scroll. Out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly will ever find joy in YHWH, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the tyrant will be no more and the arrogant will have gone; All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, those whose mere word condemns a man, who ensnare his defender in the assembly at the gate, and leave the just man with an empty claim.

Therefore thus says YHWH, the divine patron of the household of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham:

Now the household of Jacob shall have nothing to be ashamed of, nor shall its face grow pale. When its people see the work of my hands in its midst,

they shall keep my name holy; they shall reverence the Holy One of Jacob, and be in awe of the divine patron of Israel. Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, and those who find fault shall receive instruction.

A Lament

(Ps 27:1-14)

Dedicated to David

Profession of Faith

¹ Yahweh is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
Yahweh is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

Petition

⁴ One thing I asked of Yahweh,
that will I seek after:
to live in the House of Yahweh
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of Yahweh,
and to inquire in the Temple.

Profession of faith

⁵ For Yahweh will hide me in the sanctuary
in the day of trouble;
Yahweh will conceal me under the cover of the Tabernacle;
My divine patron will set me high on a rock.

Vow

⁶ Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in the Tabernacle
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to Yahweh.

Petition

- ⁷ Hear, O Yahweh, when I cry aloud,
 be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸ ‘Come,’ my heart says, ‘seek the face of your divine patron!’
 Your face, Yahweh, do I seek.
⁹ Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
 you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
 O divine patron of my salvation!
¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me,
 Yahweh will adopt me.

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Yahweh,
 and lead me on a level path
 because of my enemies.
¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
 for false witnesses have risen against me,
 and they are breathing out violence.

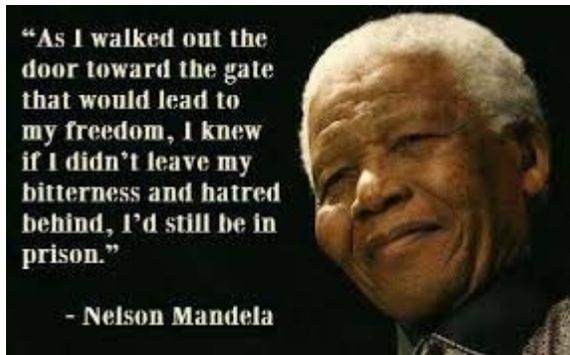
- ¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh
 in the land of the living.
¹⁴ Wait for Yahweh;
 be strong, and let your heart take courage;
 wait for Yahweh!

A Miracle Story

(Matt 9:27-31)

As Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out,
“Son of David, have pity on us!”
When he entered the house,
the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them,
“Do you believe that I can do this?”
“Yes, Lord,” they said to him.
Then he touched their eyes and said,
“Let it be done for you according to your faith.”
And their eyes were opened.
Jesus warned them sternly,
“See that no one knows about this.”
But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Homily



South Africa's first black president and anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela died at the age of 95 on December 5, 2013. Born the son of a tribal chief on July 18, 1918, in the village of Mvezo in Transkei in the Eastern Cape province, he was given the name *Rolihlaha* Mandela. Rolihlaha roughly translates from the Xhosa language as *troublemaker*. For the white South

African government, he would soon live up to his name.

Mandela led South Africa's transition from white-minority rule in the 1990s. He had been receiving intensive medical care at home for a lung infection after spending three months in hospital. Announcing the news, President Jacob Zuma said: *Our nation has lost its greatest son. Although we knew that this day would come, nothing can diminish our sense of a profound and enduring loss.*

- 1943** Joined African National Congress
- 1956** Charged with high treason, but charges dropped after a four-year trial
- 1962** Arrested, convicted of incitement and sentenced to five years in prison
- 1964** Charged with sabotage, sentenced to life
- 1990** Freed from prison
- 1993** Wins Nobel Peace Prize
- 1994-1999** First black president of South Africa
- 2001** Diagnosed with prostate cancer
- 2005** His son dies of an HIV/Aids-related illness

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate was one of the world's most revered statesmen for preaching reconciliation despite being imprisoned for 27 years. He made his last public appearance in 2010 at the football World Cup in South Africa.

His fellow campaigner against apartheid, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said Mandela was: *...not only an amazing gift to humankind, he made South Africans and Africans feel good about being who we are. He made us walk tall. God be praised.*

Among his more famous quotations:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

5/18/2016 11:12 AM

Mandela modeled hope. Nothing can be accomplished with resignation, especially resignation to the victory of evil over good. A constant theme of apocalypse is that suffering will end, and that suffering will end soon, and that when the suffering ends good, not evil, will prevail. The apocalypse from Isaiah which opens today's liturgy of the word delivers that message with rich images of trees blooming, the sick recovering, the oppressors leaving, and justice returning to the assemblies. We need to share that hope in our time.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

Lectionary: 182

<p>'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. I promise to live this day with a song in my heart, not a pain in my stomach. I will keep my hands open in appreciation, not locked in fists. I place my church and my country in your hands. Renew them. Let Francis be John.</p>

(Isa 40:1-11)

Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated;
Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

A voice says, "Cry out!"
I answer, "What shall I cry out?"
"All flesh is grass,
and all their glory like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower wilts,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it.
So then, the people is the grass.
Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
the word of our God stands forever."

Go up onto a high mountain,
Zion, herald of glad tidings;
Cry out at the top of your voice,
Jerusalem, herald of good news!
Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah:
Here is your God!
Here comes with power
the Lord GOD,
who rules by his strong arm;
Here is his reward with him,
his recompense before him.
Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;
in his arms he gathers the lambs,
Carrying them in his bosom,
and leading the ewes with care.

A Hymn (Ps 96:1-13)

Call to worship

- ¹ O sing to Yahweh a new song;
sing to Yahweh, all the earth.
- ² Sing to Yahweh, bless the name of our divine patron;
tell how Yahweh delivered us⁴⁹ every day.⁵⁰
- ³ Declare the glory of Yahweh among the peoples,
Proclaim the marvelous works of Yahweh among all the peoples.

Creation story

- ⁴ For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised;
Yahweh is to be revered above the divine patrons of other peoples.⁵¹
- ⁵ For the divine patrons of other peoples are powerless,⁵²
but Yahweh made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honor and majesty are before our divine patron;
strength and beauty are in the sanctuary of Yahweh.

Call to worship

- ⁷ Ascribe to Yahweh, O households⁵³ of the peoples,
ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due the name of Yahweh;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship Yahweh in holy splendor;
tremble? before your divine patron, all the earth.
- ¹⁰ Say among the people: *Yahweh is king!*⁵⁴
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
Yahweh will judge the peoples with equity.'
- ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
- ¹² let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy ¹³ before Yahweh;

Creation story

⁴⁹ NRSV: of his salvation

⁵⁰ NRSV: from day to day

⁵¹ NRSV: gods

⁵² NRSV: idols

⁵³ NRSV: families

⁵⁴ Arabic: *Allah Akbar!*

for Yahweh is coming,
for Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples truthfully.

Gospel[MT 18:12-14](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“What is your opinion?”

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray,
will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills

and go in search of the stray?

And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it
than over the ninety-nine that did not stray.

In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father
that one of these little ones be lost.”

Homily

Where are the Paul Vitellos, Naomi Lamberts, Phillip Berrigans, Elizabeth McAlisters today? Who reminds us of the work and the new world which Jesus preached and which Jesus inaugurated.

Daniel Berrigan is still faithful, still writing. Peter and Betty are still living in solidarity with the poor in Ciudad Juarez.

Will this new Francis become a new John? He is a curious man who lives in an hotel room and quotes Bernanos, a novelist, and Ratzinger, a theologian, together in his *Joy of the Gospel* (2013).

83. And so the biggest threat of all gradually takes shape: “the gray pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”.⁵⁵ A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum. Disillusioned with reality, with the Church and with themselves, they experience a constant temptation to cling to a faint melancholy, lacking in hope, which seizes the heart like “the most precious of the devil’s potions”.⁵⁶ Called to radiate light and communicate life, in the end they are caught up in things that generate only darkness and inner weariness, and slowly consume all zeal for the apostolate. For all this, I repeat: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization!

No to a sterile pessimism

84. The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything (cf. *John* 16:22). The evils of our world – and those of the Church – must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervor. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that “where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more” (*Rom* 5:20). Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds. Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, we are distressed by the troubles of our age and far from naive optimism; yet the fact that we are more realistic must not mean that we are any less trusting in the Spirit or less generous. In this sense, we can once again listen to the words of Blessed John XXIII on the memorable day of 11 October 1962: “At times we have to listen, much to our regret, to the voices of people who, though burning with zeal, lack a sense of discretion and measure. In this modern age they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin ... We feel that we must disagree with those prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the

⁵⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Current Situation of Faith and Theology*. Conference given at the Meeting of Presidents of Latin American Episcopal Commissions for the Doctrine of the Faith, Guadalajara, Mexico, 1996. Translation in *L’Osservatore Romano*, English Language Edition, 6 November 1996. Cf. Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, *Aparecida Document*, 29 June 2007, 12.

⁵⁶ G. Bernanos, *Journal d’un curé de campagne*, Paris, 1974, 135.

world were at hand. In our times, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church".⁵⁷

Paul Mayer, 82 Ex-Priest and Peace Activist, Dies

Paul Vitello, NYTimes December 8, 2013



Paul Mayer, a Jewish-born former Roman Catholic priest who was at the forefront of peace and social justice campaigns for five decades, for a time working closely with the radical pacifist priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan, died on Nov. 22 at his home in East Orange, N.J. He was 82.

His son, Peter, said the cause was brain cancer.

Mr. Mayer converted to Catholicism as a teenager and gave up the priesthood in 1968 to marry a former nun. But he said he still considered himself a priest — just as he still considered himself a Jew.

“Jesus never stopped being a Jew, and frankly I don’t think I could stop being a Jew even if I wanted to,” he told the psychotherapist Alan Levin in an interview for a forthcoming book, “Crossing the Boundary.”

He wore the priest’s collar for the rest of his life. He also became a devotee of Navajo religious tradition and the philosophy and practice of yoga.

In the 1960s and ’70s, Mr. Mayer helped the Berrigan brothers plan some of their highly publicized antiwar sorties, including [the 1968 raid on a draft board office in Catonsville, Md.](#), to remove and burn draft files in the parking lot outside. He also coordinated underground support for the Berrigans when they went into hiding, hunted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as among its 10 most wanted fugitives.

⁵⁷ Address for the Opening of the Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962): 4, 2-4: AAS 54 (1962), 789.

In 1971, Mr. Mayer was named an unindicted co-conspirator in [an alleged plot to kidnap Henry A. Kissinger](#), the national security adviser to President Richard M. Nixon, supposedly to ransom him in exchange for an end to the war in Vietnam. The defendants contended that the F.B.I. had fabricated the plot with the help of a paid informer. Mr. Mayer headed the defense committee for those charged in the case, known as the Harrisburg Seven. While awaiting trial, Mr. Mayer officiated at the wedding of two of the defendants, the Rev. Philip Berrigan and an activist nun, Elizabeth McAlister, at the federal detention center in Danbury, Conn.

The trial, in 1972, ended in a hung jury, after which the government dropped all but minor charges against Father Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth.

Mr. Mayer was a Benedictine monk for 18 years at St. Paul's Abbey in Newton, N.J., before being ordained a Catholic priest in the mid-1960s. In 1966 he met Naomi Lambert, a nun at the time with the order of [Medical Mission Sisters](#), while traveling in Mexico. They married two years later. By the time the Vatican relieved him of his priestly duties in 1971, they had had the first of their two children.

The couple established a commune of sorts, called Project Share, in East Orange, where they and a group of families lived together and supported one another in two adjacent six-unit apartment buildings.

His marriage ended in divorce in the 1970s. Besides his son, he is survived by a daughter, Maria.

Mr. Mayer continued a life of extravagant disregard for conventions. In 1972 he toured villages in North Vietnam that the Communist authorities said had been carpet-bombed by American planes. He visited Cuba many times to deliver medical supplies, in defiance of the United States trade embargo.

In 1973, while heading an American delegation to the World Peace Congress in Moscow, he caused a stir by criticizing the meeting's sponsor, the Soviet Union, saying it was waging "a campaign to silence" any of its citizens "who seek to express their rights." In response, his own delegation of activists stripped him of his leadership role.

Paul Michael Mayer was born in Frankfurt on Feb. 24, 1931, to Ernst and Berthel Mayer. After Paul and a younger brother, Franz, were expelled from school as Jews under Nazi decrees, their father, a concert pianist who worked as a salesman, and their mother, a nurse, immigrated to the United States with their children in 1938.

Mr. Mayer lived in an orphanage while his parents and younger brother stayed with relatives for about a year, until they could afford to rent an apartment in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan.

His decision to convert to Catholicism at 16, he said, reflected a "driving adolescent drive to belong." The writings of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk

and Christian mystic, cemented his commitment, he said. After being ordained, he was a parish priest in Panama.

He took up the cause of social justice when he joined the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in 1965. Almost 50 years later the passion had not subsided.

In an unpublished memoir he completed shortly before his death, he recalled his arrest in December 2011 during the Occupy Wall Street protest: "I found myself climbing a 15-foot linked iron fence to cast my lot with this visionary youth movement that was sweeping the planet."

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

Lectionary 183

(Isa 40:1-11)

Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your divine patron.⁵⁸
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her suffering⁵⁹service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated;
Indeed, she has received from the hand of YHWH
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
In the desert prepare the way of YHWH!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of YHWH shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together;
for the mouth of YHWH has spoken.

A voice says, "Cry out!"
I answer, "What shall I cry out?"
"All flesh is grass,
and all their glory like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower wilts,
when the breath of YHWH blows upon it.

⁵⁸ NRSV: God

⁵⁹ NRSV: service

So then, the people is the grass.
Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
the word of our God stands forever."

Go up onto a high mountain,
Zion, herald of glad tidings;
Cry out at the top of your voice,
Jerusalem, herald of good news!

Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah:
Here is your divine patron!
Here comes with power
YHWH, your divine patron,
who rules with a strong arm;
Here is the reward,
YHWH's recompense.
Like a shepherd YHWH feeds the flock;
in his arms YHWH gathers the lambs,
Carrying them in his bosom,
and leading the ewes with care.

A Hymn

(Ps 96:1-13)

Call to worship

- ¹ O sing to YHWH a new hymn;
sing to YHWH, all the earth.
- ² Sing to YHWH, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
- ⁴ For great is YHWH, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but YHWH made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- ⁷ Ascribe to YHWH, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to YHWH glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to YHWH the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship YHWH in holy splendor;
tremble before him, all the earth.
- ¹⁰ Say among the peoples,⁶⁰ “YHWH is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
YHWH⁶¹ will judge the peoples with equity.”

⁶⁰ NRSV: nations.

The word *nations* is commonly used in English translations for peoples who are not Hebrews. Excavations now suggest that Hebrews and their neighbors were more culturally similar than distinct. The nations were peoples with surplus urban cultures whose divine patron was not YHWH. The Hebrews were a people with a subsistence village culture whose divine patron was YHWH.

Using *peoples* or *outsiders* rather than *nations* (Deut 7:1) avoids the anachronism of projecting nineteenth-century concepts back onto the world of the Bible. Nations or nation-states are technical terms applied by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) to societies that appeared in Western Europe during the nineteenth century, not in Syria-Palestine during the Iron Age. **Further Reading (Nations):** Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808); White, “Globalization and the Mythology of the Nation State.”

⁶¹ NRSV: He

Using YHWH and divine patron rather than Lord and God, he or him (Deut 23:17 NRSV) is more inclusive. LORD is a male translation for YHWH, and God is a predominantly Christian

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
¹² let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
¹³ before YHWH...

Creation story

...for YHWH is coming,
for YHWH is coming to judge the earth.
YHWH will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with truth.

and monotheistic translation for El, Elyon, and Elohim. YHWH and divine patron are gender neutral.

Most languages, like biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, use the gender of verbs, nouns, pronouns, articles and adjectives, not to identify physical sexuality, but to help audiences recognize clusters of meaning. English uses the position of words in sentences when writing, and sound-emphasis when speaking to create these clusters, not gender, so there is little grammatical support for the long-standing assumption that the Hebrews characterized YHWH as male and unmarried. Hebrew pilgrims visiting Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom oases inscribed their prayers on pottery fragments to YHWH as a divine couple. **Further Reading (Grammatical Gender):** Lobner, Understanding Semantics; Corbett, "Gender and Gender Systems"; Ibrahim, Grammatical Gender.

Parable of a Good Shepherd

(Matt 18:12-14)

Jesus taught his followers⁶²:

"What is your opinion?"

If a man has 100 sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the 99 in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the 99 that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.

⁶² NRSV: disciples

Homily

Scottsdale rabbi hosts family of Syrian refugees

[Justin Sayers, The Arizona Republic](http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/scottsdale/2015/12/07/yanklowitz-said-idea-stemmed-previous-effort-mid-november-which-he-helped-organize-interfaith-protest-arizona-state-capitol-along-muslim-and-christian-leaders-group-protested-gov-douceys-public-comments-calling-halting-flow-refugees-into-arizona-prote/76589032/)

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/scottsdale/2015/12/07/yanklowitz-said-idea-stemmed-previous-effort-mid-november-which-he-helped-organize-interfaith-protest-arizona-state-capitol-along-muslim-and-christian-leaders-group-protested-gov-douceys-public-comments-calling-halting-flow-refugees-into-arizona-prote/76589032/>

A family of Syrian refugees who recently moved to Phoenix got an unexpected welcome gift from a local Rabbi and his family — a Thanksgiving dinner.

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz and his wife, Shoshana, opened their Scottsdale home on Thanksgiving Day to the Al Wazer family, who had arrived in Phoenix less than a week before. The family fled Syria and went to Jordan four years ago, and had waited more than a year to get to the U.S. legally.

"They were happy to meet somebody in America that welcomed them and made them feel like they're home," said Emad Al Wazer through a translator. "They appreciated it so much and it was so nice of them to invite them over for their first Thanksgiving in America."

Yanklowitz said the idea stemmed from a previous effort in mid-November, in which [he helped organize an interfaith protest](#) at the Arizona State Capitol. Along with Muslim and Christian leaders, the group protested Gov. Doug Ducey's public comments calling for halting the flow of refugees into Arizona.

The protest generated public response, with people saying Yanklowitz wasn't willing to have refugees in his home, he said. So in the week leading up to Thanksgiving, he talked to Safai Arkawi, head of the Syrian American Council in Phoenix, to arrange the dinner.

"I have felt that there's a lot of fear and anger toward the Syrian refugee population today," said Yanklowitz, who is the president and dean of Valley Beit Midrash in Phoenix. "I felt that I not only want to be a part of welcoming this vulnerable population, but also making clear to others that we should not only open our borders but open our homes."

On Thanksgiving Day, Al Wazer, his wife, Noor Al Mousa, and their four kids, the oldest of whom is 7, traveled to Scottsdale from Glendale. Arkawi, who came to the U.S. from Syria 40 years ago, and his daughter, Lena, accompanied the family and served as translators.

For the next few hours, the group ate dinner, lit "candles of hope," and shared stories of their past, Yanklowitz said. While the parents were talking, the Al Wazer children played along with the Yanklowitzs' 1- and 2-year-old kids.

"That was one of the highlights of my experience," Yanklowitz said. "Just seeing kids who don't even see these labels just interact. I think that's what makes America beautiful.

Shoshana prepared the dinner, which was mostly traditional — stuffing, cranberry sauce and pumpkin surrounded a Tofurky (the family is vegan). Yanklowitz said the dinner was symbolic as a welcome to American culture.

"The essence of Thanksgiving for me is the time to be grateful to be American, and a time to give back," he said, adding that Syrian refugees seem like "one of the most vulnerable populations in America today."

Yanklowitz said the refugee issue is close to his heart because Jews can relate to the Syrian refugees of today. Jewish history is filled with life in exile, which only subsided after the creation of Israel in 1948.

He said he won't let Islamic extremists, whom he called a "few bad apples," spoil the opportunity for families who need help.

"It says 36 times in the Torah that we should welcome the stranger — that's not a small number," said Yanklowitz, adding that three of his wife's four grandparents were refugees after the Holocaust. "I think we have a Jewish mandate based not only on the text, but also upon our history to be at the forefront of welcoming refugees — regardless of their country or nationality or ideology."

Yanklowitz said he posted pictures of the dinner on social media with a message of support for Syrian refugees, which generated many responses. He described the feedback as "polarizing" and decided not to respond to any comments that inspired hate.

Many people have expressed security concerns about a refugee settlement in the United States. During the Paris terrorist attacks, a Syrian

passport was found with the body of one of the terrorists, although French authorities said at the time that it appeared to be fake.

Ducey joined at least 24 other governors in asking the federal government to stop relocating refugees to their states due to fears that terrorists may be posing as people fleeing the violence in Syria.

In Arizona, 112 refugees from Syria and 3,616 people in total have been admitted as of Sept. 25, the sixth-most of all states in the country, according to the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program.

Emad Al Wazer, using Arkawi as a translator, said the family is grateful to come to the United States, but also to Yanklowitz for opening up his home. They were assigned to Phoenix by International Rescue Council.

"The dinner was symbolic but it made them feel so warm from this family to welcome them over. ... They appreciated it so much and feel like Shmuly is a brother to them," Arkawi said on behalf of Al Wazer.

Al Wazer said that in Syria, they dealt with daily bombings and shootings by pro-Assad militants. One of his daughters was shot on her way to the pharmacy by a sniper, which damaged her kidney, he said.

"They feel safe," Arkawi said. "They are just so happy to be here."

Al Wazeer said it's too early to gauge their adjustment to American culture. The family speaks little English and doesn't have a car. He's also still searching for a job.

But they're optimistic that things are going to work out.

"They are very, very happy to be here," Arkawi said.

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

Lectinary: 184

Inauguration of the Household of Jacob

(Isa 41:13-20)

I am YHWH, your divine patron, who grasp your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Do not be afraid⁶³, I will help you.”

Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O maggot Israel;⁶⁴ I will help you, says YHWH; your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

I will make of you a threshing sledge, sharp, new, and double-edged, To thresh the mountains and crush them, to make the hills like chaff. When you winnow them, the wind shall carry them off and the storm shall scatter them.

But you shall rejoice in YHWH, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The afflicted and the needy seek water in vain, their tongues are parched with thirst. I, YHWH, will answer them; I, the divine patron of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open up rivers on the bare heights, and springs⁶⁵ in the broad valleys; I will turn the desert into marshland, I will plant in the desert the cedar, acacia, myrtle, and olive; I will set in the desert⁶⁶ the cypress, together with the plane tree and the pine, that all may see and know, observe and understand, that the hand of YHWH has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

⁶³ NRSV: Fear not. A common admonition extended by YHWH to candidates during their inauguration as prophets.

⁶⁴

⁶⁵ NRSV: fountains

⁶⁶ NRSV: wasteland

A Hymn

(Ps 145:1-21)

A Hymn Dedicated to David.

Call to worship

- ¹ Extol my divine patron and ruler,
 Bless the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ² Bless YHWH every day,
 Praise the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is YHWH, therefore, praise YHWH greatly;
 The greatness of YHWH is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall laud your works to another,
 and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
 and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
 and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
 and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Creation Story

- ⁸ YHWH is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ YHWH is good to all,
 the compassion of YHWH is over all creation.

Call to worship

- ¹⁰ All your works -- give thanks to YHWH,
 all your faithful -- bless you.
- ¹¹ Speak of the glory of your kingdom,
 tell of your power,
- ¹² Make known to all people your mighty deeds,
 the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Creation Story

YHWH is faithful in every word,
and gracious in every deed.⁶⁷
14 YHWH upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
17 YHWH is just in every way,
and kind in all his doings.
18 YHWH is near to all who call out,
to all who call on their divine patron in truth.
19 YHWH fulfills the desire of all who live morally;⁶⁸
YHWH also hears their cry, and saves them.
20 YHWH watches over all who fulfill their covenant responsibilities,⁶⁹
but all the wicked YHWH will destroy.

Call to worship

21 My mouth --- praise YHWH,
All flesh -- bless YHWH's holy name for ever and ever.

⁶⁷ NRSV: *...in all his wordsin all his deeds*

⁶⁸ NRSV: *fear him*

⁶⁹ NRSV: *love him*

Teachings on Persecution

(Matt 11:11-15)

Jesus taught the crowds:

Without fear of contradiction,⁷⁰ I say to you...

...among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least citizen in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven have been persecuted like John, and the violent are taking them by force as every prophet and the law giver prophesied up to the time of John.⁷¹

If you are willing to accept persecution, like John, you will return with Elijah, the one who is to come.⁷²

...whoever has ears ought to head the meaning of this teaching.

⁷⁰ NRSV: Amen

⁷¹

⁷²

Homily

The first time I climbed *Jebel Musa* – the *Mountain of Moses* – in the Sinai Desert, I arrived before sunrise.

Second Friday of Advent

Lectionary: 185

Covenant Blessing

(Isa 48:17-18)

Thus says YHWH, the Holy One of Israel who delivered you from your enemies:

I, YHWH, your divine patron, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go. If you would listen to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river, and your vindication like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would be like the sand, and those born of your stock like its grains. Their name never cut off or erased from my presence.

Teachings on Prayer

(Ps 1:1-6)

adage

Wise are those who do not walk with the wicked . . .
Wise are those who do not stand with sinners . . .
Wise are those who do not sit with fools . . .

Wise are those who obey the law of YHWH.
Wise are those who meditate on it day and night.

proverb

The wise are like trees planted by water.
They yield fruit every season.

Their leaves do not wither.
They thrive year after year.

Not so fools,
Not so.

Fools are like chaff.
They are blown away by the wind.

proverb

Fools never stand in the gates of the city,
Sinners never sit with the village assembly.

YHWH protects the way of the wise.
Neither fools nor sinners shall stand in their way.

YHWH protects the way of the wise,
YHWH does not protect the way of fools.

Teachings on Discernment

(Matt 11:16-19)

Jesus taught the crowds:

To what shall I compare you? You are like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another: We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a lament but you did not mourn.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and you said: He is possessed by a demon.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said: Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Like the Wise Woman of Proverbs I am vindicated by my works.

Homily

The *Creation of Zion* (Isa 40:1–55:13) reflects phase two of the Isaiah Movement (587–537 B.C.E.). The time in this creation story is the days after 586 B.C.E. when Babylon conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem. Assyria, which had ruled the world of the Bible from 744 to 605 B.C.E., appeared omnipotent. Nonetheless, Babylon conquered Assyria and became as fearsome to Judah alone as Assyria had been to Israel and Judah together. In its day, Assyria had invaded and plundered Judah. Babylon conquered Judah and Jerusalem. The *Creation of Zion* developed during the exile that followed.

The destruction of Jerusalem inaugurated a new way of life for the people of Judah. Households in Judah, who were covenant partners with the household of David in Jerusalem, were deported to Tel Aviv, the ruins of an ancient settlement outside the city of Babylon. The founders of the largest city in the state of Israel today chose the same name for their city. *Tel Aviv* means *the ruin that blooms like spring*. Tel Aviv was a phoenix. Babylon then redistributed the land of Judah to households that did not have covenants with the household of David.

The households that were deported developed the *Creation of Zion* to direct the formation of their new life in a new land. Babylon left no monarch, no capital city, and no temple in Judah. The old world had come to an end. The *Creation of Zion* developed to interpret that chaos, and offer the people of Judah advice on how to survive.

The Creation of Zion has also been called *Second Isaiah*. These traditions contain some of the most powerful laments in the entire Bible (Isa 42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). Here mourners powerfully protest the loss of the land and the people of Judah to Babylon. To deal with this intense grief, they propose a new understanding of YHWH. In the creation stories in Genesis and Exodus, YHWH frees the Hebrews from suffering. Here, in the *Creation of Zion*, YHWH joins the Hebrews in their suffering. In Isaiah YHWH is not only a divine warrior, but also joins the people of Judah as an exile.

Like most stories, the *Creation of Zion* has a crisis (Isa 40:1–31), a climax (Isa 41:1–48:22), and a denouement (Isa 49:1–55:13). Today's reading is from the climax.

In the crisis, YHWH commissions the people of Judah as a *Suffering Servant* – a slave who has been tortured -- to announce the destruction of the old world of Babylon (Isa 40:1–11). This old world is being reduced to chaos, so that a new world can be created. The people of Judah respond to their inauguration with a hymn celebrating YHWH as creator and healer (Isa 40:12–

31). The climax describes YHWH decommissioning the old world where Israel and Judah are occupied by Babylon (Isa 41:1–48:22). Then, the denouement promulgates a covenant defining the conditions of life in the new world of Zion (Isa 49:1–55:13). The people also respond to the promulgation of the covenant with a hymn.

The climax episode in the *Creation of Zion* (Isa 41:1–48:22) is a cosmogony which follows some of the same patterns found in the cosmogony in the *Death of the Firstborn of Egypt* (Exod 7:14–13:10). In both stories, the world that YHWH creates is contrasted with the worlds that Amon Ra and Marduk create. In both stories, YHWH creates a world that is full of life, whereas the worlds created by Amon Ra for Egypt and Marduk for Babylon are plague-ridden. YHWH is portrayed as a creator who is life-giving. Marduk creates statues that are speechless. YHWH is the divine patron of both the powerful like Cyrus, and the powerless like the people of Judah who are slaves or a *Suffering Servant*. Yet even YHWH's suffering servant possesses more vitality than Marduk's statues of wood and metal. Nothing great or small occurs that YHWH does not authorize and direct.

Today's *Teachings on Discernment*, like Pope Francis, invites

*...all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* (9 May 1975), 22: AAS 67 (1975), 297.5). The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another seventy times seven (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!*⁷³

⁷³ Bergoglio, Jorge M. (Pope Francis), *Evangelii Gaudium: on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (Vatican: Vatican Press, November 24, 2013), #3.

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Second Friday of Advent

Lectionary: 185

Covenant Blessing

(Isa 48:17-18)

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adage

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Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

Lectionary: 193

A Blessing of Jacob for Rueben, Simeon, Levi, Judah

(Gen 49:2-10)

- ² Assemble and hear, O heirs of Jacob;
listen to Israel the father of your household.
- ³ ‘Reuben, you were my heir,⁷⁵
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,
excelling in rank and excelling in power.
- ⁴ Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel
because you went up on to your father’s bed;
then you defiled it—you went up on to my couch!
- ⁵ ‘Simeon and Levi are covenant partners;⁷⁶
weapons of violence are their swords.
- ⁶ May I never come into their council;
may I not be joined to their company—
for in their anger they killed men,
and at their whim they hamstringed oxen.
- ⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob,
and scatter them in Israel.
- ⁸ ‘Judah, your covenant partners shall praise you;

⁷⁵ NRSV: firstborn

⁷⁶ NRSV: brothers

your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's heirs shall bow down before you.
⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my heir, you have gone up.
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?
¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and the obedience of the peoples is his.

A Lament

(Ps 72:1-17)

Dedicated to Solomon

Petition

- ¹ Give our ruler your justice, O our divine patron,
and your righteousness to our ruler's heir.⁷⁷
- ² May our ruler judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May our ruler defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May our ruler live as long as the sun shines,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May our ruler be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In the days of our ruler may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May our ruler have dominion from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May the enemies of our ruler prostrate;
May they lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the rulers of Tarshish and its islands pay tribute to our ruler;⁷⁸

⁷⁷ NRSV: heir

⁷⁸ Spain

May the rulers of Sheba and Saba bring gifts.⁷⁹
11 May all rulers of other lands prostrate before our ruler,
May all peoples serve our ruler.

Profession of faith

12 For YHWH delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
13 YHWH has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
14 From oppression and violence YHWH redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in the sight of YHWH.

Petition

15 Long may our monarch live!
May gold of Sheba be given to our ruler.
May prayer be made for our monarch continually,
and blessings invoked for our ruler all day long.
16 May there be abundance of grain in the land;⁸⁰
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.
17 May our monarch's name endure forever,
the fame of our ruler continue as long as the sun.
May all peoples be blessed in our monarch;
may they pronounce our ruler: *Wise*.⁸¹

A Hymn (Ps 72: 18-19)

Call to worship

18 Bless YHWH⁸², the divine patron of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
19 Bless the glorious name of YHWH forever;
May the glory of YHWH fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

colophon

⁷⁹ Ethiopia

⁸⁰ See: *America the Beautiful*

⁸¹ NRSV: happy

⁸² NRSV: Blessed be the Lord

²⁰ The prayers of David heir of Jesse are ended.

December 17, 2015

A Genealogy of Jesus, our Teacher⁸³
-- Heir of the Household of David
-- Heir of the Household of Abraham
(Matt 1:1-17)

Abraham established the household of Isaac,
Isaac established the household of Jacob,
Jacob established the household of Judah and his covenant partners.
Judah and **Tamar** who gave birth to Perez and Zerah.
Perez established the household of Hezron,
Hezron established the household of Ram,
Ram established the household of Amminadab.
Amminadab established the household of Nahshon,
Nahshon established the household of Salmon,
Salmon and **Rahab** who gave birth to Boaz.
Boaz and **Ruth** who gave birth to Obed.
Obed established the household of Jesse,
Jesse established the household of David the king.

David and **Bathsheba** who gave birth to Solomon,
Solomon established the household of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam established the household of Abijah,
Abijah established the household of Asaph.
Asaph established the household of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat establish the household of Joram,
Joram established the household of Uzziah.
Uzziah established the household of Jotham,
Jotham established the household of Ahaz,
Ahaz established the household of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah established the household of Manasseh,
Manasseh established the household of Amos,
Amos established the household of Josiah.
Josiah established the household of Jechoniah and his covenant partners

...at the time of the deportation of the household of David from our land
to the land of Babylon. After the deportation of the household of David from
our land to the land of Babylon.

Jechoniah established the household of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel established the household of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel established the household of Abiud.
Abiud established the household of Eliakim,
Eliakim established the household of Azor,

⁸³ NRSV: Christ

Azor established the household of Zadok.
Zadok established the household of Achim,
Achim established the household of Eliud,
Eliud established the household of Eleazar.
Eleazar established the household of Matthan,
Matthan established the household of Jacob,
Jacob established the household of Joseph and Mary
Joseph and **Mary** who gave birth to Jesus, whom we call *Teacher*.

Thus the total number of generations from the household of Abraham to the household of David is 14 – 2x7 -- generations; from the household of David to the deportation of the household of David from our land to Babylon, 14 generations; from the deportation of the household of David from our land to Babylon to the household of our Teacher 14 generations.

Homily

Thank you, Abba, for waking me up this morning. You sent Jesus with a world to bless our world, just as you sent the household of Abraham and Sarah to bless all those who showed them hospitality. Like Mary and Jesus, like Abraham I want to accept your blessings today with open hands, not resent them with a closed heart. I will face today with the confidence that you are with me, not in fear that I am alone.

For the people of Ferguson MO
For Emily Shrlock (Emily's list)
For the Muslim people of Senegal
For the peoples whose leaders negotiated a climate accord

Friday of the Third Week of Advent

Lectionary: 194

A Covenant Blessing

(Jer 23: 5-8)

Behold, the days are coming, says YHWH, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; As your ruler he shall rule and govern wisely,

he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: *YHWH our justice*.

Therefore, the days will come, says YHWH, when they shall no longer say: *So help me, YHWH, who brought the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt*, but rather: *So help me YHWH, who brought the household of Israel up from Babylon, the land of the north – and from all the lands to which I banished them; they shall again live on their own land.*

A Lament

(Ps 72:1-17)

Dedicated to Solomon

Petition

- ¹ Give our ruler your justice, O our divine patron,
and your righteousness to our ruler's heir.⁸⁴
- ² May our ruler judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May our ruler defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May our ruler live as long as the sun shines,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May our ruler be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In the days of our ruler may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May our ruler have dominion from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May the enemies of our ruler prostrate;
May they lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the rulers of Tarshish and its islands pay tribute to our ruler;⁸⁵
May the rulers of Sheba and Saba bring gifts.⁸⁶
- ¹¹ May all rulers of other lands prostrate before our ruler,

⁸⁴ NRSV: son

⁸⁵ Spain

⁸⁶ Ethiopia

May all peoples serve our ruler.

Profession of faith

- 12 For YHWH delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
13 YHWH has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
14 From oppression and violence YHWH redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in the sight of YHWH.

Petition

- 15 Long may our monarch live!
May gold of Sheba be given to our ruler.
May prayer be made for our monarch continually,
and blessings invoked for our ruler all day long.
16 May there be abundance of grain in the land;⁸⁷
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.
17 May our monarch's name endure forever,
the fame of our ruler continue as long as the sun.
May all peoples be blessed in our monarch;
may they pronounce our ruler: *Wise*.⁸⁸

A Hymn

(Ps 72: 18-19)

Call to worship

- 18 Bless YHWH⁸⁹, the divine patron of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
19 Bless the glorious name of YHWH forever;
May the glory of YHWH fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

colophon

²⁰ The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

5/18/2016

⁸⁷ See: *America the Beautiful*

⁸⁸ NRSV: happy

⁸⁹ NRSV: Blessed be YHWH

A Story about the Birth of Jesus, our Teacher

(Matt 1:18-25)

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was engaged to Joseph – but before she went to live with his household – her household realized she had miraculously conceived a child.

Joseph, the husband-to-be of Mary, was a just man and did not want to shame so he decided to divorce her without a trial.

Suddenly, a messenger from YHWH appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: *Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife into your household. For she has conceived this child miraculously. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will deliver his people from slavery.*

All this took place to fulfill what YHWH had said through the prophet Isaiah: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive a child and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means Our Divine Patron is with us* (Isa 7:6).

When Joseph awoke, he did as the messenger of YHWH had commanded him and took Mary as his wife into his household. They did not have sexual relations with she gave birth to her son, and he named him *Jesus*.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning. I want to use this day to see all the ways Jesus is born into our world to deliver us from all the suffering which is around us. Because you are with me, I do not want to be afraid to say: Call him *Jesus*.

For the people of the 186 countries who signed the 2015 climate agreement
For the family of Freddie Gray in Baltimore
For Jim and Laurie in retirement

Advent, December 20

Lectionary: 197

Man's Proposition

(Song 2:8-13)

Hark! my lover – here he comes
 springing across the mountains,
leaping across the hills.
 My lover is like a gazelle -- or a young stag.
Here he stands behind our wall,
 gazing through the windows,
 peering through the lattices.
My lover speaks: *Arise, my beloved,
 my dove, my beautiful one, come!*
*For see, the winter is past,
 the rains are over and gone.*
*The flowers appear on the earth,
 the time of pruning the vines has come,
 the song of the dove is heard in our land.*
*The fig tree puts forth its figs,
 the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.*
*Arise, my beloved,
 my beautiful one, and come!*
*O my dove in the clefts of the rock,
 in the secret recesses of the cliff,*
*Let me see you,
 let me hear your voice,*
*For your voice is sweet,
 you are lovely.*

Hymn

(Ps 33:1-12)

Call to worship

- ¹ *Rejoice in Yahweh, you righteous.
 Praise befits the upright.*
- ² *Praise Yahweh with the lyre;
 make melody to your divine patron with the ten-stringed harp.*
- ³ *Sing to your divine patron a new song;
 play skillfully on the strings,
 shout loudly.⁹⁰*

Creation story

- ⁴ For the word of Yahweh is upright,

⁹⁰ Seven calls to worship here

- all the work of your divine patron is done faithfully.
- ⁵ Your divine patron loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of Yahweh.
- ⁶ By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
all the stars by the breath of the mouth of your divine patron.
- ⁷ Yahweh gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;⁹¹
Your divine patron put the oceans in storehouses.
- ⁸ Let all the earth live morally;
let all the peoples of the world stand in awe of their divine patron.
- ⁹ For their divine patron spoke, and it came to be;
Their divine patron commanded, and it stood firm.
- ¹⁰ Yahweh brings the plans of the peoples to nothing;
Their divine patron frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- ¹¹ The plans of Yahweh stand for ever,
the thoughts of heart of Yahweh for all generations.
- ¹² Happy is the people whose divine patron is Yahweh,
the people whom Yahweh has chosen as a heritage.

A Lament

(Ps 33:13-22)

Profession of faith

- ¹³ Yahweh looks down from heaven;
Yahweh sees all humans.
- ¹⁴ From where Yahweh sits enthroned,
Yahweh watches all the inhabitants of the earth —
- ¹⁵ Yahweh fashions the hearts of all;
Observes all their deeds.
- ¹⁶ A ruler is not saved by a great army;
a warrior is not delivered by great strength.
- ¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
by its great might it cannot save.
- ¹⁸ Truly the eye of Yahweh is on those who live morally,
on those who hope in the steadfast love of Yahweh,
- ¹⁹ to deliver their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

Petition

- ²⁰ Our soul waits for Yahweh;
Yahweh is our help and shield.
- ²¹ Our heart is glad in our divine patron,

⁹¹ waters above the *raqia firmament*

We trust in the holy name of Yahweh.

²² Let your steadfast love, O Yahweh, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

(Luke 1:39-45)

Mary set out in those days and traveled to the mountains in haste to a village of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said:

*Most blessed are you among women;
blessed is the fruit of your womb.
How does this happen to me,
that the mother of my divine patron should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb danced⁹² for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by our divine patron would be fulfilled.*

Homily

Advent is a time which celebrates both the coming and going of Jesus. Jesus came once, but also continues to return every day, and in the end time.

The central feast of early Christianity was Lent-Easter-Ascension-Pentecost. When Christianity migrated to northern Europe it assimilated pre-Christian traditions celebrating the winter solstice.

Pre-Christian European cultures celebrated sympathetic rituals to rekindle the sun by building great fires and the earth by forcing trees to bloom in the middle of winter. Folks in southern Louisiana still build bonfires on the levees during Advent, and set them ablaze on Christmas Eve. We bring in trees and decorate them to look like they are in full bloom. The rituals encourage the sun to rekindle, and the earth to rise from the dead.

Christians incorporated the solstice rituals into a *Little Easter* parallel to the *Great Easter* dated by the spring equinox. Advent, a period of preparation mirrored Lent, and was followed by the feasts of Christmas (Easter) with its New Year octave (Ascension) Christmas, and then the Epiphany

⁹² NAB: leaped

(Pentecost). The transformation of the Feast of the *Sun* into a Feast of the *Son of God* was complete.

The end-time character of Advent is shaped by its location in the liturgical calendar. Advent follows the last Sundays of Ordinary Time – the *real world* where Christians live. Although popes subsequently added feasts like Christ the King and other celebrations which developed from Medieval piety, the original Sundays at the end of the liturgical year focused on the second coming of Jesus, and reflect the *realized eschatology* of a community in waiting. Those Sundays formed a *kerygma* proclamation for which Advent then became a *didache* explanation.

Interesting as well is the long-time scholarly argument that Judaism and Christianity – unlike the world views of most other traditional cultures – were linear or historical – based on divine intervention in human life, not cyclical or mythical – based on recurrences in Nature. Eventually, research demonstrated that all cultures – included biblical cultures -- have both linear and cyclical rituals like Advent which celebrates both a Messiah who came, and a Messiah returns.

Both the man and the woman in the Song of Solomon proposition each other. The proposition is not a gender-specific genre.

Here the woman describes the man ...*gazing through the windows, peering through the lattices* (Song 2:9). She is a feast for his eyes. Similar language in a story of Isaac and Rebekah is equally sensual: *Abimelech, ruler of the Philistines, looked out of a window and was surprised to see Isaac fondling his wife Rebekah* (Gen 26:8).

The woman also describes the sound of his voice inviting her to make love with him: *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away* (Song 2:10). The invitation elicits the sense of touch as well as hearing. He will touch her hand, and her feet will touch the ground, as they find a place to touch one another.

The man endorses his invitation to the woman with the promise that their lovemaking will fill the senses like spring: *Flowers appear on the earth; and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance as delightful as spring* (Song 2:11–13). They will see the flowers, hear the birds, and smell the grapes.

The only appropriate response to the presence of God in our lives is to rejoice. *The Gospel, radiant with the glory of Christ's cross, constantly invites us to rejoice. A few examples will suffice. "Rejoice!" is the angel's greeting to Mary*

(Lk 1:28). Mary's visit to Elizabeth makes John leap for joy in his mother's womb (cf. Lk 1:41). In her song of praise, Mary proclaims: "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (Lk 1:47).⁹³

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Advent, December 21

Lectionary: 198

Man's Proposition

(Song 2:8-13)

Hark! my lover comes
 Springing across the mountains,
Leaping across the hills.
 My lover is like a gazelle -- a young stag.
Here he stands behind our wall,
 Gazing through the windows,
 Peering through the lattices.⁹⁴
My lover speaks: *Arise, my beloved,*
 my dove, my beautiful one, come!
For see, the winter is past,
 the rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
 the time for pruning vines has come,
 the song of the dove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
 the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.
Arise, my beloved,

⁹⁴ In the *Stories of Atrahasis* the divine assembly orders Ea-Enki not to warn Atrahasis that they are about to flood the earth. Nonetheless, Atrahasis falls asleep in the House of Ea-Enki, who sits behind his privacy screen woven from reeds, talking to himself about the decision of the divine assembly. Atrahasis thinks the voice of his divine patron is a dream. The motif also appears in the *Stories of Abraham and Sarah* (Gen 26:81) and the *Stories of David's Rise to Power* (Sam 3:3-4).

*my beautiful one, and come!
O my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the secret recesses of the cliff,
Let me see you,
let me hear your voice,
For your voice is sweet,
you are lovely.*

A Hymn (Ps 33:1-12)

Call to worship

- ¹ *Rejoice in YHWH, you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.*
- ² *Praise YHWH with the lyre;
Make melodies to your divine patron with the ten-stringed harp.*
- ³ *Sing to your divine patron a new song;
Play skillfully on the strings,
Shout loudly.⁹⁵*

Creation story

- ⁴ *For the word of YHWH is upright,
All the work of your divine patron is done faithfully.*
- ⁵ *Your divine patron loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the steadfast love of YHWH.*
- ⁶ *By the word of YHWH the heavens were made,
All the stars by the breath of the mouth of your divine patron.*
- ⁷ *YHWH gathered the waters of the sea as in a flask;⁹⁶
Your divine patron put the oceans in storehouses.*
- ⁸ *Let all the earth live morally;
Let all the peoples of the world stand in awe of our divine patron.*
- ⁹ *For our divine patron spoke, and it came to be;
Our divine patron commanded, and it stood firm.*
- ¹⁰ *YHWH brings the plans of the peoples to nothing;
Our divine patron frustrates the plans of the peoples.*
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- ¹² *Happy is the people, whose divine patron is YHWH,
The people whom YHWH has chosen as a heritage.*

⁹⁵ Seven calls to worship here

⁹⁶ waters above the *raqia firmament*

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Profession of faith

- 13 YHWH looks down from the heavens;
YHWH sees all humans.
- 14 From where YHWH sits enthroned,
YHWH watches all the peoples of the earth —
- 15 YHWH fashions the hearts of all;
Observes all their deeds.
- 16 A ruler is not saved by a great army;
A warrior is not delivered by great strength.
- 17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
By its great might it cannot save.
- 18 Truly the eye of YHWH is on those who live morally,
On those who hope in the steadfast love of YHWH,
- 19 To deliver their souls from death,
To keep them alive in famine.

Petition

- 20 Our soul waits for YHWH;
YHWH is our help and shield.⁹⁷
- 21 Our heart is glad in our divine patron,
We trust in the holy name of YHWH.
- 22 Let your steadfast love, O YHWH, be upon us,
Even as we hope in you.

A Hymn of Elizabeth

(Luke 1:39-45)

Mary set out in those days and hurried into the hills to a village of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out:

⁹⁷ *'ezer* -- the word used for the woman in the *Stories of Adam and Eve*, and traditionally translated condescendingly as *helpmate*, here is a title for YHWH with the connotations of *savior!*

*Praise YHWH for sending you, a women;
Praise YHWH for sending the fruit of your womb.
How does this happen to me,
That the mother of my divine patron should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
The infant in my womb danced in gratitude.⁹⁸
Praise YHWH whom you believed
That what was spoken to you by our divine patron would be fulfilled.*

Homily

'Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning. You send spring after a harsh winter. You sent your son into a world of Roman oppression. Send me hope when I hear angry words against Muslims, liberals, journalists and immigrants. The Jesus who found hope even on the cross gives me courage to say this prayer.

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⁹⁸ NAB: leaped as David did before the ark of the covenant (2 Sam 6:14)

Christ the King and other celebrations which developed from Medieval piety, the original Sundays at the end of the liturgical year focused on the second coming of Jesus, and reflect the *realized eschatology* of a community in waiting. Those Sundays formed a *kerygma* proclamation for which Advent then became a *didache* explanation.

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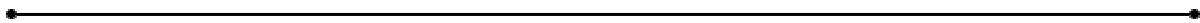
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Advent, December 22

Lectionary: 199

Reading 11 SM 1:24-28

In those days,
Hannah brought Samuel with her,
along with a three-year-old bull,
an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine,
and presented him at the temple of YHWH in Shiloh.
After the boy's father had sacrificed the young bull,
Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said:
"Pardon, my lord!
As you live, my lord,
I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to YHWH.
I prayed for this child, and YHWH granted my request.
Now I, in turn, give him to YHWH;
as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to YHWH."
She left Samuel there.

A Hymn of Hannah

(1 Sam 2:1-7)

Hannah sang:

My heart exults in YHWH;
my strength is exalted in my Divine patron.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.

² There is no Holy One like YHWH,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our Divine patron.

³ Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for YHWH is a Divine patron of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.

⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.

⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

⁶ YHWH kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷ YHWH makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.

GospelLK 1:46-56

A Hymn of Mary

(Latin: *Magnificat*)
(Luke 1:46-56)

Mary sang:

Call to worship

Let my soul proclaim the greatness of YHWH;
Let my spirit rejoice in my divine patron.

Creation story

for my savior has looked upon his lowly servant.
 From this day all generations will call me blessed:
 the Almighty has done great things for me,
 and the name YHWH is unlike any other name.¹⁰⁰
 My divine patron has mercy on those who live morally¹⁰¹
 in every generation.
 YHWH has a strong arm,
 and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
 My divine patron has cast down the mighty from their thrones
 and has lifted up the lowly.
 YHWH has filled the hungry with good things,
 and the rich my divine patron has sent away empty.
 YHWH has come to the help of Israel, the people of YHWH¹⁰²
 for my divine patron remembered and was merciful,
 a promise YHWH made to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and his household,¹⁰³

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¹⁰⁰ NRSV: holy

¹⁰¹ NRSV: fear him

¹⁰² NRSV: his servant

¹⁰³ NRSV: children

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Advent, December 23

Lectionary: 200

A Trial of Judah

(Mal 3:1—4:5)

Sentence

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me -- your divine patron will suddenly come to the Temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is coming, says YHWH, the commander of the divine warriors.¹ ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For my messenger is like a fire for refining precious metals and like lye for washing wool. ³My messenger will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the household of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to YHWH in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to YHWH as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵ Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the outsider, and do not live morally, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

Indictment

⁶ For I YHWH do not change; therefore you, O households of Jacob, have not perished. ⁷Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my teaching and have ignored them. Return to me, and I will return to

¹ NRSV: the Lord of hosts – who delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and protected them from their enemies in Syria-Palestine

you, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

8 Do any other households steal from their divine patron? Yet you are stealing from me! But you say, 'How are we stealing from you?' By not paying the full tithes and offerings which you owe me! ⁹You are so cursed for stealing from me — every last household! ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the Temple storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. See if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. ¹¹I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vines in the field shall not be barren, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. ¹²Then all peoples will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

13 You have spoken harsh words against me, says YHWH. Yet you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' ¹⁴You have said, 'It is of little value² to serve our divine patron. What do we profit by keeping the teachings of YHWH³ or by mourning before YHWH, commander of the divine warriors?' ¹⁵NWe watch the arrogant live happily ever after. Evildoers not only prosper, but when they put our divine patron to the test they escape unpunished.

Appeal and mitigation

16 Then those who revered YHWH spoke with one another. YHWH took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered YHWH and meditated on the name YHWH. ¹⁷They shall be mine, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who obey them. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves your divine patron and one who does not.

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says

² NRSV: vain See: Qoheleth *vanity of vanities*. Not *worthless*, but *temporary*

³ NRSV: his command

YHWH, commander of the divine warriors, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. ³And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

⁴ Remember the teachings of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Mt. Horeb for all Israel.⁴

⁵ Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible Day of YHWH comes. ⁶He will turn the hearts of fathers and mothers to the members of their households and the minds of the members of every household to their fathers and mothers, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.⁵

A Lament

(Ps 25:1-22)

Dedicated to David

Petition

¹ To you, YHWH, I lift up my soul.

² O my divine patron, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;

⁴ Deuteronomy

⁵ The meaning of the teaching: *Honor your father and mother.*

- do not let my enemies exult over me.
- ³ Do not let those who wait for you to deliver them be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
- ⁴ Make me to know your ways, YHWH;
teach me your paths.
- ⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the divine patron of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
- ⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, YHWH, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
- ⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, YHWH!

Profession of faith

- ⁸ Good and upright is YHWH;
My divine patron instructs sinners in the way.
- ⁹ My divine patron leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
- ¹⁰ All the paths of YHWH are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who are faithful to the covenant and decrees of YHWH.

Petition

- ¹¹ For your name's sake, YHWH,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
- ¹² Who are they that live morally?⁶
YHWH will teach them the way that they should choose.

⁶ NRSV: fear YHWH

13 They will abide in prosperity,
 their households⁷ shall possess the land.
14 The friendship of YHWH is for those who live morally,
 Who makes the covenant known to them.
15 My eyes are ever towards YHWH,
 for my divine patron will pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
 for I am lonely and afflicted.
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
 bring me out of my distress.
18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
 forgive all my sins.
19 Consider how many are my foes,
 and with what violent hatred they hate me.
20 O guard my life, and deliver me;
 do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
 for I wait for you.
 ²²Redeem Israel, O our divine patron,
 out of all its troubles.

(Luke 1:57-66)

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son.

⁷ NRSV: children

The neighbors and relatives of Elizabeth heard that YHWH had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him *Zechariah* after his father, but his mother said: *No. He will be called John.*⁸

But they answered her: *There is no one among your relatives who has this name.* So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote: *John is his name,* and all were amazed.

Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing our divine patron.

Then fear came upon all the neighbors of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hills of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying: *What, then, will this child be? For surely the hand of YHWH was with him.*

Homily

The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas

Lectionary 203

(1 John 2:12-17)

I am writing to you, children, because your sins have been forgiven for his name's sake.

I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,
because you have conquered the Evil One.

I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong and the word of God remains in you,
and you have conquered the Evil One.

Do not love the world or the things of the world.
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world,
sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life,
is not from the Father but is from the world.
Yet the world and its enticement are passing away.
But whoever does the will of God remains forever.

A Hymn (Ps 96:1-13)

Call to worship

- ¹ **Sing** to Yahweh a new song;
Sing to Yahweh, all the earth.
- ² **Sing** to Yahweh,
Bless the name of our divine patron;
Tell how Yahweh delivered us⁹ every day.¹⁰
- ³ **Declare** the glory of Yahweh among the peoples,
Proclaim the marvelous works of Yahweh among all the peoples.¹¹

Creation story

- ⁴ For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised;
Yahweh is to be revered above the divine patrons of other peoples.¹²
- ⁵ For the divine patrons of other peoples are powerless,¹³
But Yahweh made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honor and majesty are before our divine patron;
Strength and beauty are in the sanctuary of Yahweh.

⁹ NRSV: of his salvation

¹⁰ NRSV: from day to day

¹¹ Note seven imperatives in this call.

¹² NRSV: gods

¹³ NRSV: idols

Call to worship

- ⁷ Ascribe to Yahweh, O households¹⁴ of the peoples,
Ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due the name of Yahweh;
Bring an offering, and come into the courts of Yahweh.
- ⁹ Worship Yahweh in holy splendor;
Tremble before your divine patron, all the earth.
- ¹⁰ Say among the people: *Yahweh is king!*¹⁵

*The world is firmly established;
It shall never be moved.*

*Yahweh will judge the peoples with equity.*¹⁶

- ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad,
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar,
And all that fills it;
- ¹² Let the field exult,
And everything in it.
- Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy¹³ before Yahweh;

Creation story

For Yahweh is coming,
For Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples truthfully.

An Inauguration of Jesus

(Luke 2:36-40)

There was a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the Temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.

Anna came forward at that very time, and gave thanks to her divine patron and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

¹⁴ NRSV: families

¹⁵ Arabic: *Allah Akbar!*

¹⁶ One colon is nest inside another

When Mary and Joseph had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of YHWH,¹⁷ they returned to Galilee, to their own village of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of his divine patron was upon him.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.

Thank you for the comforting presence of your power, reassuring me that suffering will end, and good will prevail – that I will finish the *Social World of Deuteronomy: a feminist commentary*.

Thank you for the time to acknowledge all you continue to do for me and for Patrice.

Maulana Karenga, Ph.D. founded Kwanzaa (Dec 26-Jan1) in 1966 during the Black Freedom Movement. Therefore, Kwanzaa reflects its concern for cultural rootedness in thought and practice, and the unity and self-determination associated with Black Freedom in the African diaspora.

Karenga is professor and chair of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach. Karenga applies the principles of Ma 'at, a world view of ancient Egypt, to create *Kawaida* -- a Swahili word meaning *tradition* -- a synthesis of nationalism, pan-Africanism, and socialism. His *Ma 'at, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (1996) applies this tradition of ancient Egypt to urgent political and social issues of today.

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. These values are called the *Nguzo Saba* which in Swahili means the *Seven Principles*.

Umoja (OO-MO-JAH) or **unity** stresses the importance of togetherness reflected in the African saying: *I am We* or *I am because We are*.

Kujichagulia (KOO-GEE-CHA-GOO-LEE-YAH) or **self-determination** requires that we define our common interests and make decisions that are in the best interest of our family and community.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy?

Ujima (OO-GEE-MAH) or **collective work** reminds us of our obligation to the past, present and future, and that we have a role to play in the community, society, and world.

Ujamaa (OO-JAH-MAH) or **cooperative economics** emphasizes our collective economic strength and encourages us to meet common needs through mutual support.

Nia (NEE-YAH) or **purpose** encourages us to look within ourselves and to set personal goals that benefit the community.

Kuumba (KOO-OOM-BAH) or **creativity** makes use of our creative energies to build and maintain a strong and vibrant community.

Imani (EE-MAH-NEE) or **faith** focuses on honoring the best of our traditions, draws upon the best in ourselves, and helps us strive for a higher level of life for humankind, by affirming our self-worth and confidence in our ability to succeed and triumph in righteous struggle.

During Kwanzaa celebrants use the principles to meditate on three questions: *Who am I? Am I really who I am? Am I all I ought to be?*

The prophet Anna was a Kwanzaa experience for Jesus. She challenges him to ask: *Who am I? Am I really who I am? Am I all I ought to be?* As he matures in Nazareth, his vocation becomes clearer – he *grows in wisdom*, and he embraces the unique mission for which his divine patron inaugurated him in the Temple of Jerusalem.

When we receive communion, Jesus challenges us to consider the same questions: *Who am I? Am I really who I am? Am I all I ought to be?*

The Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas

Lectionary: 204

(1 John 2:18-21)

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. Thus we know this is the last hour. They went out from us,¹⁸ but they were not really of our number; if

¹⁸ The antichrist was once a member of the faithful. What happened? What is the lie?

they had been, they would have remained with us. Their desertion shows that none of them was of our number. But you have the anointing that comes from the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you not because you do not know the truth but because you do, and because every lie is alien to the truth.

A Hymn (Ps 96:1-13)

Call to worship

- ¹ **Sing** to Yahweh a new song;
 Sing to Yahweh, all the earth.
² **Sing** to Yahweh,
 Bless the name of our divine patron;
 Tell how Yahweh delivered us¹⁹ every day.²⁰
³ **Declare** the glory of Yahweh among the peoples,
 Proclaim the marvelous works of Yahweh among all the peoples.²¹

Creation story

- ⁴ For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised;
 Yahweh is to be revered above the divine patrons of other peoples.²²
⁵ For the divine patrons of other peoples are powerless,²³
 But Yahweh made the heavens.
⁶ Honor and majesty are before our divine patron;
 Strength and beauty are in the Temple of Yahweh.

Call to worship

- ⁷ **Ascribe** to Yahweh, all you households²⁴ of the peoples,
 Ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
⁸ **Ascribe** to Yahweh the glory due the name of Yahweh;
 Bring an offering, and come into the courts of Yahweh.
⁹ **Worship** Yahweh in holy splendor;
 Tremble before your divine patron, all the earth.
¹⁰ **Say** among the people: *Yahweh is king!*²⁵

¹⁹ NRSV: of his salvation

²⁰ NRSV: from day to day. The pain of the diaspora is re-branded as the opportunity to proclaim Yahweh's great works to those among whom the Hebrews live.

²¹ Note seven imperatives in this call.

²² NRSV: gods

²³ NRSV: idols

²⁴ NRSV: families

²⁵ Arabic: *Allah Akbar!*

*The world is firmly established;
It shall never be moved.*

Yahweh will judge the peoples with equity.²⁶

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad,
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar,
And all that fills it;

¹² Let the field exult,
And everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy¹³ before Yahweh;

Creation story

For Yahweh is coming,
For Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples truthfully.

Creation Story

(John 1:1-18)

In the beginning was the Word,²⁷
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,²⁸
and the darkness has not overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.
The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

²⁶ One colon is nest inside another

²⁷ Sterility affidavit is missing here.

²⁸ Here is the sterility affidavit with chaos described as *darkness*.

He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to those who believe in his name,
who were born not by natural generation
nor by human choice nor by a man's decision
but of God.

And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only-begotten Son,
full of grace and truth.

John testified to him and cried out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said,
"The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me."
From his fullness we have all received,
grace in place of grace,
because while the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
The only-begotten Son, God, who is at the Father's side,
has revealed him.

Homily

<p>Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning. Thank you for this new year of life and of living Thank you for your presence to prisoners, and those like Louis Taylor who spent 42 years in prison for a crime he did not commit – give him the grace of Madeba who spent 27 years in prison. Let us both forgive those who have hurt us.</p>

Jesus came into a world of darkness, like Madeba came from the tomb of Robben Island into the darkness of apartheid, and gave us hope that things could change, like the full moon which will shine on New Year 's Day for 2014.

Hope gave birth to a reality which was not perfect, but it was better because it was a work in progress.

His Day is Done

A Tribute Poem for Nelson Mandela

Maya Angelou, Ph.D.
December 8, 2013

His day is done.
Is done.

The news came on the wings of a wind, reluctant to carry its burden.
Nelson Mandela's day is done.
The news, expected and still unwelcome, reached us in the United States, and suddenly our world became somber.
Our skies were leadened.

His day is done.
We see you, South African people standing speechless at the slamming of that final door through which no traveler returns.
Our spirits reach out to you Bantu, Zulu, Xhosa, Boer.
We think of you and your son of Africa, your father, your one more wonder of the world.

We send our souls to you as you reflect upon your David armed with a mere stone, facing down the mighty Goliath.

Your man of strength, Gideon, emerging triumphant.

Although born into the brutal embrace of Apartheid, scarred by the savage atmosphere of racism, unjustly imprisoned in the bloody maws of South African dungeons.

Would the man survive? Could the man survive?

His answer strengthened men and women around the world.

In the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas, on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, in Chicago's Loop, in New Orleans Mardi Gras, in New York City's Times Square, we watched as the hope of Africa sprang through the prison's doors.

His stupendous heart intact, his gargantuan will hale and hearty.

He had not been crippled by brutes, nor was his passion for the rights of human beings diminished by twenty-seven years of imprisonment.

Even here in America, we felt the cool, refreshing breeze of freedom.

When Nelson Mandela took the seat of Presidency in his country where formerly he was not even allowed to vote we were enlarged by tears of pride, as we saw Nelson Mandela's former prison guards invited, courteously, by him to watch from the front rows his inauguration.

We saw him accept the world's award in Norway with the grace and gratitude of the Solon in Ancient Roman Courts, and the confidence of African Chiefs from ancient royal stools.

No sun outlasts its sunset, but it will rise again and bring the dawn.

Yes, Mandela's day is done, yet we, his inheritors, will open the gates wider for reconciliation, and we will respond generously to the cries of Blacks and Whites, Asians, Hispanics, the poor who live piteously on the floor of our planet.

He has offered us understanding.

We will not withhold forgiveness even from those who do not ask.

Nelson Mandela's day is done, we confess it in tearful voices, yet we lift our own to say thank you.

Thank you our Gideon, thank you our David, our great courageous man.

We will not forget you, we will not dishonor you, we will remember and be glad that you lived among us, that you taught us, and that you loved us all.

Christmas, January 2

Lectionary: 206

(1 John 2:29—3:6)

If you consider that God is righteous,
you also know that everyone who acts in righteousness
is begotten by him.

See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are.
The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.
We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.
Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure,
as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness,
for sin is lawlessness.
You know that he was revealed to take away sins,
and in him there is no sin.
No one who remains in him sins;
no one who sins has seen him or known him.

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.
The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh are victorious.
²Yahweh has achieved victory;
Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.
³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.
All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to Yahweh, all the earth;
Break forth into joyous song
Sing hymns.
⁵**Sing hymns** to Yahweh with the lyre –
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
⁶with trumpets and horns --
Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas **roar** and all that fills it –
The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands**;
Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Gospel [JN 1:29-34](#)

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
He is the one of whom I said,
‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.’
I did not know him,
but the reason why I came baptizing with water
was that he might be made known to Israel.”
John testified further, saying,
“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky
and remain upon him.
I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,
‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Homily

<p>Thank you, ‘Abba, for waking me up this morning. Thank you for your on-going presence in my life.</p>
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Eczema and Holy Water

Mert Erogul

(New York Times December 29, 2013)

http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/25/eczema-and-holy-water/?_r=1

My 9-month-old son’s first time on a plane — a 10-hour journey from J.F.K. to Istanbul — was a disaster. The dry air of the cabin, the confinement and possibly some allergen on the in-flight menu all contributed to an unprecedented eruption of his eczema. It was demoralizing. His skin had been

cracking and inflamed for months, but we had taken such pains with it — daily applications of heavy cream and austere dietary restrictions — in anticipation of introducing him to his relatives in Turkey.

We stayed at my mother-in-law's on the European side of Istanbul. After just a few days, she was as obsessed as we were with the daily moisturizing routine. Then she announced that she had a solution: we must visit a Greek Orthodox priest and have the baby blessed. My mother-in-law, like both our families, is a nonpracticing Muslim, but this priest had distinguished himself by getting a friend's daughter married off by praying for her. I looked at my wife, unsure of what to say.

We live in Brooklyn. Neither of us is religious. I am a medical doctor. I have never met a priest in my life. Yet my mother-in-law was insistent, and my wife was curious.

So despite my skepticism, we found ourselves inside the Hagios Demetrios, an unremarkable old church on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus. The gloomy little church smelled like incense and old people, of which there were many. They were lined up and hunched over in the foyer, patiently waiting for an audience with the priest. They all seemed to have rheumatism. We waited, too, the baby growing restless. I felt sad for these superstitious people and impatient to finish. Eventually a voice in accented Turkish announced that the priest would be seeing the babies first, and with that we pushed, as New Yorkers do, to the front of the line.

The priest, a tall robed figure surrounded by lesser robed figures, turned and looked at us as we entered. He had black hair and a black beard speckled with gray. He beckoned us over, my wife told him why we were there, and then I was acutely aware of everything in the room, all the people and the ornaments, the sunlight spilling in through stained glass. How it must have looked just like this hundreds of years ago. I was aware of the history of countless people, Christians, Muslims and Jews, who had stood where I was, hoping for a blessing. I remembered all my worry and frustration, my powerlessness to fix my own son despite everything I knew about medicine. The priest nodded and reached for my hand and took my wife's hand and he pulled us near. He put his palm on the baby's forehead.

He said, "Don't worry. Everything is going to be all right." A bit of my son's drool dripped onto my wrist. "You know, my daughter had terrible eczema, and I took her to several dermatologists until finally a doctor in Bakirkoy figured out that she was allergic to her stuffed toy. When we got rid of it her skin cleared up." He smiled at me. "Anyway, these skin conditions get better when they're like 2 years old." He put his hand on my shoulder and I smiled back.

We thanked him and turned to each other. We held the baby and felt lighter. The priest mumbled a benediction, made a sign and then politely motioned us to a door behind him. I had heard about this door. It led to a long and low tunnel dug into the hill, lit by occasional electric lights that illuminated the damp walls on which were inscribed centuries of prayers that people had left. Who knows how many of them had been answered.

We had to walk hunched over for what felt like hundreds of feet through this tunnel, and at the end was a brass spigot that I could not seem to operate. It was stuck tight. Nor could my wife turn it. It fell to the child's grandmother, who twisted it easily and collected the holy water in a bottle she had brought, and we washed the baby's skin.

Months later, back in Brooklyn, we still have that bottle of holy water. It sits, next to the infant Motrin and Tylenol, on a shelf near the baby's bed.

Mert Erogul is an emergency doctor at Kings County Hospital and teaches medical students at SUNY Downstate School of Medicine.

Monday after Epiphany

Lectionary: 212

A Teaching

(1 John 3:22—4:6)

My students²⁹ we receive from 'Abba whatever we ask, because we keep the commandments and do what pleases our divine patron. The command of 'Abba is that we should believe in the name of the heir of 'Abba³⁰, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit whom he gave us.

My students do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

²⁹ NAB: Beloved

³⁰ NAB: his Son

This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist who, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world. You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them. We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

A Lament

(Ps 2:1-12)

Complaint

- ¹ Why do the nations conspire?
 Why do the peoples plot in vain?
² The rulers of the earth set themselves against Yahweh and the messiah
 the rulers assemble and proclaim:
³*Let us burst their bonds asunder,
 Let us cast their cords from us.*

Profession of faith

- ⁴ Yahweh who sits in the heavens laughs;
 Our divine patron has them in derision.
⁵ Then Yahweh will speak to them in wrath,
 and terrify them in fury, saying:
⁶ *I have set my messiah on Mt. Zion, my holy hill.*
⁷ I will proclaim the decree of Yahweh, who said:
*You are my heir;
 today I have begotten you.*
⁸ *Ask of me, and I will make the peoples your heritage,
 and the ends of the earth your possession.*
⁹ *You shall break them with an iron rod,
 and dash them in pieces like a clay pot.*

Petition

- ¹⁰ Now therefore, O rulers, be wise;
 be warned, O rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve Yahweh by living morally,
with trembling ¹²kiss the feet of Yahweh,
or Yahweh will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
for the anger of Yahweh is quickly kindled.

Beatitude

The wise take refuge in Yahweh.

Gospel [MT 4:12-17, 23-25](#)

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee.
He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea,
in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet
might be fulfilled:

*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sit in darkness
have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
“Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

He went around all of Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom,
and curing every disease and illness among the people.
His fame spread to all of Syria,
and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases
and racked with pain,
those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics,
and he cured them.
And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea,
and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

Homily

The adage in a Teaching on Prayer is composed of five beatitudes (Ps 1:1–2*). There are three beatitudes in the first line, and two in the second. The first three beatitudes are expressed negatively: *Wise are those who do not walk with*

the wicked (Ps 1:1). The second three are expressed positively: *Wise are those who obey the law of Yahweh* (Ps 1:2).

Most translations use *blessed* or *happy* in beatitudes that are expressed positively. To be *blessed* is to be *wise*. The wise have status or honor. Only the wise can survive and are admitted to the sanctuary where all the households in the clan come to pray. Only those who *obey the torah instructions of Yahweh* and *who meditate on them day and night* (Ps 1:2) are prepared to pray (Mic 6:8). The same motif appears in the book of Deuteronomy and in other psalms like the one today (Deut 30:15–20; Ps 19:7–13; 119:1–176).

Goodness spreads.³¹ Authentic experiences of good grow within us, and anyone who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good.

Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others. When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. Life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is what mission means.

Christians must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from Christians who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from Christians whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ

Tuesday after Epiphany

Lectionary: 213

(1 John 4:7-10)

Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is of God;
everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.
Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.
In this way the love of God was revealed to us:
God sent his only-begotten Son into the world
so that we might have life through him.
In this is love:
not that we have loved God, but that he loved us
and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

A Lament

(Ps 72:1-17)

Dedicated to Solomon

Petition

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's heir.³²
- ² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May his foes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,

³² NRSV: son

may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.

¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all people give him service.

Profession of faith

¹² For Yahweh delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.

¹³ Yahweh has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.

¹⁴ From oppression and violence Yahweh redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in the sight of Yahweh.

Petition

¹⁵ Long may our monarch live!

May gold of Sheba be given to our ruler.

May prayer be made for our monarch continually,
and blessings invoked for our ruler all day long.

¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land;³³
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;

and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.

¹⁷ May our monarch's name endure forever,
the fame of our ruler continue as long as the sun.

May all peoples be blessed in our monarch;
may they pronounce our ruler: *Wise*.³⁴

A Hymn

(Ps 72: 18-19)

Call to worship

¹⁸ Bless Yahweh³⁵, the divine patron of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹ Bless the glorious name of Yahweh forever;
May the glory of Yahweh fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

colophon

³³ See: *America the Beautiful*

³⁴ NRSV: happy

³⁵ NRSV: Blessed be the Lord

²⁰ The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

(Mark 6:34-44)

When Jesus saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves."

But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?"

He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see."

And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish."

So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate of the loaves were five thousand men.

Homily

Jesus preaches and then feeds – simulating the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the meal which will become the structure of the Lord’s Supper.

Many mock the strategy of evangelizing with food. They label such converts as *Rice Christians*, and the strategy as *three hots and a cot*, or *a meal and a message*. Faith based charities for the poor will only feed them if they sit through a prayer service.

Nonetheless, the joy of eating after hunger is a good metaphor for designing strategies of evangelizing. Catholics used to fast before taking communion to create a sense of satisfaction when they were fed with the Eucharist. Being rescued from near death, or being fed after long hunger is precisely the *Gaudium Evangelii* which Pope Francis envisioned in his first encyclical.

Saturday after Epiphany

Lectionary: 217

Reading 11 [JN 5:14-21](#)

Beloved:

We have this confidence in him
that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.
And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask,
we know that what we have asked him for is ours.
If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly,
he should pray to God and he will give him life.
This is only for those whose sin is not deadly.
There is such a thing as deadly sin,
about which I do not say that you should pray.
All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.

We know that anyone begotten by God does not sin;
but the one begotten by God he protects,
and the Evil One cannot touch him.
We know that we belong to God,
and the whole world is under the power of the Evil One.
We also know that the Son of God has come
and has given us discernment to know the one who is true.
And we are in the one who is true,
in his Son Jesus Christ.

He is the true God and eternal life.
Children, be on your guard against idols.

A Hymn (Ps 149:1-9)

Call to worship

¹ **Praise** YHWH!

Sing to YHWH a new hymn,

Praise YHWH in the assembly of the faithful.

² Let Israel **be glad** in its Maker;

Let the children of Zion **rejoice** in their divine ruler.

³ Let them **praise** the name of YHWH with dancing,

Making melody to YHWH with tambourine and lyre.

Creation story

⁴ For YHWH takes pleasure in the people of YHWH;

YHWH adorns this humble people with victory.

Call to worship

⁵ Let the faithful exult in glory;

Let them sing for joy on their dining couches.

⁶ Let high praises for their divine patron be in their throats

Let them raise their two-edged swords,³⁶

⁷ Let them execute vengeance on their enemies

Let them punish outsiders,

⁸ Let them bind their rulers with ropes

Let them lock their leaders with chains of iron,

⁹ Let them execute the sentence I decreed.

³⁶ Biblical precedent for: *Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition. Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition* (Famous Music Corporation, 1942) is a song by Frank Loesser about Chaplain Howell Forgy, Lt jg, aboard the USS New Orleans when the Japanese attacked on Sunday morning December 7, 1941. Forgy explains the story behind Loesser's lyrics: *Well, I was stationed aboard the USS New Orleans, and we were tied up at 1010 dock in Pearl Harbor when we attacked again. We were having a turbine lifted, and all of our electrical power wasn't on, and so when we went to lift the ammunition by the hoist, we had to form lines of men — form a bucket brigade — and we began to carry the ammunition up through the quarterdeck into the gunnery, and I stood there and directed some of the boys down the port side and some down the starboard side, and as they were getting a little tired, I just happened to say: Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition. That's all there was to it.*

According to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (January 1, 1943), the quote may have first appeared in John Ford's 1939 film *Drums along the Mohawk*.

This is glory for all the faithful of YHWH.
Praise YHWH!

ospel [JN 3:22-30](#)

Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea,
where he spent some time with them baptizing.

John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim,
because there was an abundance of water there,
and people came to be baptized,
for John had not yet been imprisoned.

Now a dispute arose between the disciples of John and a Jew
about ceremonial washings.

So they came to John and said to him,
“Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan,
to whom you testified,
here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him.”

John answered and said,

“No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven.
You yourselves can testify that I said that I am not the Christ,
but that I was sent before him.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom;
the best man, who stands and listens for him,
rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.

So this joy of mine has been made complete.
He must increase; I must decrease.”

Ash Wednesday

Lectionary: 219

(Joel 2:12-18)

Even now YHWH says: *Turn back to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.*

Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to YHWH, your divine patron.

For gracious and merciful is YHWH, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.

Perhaps YHWH will turn back from punishment and leave behind a blessing,

Make offerings and pour out libations for YHWH, your divine patron.
Blow the trumpet on Mt. Zion!
Proclaim a fast,
Call an assembly;
Gather the people,
Notify the congregation;
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and the infants at the breast;
Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber.
Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of YHWH, weep
and say: *Spare, O YHWH, your people, and allow the peoples ruling them use
their name as a curse! Why should outsiders³⁷ say: Where is their divine patron?*

Then YHWH was stirred to concern for the land and took pity on the people.

A Lament

(Ps 51:1-19)

To the leader

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan confronted him, after he raped Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.³⁸

³⁷ NRSV: among the peoples

³⁸ Important tradition supporting theology of original sin.

Petition

- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.³⁹
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a sincere heart,⁴⁰ my divine patron,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Vow

- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

- ¹⁵ YHWH, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.⁴¹
- ¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸ Do good to Mt. Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

³⁹ Christians of color do not want to be *white*, just forgiven. Non-white people of faith find such metaphors offensive or colonial.

⁴⁰ *Clean heart* is the Hebrew idiom for *sincere*

⁴¹ My mantra: *Our YHWH open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise; O Divine patron come to my assistance, O YHWH make haste to help me.*

See: John Main, OSB who teaches a mantra-based style of meditation similar to Centering Prayer that he learned from his Hindu teacher -- Swami Satyananda. Main alleges that this technique was also taught by St. John Cassian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These are the same Catholic sources claimed by the centering prayer folks and which are very much disputed by experts on the Catholic contemplative tradition.

19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

(2 Cor 5:20—6:2)

Brothers and sisters:

We are ambassadors for our Teacher, as if our godparent⁴² were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of our Teacher,⁴³ be reconciled to our godparent. For our sake our godparent made our Teacher to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of our godparent through Jesus.

Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of our godparent in vain. For our godparent says:

*In an acceptable time I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you.*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

6Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁴² In OT use *divine patron*, rather than *God*; in the NT use *godparent* (Aramaic: 'abba)

⁴³ NRSV: *Christ*

7 When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial,

but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Take care not to perform righteous deeds

in order that people may see them;

otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms,

do not blow a trumpet before you,

as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets

to win the praise of others.

Amen, I say to you,

they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,

do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,

so that your almsgiving may be secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray,

do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.
Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.
But when you pray, go to your inner room,
close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you fast,
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.
They neglect their appearance,
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you fast,
anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.
And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Lectionary: 220

(Deut 30:15-20)⁴⁴

Moses said to the people:

Today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the these teachings of the YHWH, your divine patron, which I enjoin on you today, loving YHWH, and walking in the ways of your divine patron, and keeping his commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and YHWH, your divine patron, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy. If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other divine patrons, I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land that you are crossing the River Jordan to enter and occupy. I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the YHWH, your divine patron, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you,

⁴⁴ From Covenant Witnesses (Deut 29:1—31:29)

a long life for you to live on the land that the YHWH swore he would give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Teachings on Prayer

(Ps 1:1-6)

adage

Wise are those who do not walk with the wicked . . .
Wise are those who do not stand with sinners . . .
Wise are those who do not sit with fools . . .

Wise are those who obey the teachings⁴⁵ of YHWH.
Wise are those who meditate on them day and night.⁴⁶

proverb

The wise are like trees planted by water.
They yield fruit every season.

Their leaves do not wither.
They thrive year after year.

Not so fools,
Not so.

Fools are like chaff.
They are blown away by the wind.

proverb

Fools never stand in the gates of the city,
Sinners never sit with the village assembly.

YHWH protects the way of the wise.
Neither fools nor sinners shall stand in their way.

YHWH protects the way of the wise,
YHWH does not protect the way of fools.

⁴⁵ Hebrew: *torah*

⁴⁶ The Rule of Albert for the Carmelites: *All are to remain in their cells or near them, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord and being vigilant in prayers, unless otherwise lawfully occupied.*

Teachings on Death and Resurrection

(Luke 9:22-25)

Jesus taught his followers:

The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised up from the dead.

Then Jesus taught the crowds:

Those who wish to follow me, must deny themselves and take a cross every day and follow me. Those who try to save their lives will lose them. Those who lay down their lives -- as I will do -- will save their lives. What profit is there for anyone to lay down their lives to gain the whole world?

Homily

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Lectionary: 220

(Deut 30:15-20)⁴⁷

Moses said to the people:

Today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the these teachings of the YHWH, your divine patron, which I enjoin on you today, loving YHWH, and walking in the ways of your divine patron, and keeping his commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and YHWH, your divine patron, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy. If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other divine patrons, I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land that you are crossing the River Jordan to enter and occupy. I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the YHWH, your divine patron, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land that the YHWH swore he would give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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Homily

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Lectionary: 221

(Isa 58:1-9)

Thus says YHWH, your divine patron:

Cry out full-throated and unsparingly, lift up your voice like a trumpet blast; Tell my people their wickedness, and the household of Jacob their sins. They seek me day after day, and desire to know my ways, Like a people that has done what is just and not abandoned the law of their divine patron;

They ask me to declare what is due them, pleased to gain access to their divine patron. “Why do we fast, and you do not see it? afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?”

Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your workers. Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That you bow your head like a reed and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to YHWH? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of YHWH shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and YHWH will answer, you shall cry for help, and YHWH will say: *Here I am!*⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *I am* is the first syllable of the divine name YHWH. The Gospel of John affirms that Jesus is sent by YHWH with seven *I am* sayings.

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger. (John 6:35).

I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

I am the gate; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture (John 10:9).

A Lament

(Ps 51:1-19)

To the leader

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan confronted him, after he raped Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
My sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
I have done what is evil in your sight,
You are justified in your sentence,
You are blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
My mother conceived me as a sinner.⁵¹

Petition

- ⁶ You desire me to be honest even with myself;
Teach me to be wise even when I am alone.⁵²
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be cleaner⁵³ than snow.⁵⁴
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11).

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies (John 11:25).

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to my godparent, but through me (John 14:6).

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1).

⁵¹ Important tradition supporting theology of original sin.

⁵² Hebrew: *secret* only – the word *heart* is missing in Hebrew

⁵³ NRSV: *whiter*

⁵⁴ Christians of color do not want to be *white*, just forgiven. Non-white people of faith find such metaphors offensive or colonial.

let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
9 Hide your face from my sins,
Blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a sincere heart,⁵⁵ my divine patron,
Put a new and right spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
Do not take your holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
Sustain in me a willing spirit.

Vow

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

15 YHWH, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.⁵⁶
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
17 The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a humble⁵⁷ spirit;
a humble and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Mt. Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in true⁵⁸ sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Teachings on Fasting

(Matt 9: 14-15)

⁵⁵ *Clean heart* is the Hebrew idiom for *sincere*

⁵⁶ My mantra: *Our YHWH open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise; O Divine patron come to my assistance, O YHWH make haste to help me.*

See: John Main, OSB who teaches a mantra-based style of meditation similar to Centering Prayer that he learned from his Hindu teacher -- Swami Satyananda. Main alleges that this technique was also taught by St. John Cassian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These are the same Catholic sources claimed by the centering prayer folks and which are very much disputed by experts on the Catholic contemplative tradition.

⁵⁷ NRSV: *humble*

⁵⁸ NRSV: *right*

The followers of John approached Jesus and asked:

Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your followers do not fast?"

Jesus taught them:

Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Homily

Fasting creates a physical reminder of at least two important biblical traditions. First, the food we eat is not a wage we have earned, but a gift we have been given. Second, hunger reminds us to advocate for the powerless – to work for justice. The hungry, the imprisoned, the homeless are not victims of divine forgetfulness, but human. God has provided adequately for all, but some humans avariciously take from the poor or withhold from the poor. The people of the United States is less than 5% of the total population of the world, and yet they consume more than 25% of the world's resources.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Lectionary: 222

A Teaching of YHWH⁵⁹

(Isa 58:9-14)

If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech, if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted, then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday, then YHWH will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land, then YHWH will renew your strength, then you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails and then the ancient ruins of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt for your sake, then the foundations of its walls from ages past you shall raise up, and then they call you: *Repairer of the breach* and *Restorer of ruined homesteads*.

⁵⁹ NRSV: Thus says YHWH

If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight, and YHWH's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice, then you shall delight in YHWH, then I will make you ride on the heights of the earth and then I will nourish you from the land of your ancestor Jacob.⁶⁰

YHWH has spoken.

⁶⁰ NRSV: *with the heritage of Jacob*

A Lament

(Ps 86:1-17)

A Prayer of David

Petition

- ¹ Incline your ear, YHWH, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
- ² Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;
save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my divine patron; ³be gracious to me, YHWH,
for to you I cry all day long.
- ⁴ Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, YHWH, I lift up my soul.
- ⁵ For you, YHWH, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.
- ⁶ Give ear, YHWH, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.
- ⁷ In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.

Profession of faith

- ⁸ There is none like you among the divine patrons, YHWH,
nor are there any works like yours.
- ⁹ All the peoples you have made shall come
and bow down before you, YHWH,
and shall glorify your name.
- ¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are our divine patron.

Petition

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, YHWH,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

Vow

- ¹² I give thanks to you, YHWH my divine patron, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name for ever.
- ¹³ For great is your steadfast love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Complaint

¹⁴ My divine patron, the insolent rise up against me;
Fools⁶¹ seek my life,
and they do not set you before them.

Profession of faith

¹⁵ But you, YHWH, are my divine patron merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Petition

¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save this son of my mother, who is your servant.⁶²
¹⁷ Show me assign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, YHWH, have helped me and comforted me

⁶¹ NRSV: *a band of ruffians*

⁶² See: Ps 22:9-10; 27:10; 35:14; 50:20; 51:5; 71:6; 109:14; 116:16; 131:2; 139:13; Luke 1:26-37. Marc Zvi Brettler, "Women and Psalms: Toward an Understanding of the Role of Women's Prayer in the Israelite Cult," in (Sheffield, Eng: Sheffield Academic Pr, 1998), 25-56.; Marc Zvi Brettler, "Mother of Psalmist (God's Serving Girl)," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament*, eds. Toni Craven Carol Meyers and Ross S. Kraemer (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 296-297. Brettler considers the colon (Ps 86:16) to be a stock parallel in Hebrew: a son (Hebrew: *'ebed*) and his mother (Hebrew: *'amat*). Both the mother and her son are servants or slaves of YHWH.

A Teaching of Jesus

(Luke 5:27-32)

Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him: *Follow me.*

Leaving everything behind, Levi got up and followed Jesus. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them.

The Pharisees and their scribes complained to the followers of Jesus: *Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?*

Jesus teaches: *Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.*

Homily

My name is Jon Linton and I am devoted to bringing greater awareness to our homeless.⁶³ At no time since the Great Depression have more people called the streets home. We have an estimated 22,000 homeless here in Arizona. And, more than 60 percent of that number live right here in Maricopa County.

Several years ago, I started a campaign to call attention to those who live in the margins. Why? In 2007, I stopped to speak with a homeless veteran holding a sign pleading for help. When I asked his name the man began to weep and said it had been years since anyone had cared to ask who he was. In that moment the “I Have A Name Project” was born. I shall never forget Chuck Ridgeway.

After meeting Chuck, I began taking black and white photographs of people living on street (with their permission) in an effort to bring a face to homelessness. Last year while preparing for an exhibition, a message came across social media that read: My daughter has a name and now she is gone. I would learn that an 18-year-old-girl had lost her life while experiencing homelessness. Through the power of social media, our project helped this family bring their little girl home for a proper goodbye.

Out of this painful tragedy, the I Have a Name Project created a mural in downtown Phoenix that pays remembrance to those who have perished while homeless on our city streets. The mural’s image depicts a child, representing mankind’s future, standing atop a pillar of words reading: “At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by, I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in [Mother Teresa].”

Says the mural’s artist Brian Boner: “The boy spills birds from a watering can in an attempt to spread a message of tolerance, compassion, and humanity to the masses. The birds fly forever, carrying these words throughout the world, allowing more and more to join the flock until everyone moves in unison. Each one raising the other higher and higher, until no one feels heavy, no one feels despair, everyone has hope. We have an obligation to teach the children of the world kindness and compassion towards our fellow man. There is no better way to teach them than to demonstrate it ourselves.”

⁶³ PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK Copyright © 2016 The Arizona Republic
02/13/2016

February 13, 2016 7:04 am (GMT +7:00)

On Friday, Feb. 19, 2016 at the mural site, on the MonOrchid building's west wall at 214 E. Roosevelt St., we will hold a candlelight vigil to honor lives lost to homelessness.

Jon Linton is an artist and the founder of the I Have a Name Project. He is devoted to bringing greater awareness to our homeless people.

Monday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 224

Reading [1LV 19:1-2, 11-18](#)

The LORD said to Moses,
“Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell them:
Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy.

“You shall not steal.
You shall not lie or speak falsely to one another.
You shall not swear falsely by my name,
thus profaning the name of your God.
I am the LORD.

“You shall not defraud or rob your neighbor.
You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your day laborer.
You shall not curse the deaf,
or put a stumbling block in front of the blind,
but you shall fear your God.
I am the LORD.

“You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment.
Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty,
but judge your fellow men justly.
You shall not go about spreading slander among your kin;
nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake.
I am the LORD.

“You shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart.
Though you may have to reprove him,
do not incur sin because of him.
Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen.
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
I am the LORD.”

A Lament

(Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm dedicated to David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
the firmament proclaims the handiwork of YHWH.
- ² One day tells its stories to another,
One night makes report to the next.⁶⁴
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
- ⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.
- In the heavens YHWH has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵YHWH comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,⁶⁵

⁶⁴ NRSV: Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

⁶⁵ Hebrew: *huppah*

A huppah is a Jewish wedding canopy with four open sides. A Jewish wedding ceremony typically occurs under a huppah.

The huppah typically consists of a square cloth made of silk, wool, velvet or cotton, supported by four poles. The poles stand on the ground and are often held upright by friends of the couple. The poles can also be free-standing and decorated with flowers. Couples can make their own huppah, use a congregation's huppah or rent one from a Jewish bookstore or florist.

The huppah symbolizes the new home that the couple will create. The ancient rabbis compared the huppah to the tent of Abraham, found in biblical story. Abraham was famed for his hospitality; his tent had entrances on all four sides so that travelers coming from any direction would have a door to enter.

The creation of the huppah can offer a way to involve your guests and your family's religious or ethnic cultures in the wedding. The huppah could include patterns and materials that are traditional to the non-Jewish partner's family or culture. Some couples also send their guests squares of fabric and ask them to decorate the squares with words or drawings that will be significant to the couple. The couple then has the squares sewn together into a quilt which becomes the huppah covering and then a wall hanging in their home. The space inside should be big enough for the couple, clergy and a small table for ritual items like wine and glasses. Family and friends in the wedding party, including parents, often stand outside the huppah.

Some couples also use a family heirloom, such as a grandfather's prayer shawl (Hebrew: *tallit*), a prized family tablecloth or other sacred or familial fabric, as the huppah covering, being careful to secure the fabric in a way that won't threaten its survival in case of rough weather. Make sure the huppah can withstand the weather, if outdoors, and is tall enough for the tallest person to stand under it with the center drag of the covering not hitting him or her on the head. Five-foot-by-six is the size of largest prayer shawls, often used as huppah coverings, and is a good size for most weddings. The poles are often 7 1/2 feet tall to accommodate people over 5-foot-10.

[http://www.interfaithfamily.com/life_cycle/weddings/The Jewish Wedding Canopy \(Huppah\).shtml](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/life_cycle/weddings/The_Jewish_Wedding_Canopy_(Huppah).shtml)

Our divine patron runs the course like a joyful athlete.

⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
its circuit to the end of them;
nothing is hidden from its warmth.

⁷ The teachings of YHWH are perfect,
reviving the soul;
the teachings⁶⁶ of the YHWH are sure,
making students wise;

⁸ the precepts of the YHWH are right,
making minds rejoice;
the commandment of the YHWH is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

⁹ living morally⁶⁷ is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the YHWH are true
completely righteous.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even fine gold in abundance;
sweeter also than honey,
dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

¹¹ Moreover by them is your follower⁶⁸ warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can detect their sins?
Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³ Stand between your follower and the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let my mouth's words and my heart's prayer be acceptable to you,
O YHWH, who births me and delivers me from my enemies.

⁶⁶ NRSV: *decrees*

⁶⁷ NRSV: *Fear of YHWH*

⁶⁸ NRSV: *servant*

(Matt 25:31-46)

Jesus taught his followers:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all peoples will be assembled before him.

The Son of Man will separate the peoples one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my godparent. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’

Then the righteous will ask: ‘Teacher, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’

The king will answer: Without question, whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me.’

Then the Son of Man will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his messengers. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’

Then those on the left will ask: Teacher, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’

The Son of Man will answer: ‘Without question,⁶⁹ what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’

Those on the left will go off to eternal punishment, but those on the right⁷⁰ to eternal life.”

⁶⁹ NRSV: *Amen, I say to you* -- without a doubt; trust me; without question;

⁷⁰ NRSV: *righteous*

Homily

**HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS
HOLY MASS AT THE ECATEPEC STUDY CENTRE (MEXICO)
SUNDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2016**

Last Wednesday we began the liturgical season of Lent, during which the Church invites us to prepare ourselves to celebrate the great feast of Easter. This is a special time for recalling the gift of our baptism, when we became children of God. The Church invites us to renew the gift she has given us, to not let this gift lie dormant as if it were something from the past or locked away in some “memory chest”. Lent is a good time to recover the joy and hope that make us feel beloved sons and daughters of the Father. The Father who waits for us in order to cast off our garments of exhaustion, of apathy, of mistrust, and so clothe us with the dignity which only a true father or mother knows how to give their children, with the garments born of tenderness and love.

Our Father, he is the Father of a great family; he is our Father. He knows that he has a unique love, but he does not know how to bear or raise an “only child”. He is the God of the home, of brotherhood, of bread broken and shared. He is the God who is “Our Father”, not “my father” or “your stepfather”.

God’s dream makes its home and lives in each one of us so that at every Easter, in every Eucharist we celebrate, we may be the children of God. It is a dream which so many of our brothers and sisters have had through history. A dream witnessed to by the blood of so many martyrs, both from long ago and from now.

Lent is a time of conversion, of daily experiencing in our lives of how this dream is continually threatened by the father of lies, by the one who tries to separate us, making a divided and fractious society. A society of the few, and for the few. How often we experience in our own lives, or in our own families, among our friends or neighbours, the pain which arises when the dignity we carry within is not recognized. How many times have we had to cry and regret on realizing that we have not acknowledged this dignity in others. How often – and it pains me to say it – have we been blind and impervious in failing to recognize our own and others’ dignity.

Lent is a time for reconsidering our feelings, for letting our eyes be opened to the frequent injustices which stand in direct opposition to the dream and the plan of God. It is a time to unmask three great temptations that wear down and fracture the image which God wanted to form in us:

There are three temptations of Christ... three temptations for the Christian, which seek to destroy what we have been called to be; three temptations which try to corrode us and tear us down.

Wealth: seizing hold of goods destined for all, and using them only for “my own people”. That is, taking the “bread” based on the toil of others, or even at the expense of their very lives. That wealth which tastes of pain, bitterness

and suffering. This is the bread that a corrupt family or society gives its own children.

Vanity: the pursuit of prestige based on continuous, relentless exclusion of those who “are not like me”. The futile chasing of those five minutes of fame which do not forgive the “reputation” of others. “Making firewood from a felled tree” gives way to the third temptation:

Pride: or rather, putting oneself on a higher level than one truly is on, feeling that one does not share the life of “mere mortals”, and yet being one who prays every day: “I thank you Lord that you have not made me like those others...”.

Three temptations of Christ... Three temptations which the Christian is faced with daily. Three temptations which seek to corrode, destroy and extinguish the joy and freshness of the Gospel. Three temptations which lock us into a cycle of destruction and sin.

And so it is worth asking ourselves:

To what degree are we aware of these temptations in our lives, in our very selves?

How much have we become accustomed to a lifestyle where we think that our source and life force lies only in wealth?

To what point do we feel that caring about others, our concern and work for bread, for the good name and dignity of others, are wellsprings of happiness and hope?

We have chosen Jesus, not the evil one; we want to follow in his footsteps, even though we know that this is not easy. We know what it means to be seduced by money, fame and power. For this reason, the Church gives us the gift of this Lenten season, invites us to conversion, offering but one certainty: he is waiting for us and wants to heal our hearts of all that tears us down. He is the God who has a name: Mercy. His name is our wealth, his name is what makes us famous, his name is our power and in his name we say once more with the Psalm: “You are my God and in you I trust”. Let us repeat these words together: “You are my God and in you I trust”.

In this Eucharist, may the Holy Spirit renew in us the certainty that his name is Mercy, and may he let us experience each day that “the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus...”, knowing that “with Christ and in Christ joy is constantly born anew” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudi* #183/Page 54

Curiously, Francis does not speak the poor of Ecatepec, but stands with them and is their voice in speaking to the powerful of not only Mexico, but of the world.

Wealth, vanity and pride are not clear and distinct, but are an effort by Francis to translate the temptations of Jesus to be a messiah who takes away poverty, who drives the Romans into the Sea, and who captivates crowds with

spectacles – as fundamentally temptations of a selfie-culture. A world view which is all about me, instead of all about we.

Francis' strongest line is: *Our Father, he is the Father of a great family; he is our Father. He knows that he has a unique love, but he does not know how to bear or raise an "only child". He is the God of the home, of brotherhood, of bread broken and shared. He is the God who is "Our Father", not "my father" or "your stepfather".* The chosen one is a household.

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 225

A Teaching of YHWH

(Isa 55:10-11)

Just as the rain and snow come down from the heavens above and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to those who sow and bread to those who are hungry, so shall my word be that comes from my mouth not return until those who hear me carry out my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

A Hymn

(Ps 34:1-22)

Dedicated to David

In memory of when he acted insane before Abimelech, who then sent him into exile.

Call to Worship

- ¹ I will bless YHWH at all times;
I will sing praise YHWH continually.
- ² My soul boasts in YHWH;
Let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify YHWH with me,
Let us exalt the name of YHWH together.

Creation story

- ⁴ I sought YHWH;
YHWH answered me,

- YHWH delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to YHWH
Be radiant;
So your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ Helpless, I cried out;
YHWH heard me,
YHWH saved me from all my troubles.
- ⁷ The messenger of YHWH encamps around those who live morally YHWH,
and delivers them.

Call to worship

- ⁸ O taste and see that YHWH is good;
Wise⁷¹ are those who take refuge in YHWH.
- ⁹ Live morally,⁷² holy ones of YHWH.
Those who live morally have no want.
- ¹⁰ Young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek YHWH lack nothing.
- ¹¹ Come, my students,⁷³ listen to me;
I will teach you how to live morally.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

Creation story

- ¹⁵ The eyes of YHWH are on the righteous,
The ears of YHWH are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of YHWH is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, YHWH hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ YHWH is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but YHWH rescues them from them all.
- ²⁰ YHWH keeps all their bones;

⁷¹ NRSV: Happy

⁷² Comparable to ...*fear* YHWH

⁷³ NRSV: children

- not one of them will be broken.⁷⁴
- ²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² YHWH redeems the life of the people of YHWH;
none of those who take refuge in YHWH will be condemned.

Teachings on Prayer

(Matt 6:7-15)

Jesus taught his followers:

When you pray, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your godparent knows what you need before you ask.

Pray like this:

‘Abba, you live in the heavens above,
I will praise your name.
I will work to build up the Kingdom of Heaven,
To carry out your will here on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today enough to eat.
Forgive our sins against you as we forgive the sins of others against us.
Protect our faith in you during the end time.
Deliver us from cynicism and despair that good, not evil, will prevail.

*Embolism*⁷⁵

If you forgive the sins of others here on earth,
your godparent in the heavens above will forgive you.
If you do not forgive the sins of others here on earth,
Your godparent in the heavens above will not forgive your sins.

⁷⁴ Becomes important in the passion stories of Jesus (John 19:36)

⁷⁵ An embolism is a short meditation on one of the lines of the prayer. Most Catholics meditate on the line: *Deliver us from evil*; most Reformation Christians meditate on the line: *Your kingdom come*.

Homily

Wednesday of the First Week in Lent

Lectionary: 226

A Parable of Jonah

(Jonah 3:1-10)

Crisis (Jonah 1:1—3:9)

...The second word of YHWH to Jonah:

Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you.

So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, as YHWH commanded.

Now Nineveh was an enormously large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day's walk announcing: *Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed*, when the people of Nineveh professed their faith in our divine patron. They proclaimed a fast and all of them, powerful and powerless, put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the Great King of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles: *Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to our divine patron; every household shall turn away from evil and from violence. Who knows, our divine patron may turn away relent and forgive, and withhold blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish.*

When YHWH saw by their repentance -- how they turned from evil -- YHWH turned away from the evil which YHWH had threatened to do to them.

A Lament

(Ps 51:1-19)

To the leader

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan confronted him, after he raped Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
My sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
I have done what is evil in your sight,
You are justified in your sentence,
You are blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
My mother conceived me as a sinner.⁷⁶

Petition

- ⁶ You desire me to be honest even with myself;
Teach me to be wise even when I am alone.⁷⁷
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be clean.⁷⁸
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
Blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰ Create in me a sincere heart,⁷⁹ my divine patron,
Put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,

⁷⁶ Important tradition supporting theology of original sin.

⁷⁷ Hebrew: *secret* only – the word *heart* is missing in Hebrew

⁷⁸ NRSV: *whiter* -- Christians of color do not want to be *white*, just forgiven. Non-white people of faith find such metaphors offensive or colonial.

⁷⁹ *Clean heart* is the Hebrew idiom for *sincere*

Do not take your holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
Sustain in me a willing spirit.

Vow

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

15 YHWH, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.⁸⁰
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
17 The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a humble⁸¹ spirit;
a humble and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Mt. Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in true⁸² sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

⁸⁰ My mantra: *Our Lord open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise; O God come to my assistance, O Lord make haste to help me.*

See: John Main, OSB who teaches a mantra-based style of meditation similar to Centering Prayer that he learned from his Hindu teacher -- Swami Satyananda. Main alleges that this technique was also taught by St. John Cassian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These are the same Catholic sources claimed by those who practice centering prayer and some scholars question Main's interpretation of the Catholic contemplative tradition and its relationship to the Hindu tradition.

⁸¹ NRSV: *humble*

⁸² NRSV: *right*

Teachings on Repentance

(Luke 11:29-32)

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus taught:

This generation is evil, because it seeks a sign. No sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man is a sign to this generation.

At the judgment the Queen of the South will indict and convict this generation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is someone greater than Solomon here.

At the judgment the people of Nineveh will indict and convict this generation, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is someone greater than Jonah here.

Homily

There is a long standing tradition of interpretation of these Teachings on Repentance that the sign of Jonah is that, like Jesus, Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, and then was brought back to shore by YHWH just as Jesus was three days in the tomb, and then was raised from the death by his godparent. A more likely reading is that just as both the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South turned their lives around, or turned away (Hebrew: sub) from their old lives and embraces new lives when they heard the preaching of Jonah and the teachings of Solomon, this generation needs to turn away from their old live – from evil – and embrace new lives as followers of Jesus.

Thursday of the First Week in Lent

Lectionary: 227

Reading 1 [EST C:12, 14-16, 23-25](#)

Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, had recourse to the LORD.

She lay prostrate upon the ground, together with her handmaids, from morning until evening, and said:

“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, blessed are you. Help me, who am alone and have no help but you,

for I am taking my life in my hand.
As a child I used to hear from the books of my forefathers
that you, O LORD, always free those who are pleasing to you.
Now help me, who am alone and have no one but you,
O LORD, my God.

“And now, come to help me, an orphan.
Put in my mouth persuasive words in the presence of the lion
and turn his heart to hatred for our enemy,
so that he and those who are in league with him may perish.
Save us from the hand of our enemies;
turn our mourning into gladness
and our sorrows into wholeness.”

A Lament

(Ps 138:1-8)

Dedicated to David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I give you thanks, YHWH, with my whole heart;
 Before the members of the divine assembly I sing your praise;
- ² I bow down towards your holy Temple
 I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and faithfulness;
 for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
- ³ On the day I called, you answered me,
 You increased my strength of soul.
- ⁴ All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, YHWH,
 for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of YHWH,
 for great is the glory of YHWH.
- ⁶ For though YHWH is high, YHWH regards the lowly;
 but the haughty YHWH perceives from far away.
- ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
 your right hand delivers me.
- ⁸ YHWH will fulfill my destiny;
 your steadfast love, YHWH, endures forever.

Petition

Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Teachings on Prayer

(Matt 7:7-12)

Jesus taught his followers:

“Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
Which one of you would hand his son a stone
when he asked for a loaf of bread,
or a snake when he asked for a fish?
If you then, who are wicked,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your heavenly Father give good things
to those who ask him.

“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.
This is the law and the prophets.”

Homily

Se ve! Se siente! El Papa esta presente! – You can see it. You can feel it. The Pope gets it!

Siempre hay posibilidad de cambio. Never lose hope.

VISIT OF FRANCIS TO JUAREZ (MEXICO) FEBRUARY 17, 2016.

I remember a story of Peter down on his knees and reading for the first time the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962—1965) which he had carefully laid out on the floor in front of him. *Se ve! Se siente. El Espiritu esta presente!* You can see it. You can feel it. The Holy Spirit has inspired church leaders to get it! *Siempre hay posibilidad de cambio.* Never lose hope. The vision of the Council inspired so many of us, and rekindled our hope that the church would once again bring hope to the poor.

Pope Francis, like the Second Vatican Council, once again rekindles that hope – even if only for a day or a week in a Mexico, a country which is a visible sacrament of the poor around the world. I am grateful that he came. I am grateful that he speaks with such clarity and with such conviction especially because – once again, finally – there is a leader who understands and endorses the lives of solidarity with the poor of all the men and women – like Betty and Peter – who day after day witness to the poor that there is hope, that suffering will end, that their suffering will end soon, and, when it does, good, not evil will prevail. They are the *didache* to Francis' *kerygma*.

New Testament scholar Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921) described the mission of Jesus and his followers with two Greek words: *keryma* and *didache*. Like the prophets of ancient Israel, they announced – *keryma* -- the creation of a new world. The old world of sin, suffering, and slavery had been destroyed. A new world of salvation, healing and freedom had been created. Then they patiently explained – *didache* -- how this new world worked using both the words they used to teach and their way of life.

For too long popes like Paul VI (1897-1978), John Paul II (1920-2005) and Benedict XVI (1928-) cautioned against the dangers of embracing the world and its poor. They considered the liberation theology described by Gustavo Gutierrez (1928-) in his *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (1972) to be only a Catholic Marxism as proposed by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in their *Communist Manifesto* (1848). The *kerygma* of these popes was not simply a limited theological discussion, it was a pastoral proclamation which cast a shroud over the lives of men and women

living in *comunidades de base* throughout Latin America. Inspired by the world view in Second Vatican Council in the *Pastoral Constitution of Church in the Modern World* (1965) and the documents of the Conference of Bishops in Latin America (CELAM) from Medellin, Colombia (1966) and Puebla, Mexico (1979) – and undeterred by papal censure -- these men and women maintained their *didache* in solidarity with the poor and the persecuted to give them hope and to challenge the powerful to adopt business models which highlighted service rather than exploitation.

Now the *kerygma* of Francis and the *didache* of the *comunidades de base* in the Americas are once again in harmony. The gospel of Jesus is preached and lived harmonious – at least in some church communities. Nonetheless, as the experience of the church after the Second Vatican Council there is still much to be done before local churches reflect that harmony, but as Lao Tzu (570-490 BCE?), the venerable teacher of the Dao, taught his followers in his *Tao Te Ching: the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step* – a step which Francis continues to invite us to take because it will announce our own confidence that: *Siempre hay posibilidad de cambio*.

FEBRUARY 18, 2016

The Radical Meaning of Pope Francis's Visit to Juárez

BY JAMES CARROLL

WWW.NEWYORKER.COM/NEWS/NEWS-DESK/THE-RADICAL-MEANING-OF-POPE-FRANCISS-VISIT-TO-JUAREZ

Across Mexico this week, Pope Francis spoke tenderly to masses of ordinary people and delivered blistering messages—“God will hold accountable the enslavers of our day”—to drug lords, corrupt government officials, oligarchs, and even bishops. But in Juárez on Wednesday, at the U.S.-Mexico border, he offered perhaps his most powerful statement with a simple blessing and the act of standing still. On a platform overlooking the Rio Grande, in blazing sunlight, beside crosses memorializing migrants who had died making the trek north, Francis faced the skyline of El Paso, Texas—an unreachable city for many of the thousands of Mexicans who came to see him. Unlike everything else that Francis did and said during his trip, this act was expressly addressed to the people of the United States. By looking across the river from south to north, by

aligning his gaze with that of the Mexican public, Francis was asking this country to think about its migrant crisis from a different point of view. The Pope leads not by mandate but by invitation. “Let us together ask God for the gift of conversion,” he prayed at the border Mass. By “conversion,” Francis meant a change in attitude. This was a particular instance of his broad emphasis on the urgency of considering questions of the economy, climate, health, and culture from the perspective of the impoverished global majority. It is an idea that has proved unpopular with some of our current and aspiring political leaders. Donald Trump, Jeb Bush, and Marco Rubio have all, at various times, defended themselves from the implications of papal criticism by decrying this religious figure’s trespass into the political realm. Trump, when asked about the Pope’s intention to stand at the border, denigrated him as “a very political person” and a tool of the Mexican government. (On Thursday, Francis addressed Trump’s comments directly while on his way back to the Vatican. “A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not of building bridges, is not Christian,” he said. “As to whether I am a pawn, well, maybe. I don’t know. I’ll leave that up to your judgment and that of the people.”) Defenders of the Pope, meanwhile, insist that, on the issue of poverty, he is properly political. But something crucial is being lost in the back-and-forth argument about the distinction between religion and politics, which is only a variant of old American quarrels about church and state. The Pope’s standing shoulder to shoulder with a beleaguered people recapitulates the very foundation of the Biblical faith, which began, after all, in a migrant crisis like ours. In Exodus 3:7-8, God says, “I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them.” The Hebrews, understood by Pharaoh as the cause of plagues that threatened to destroy his nation, were driven out into the wilderness, where they wandered for forty years. The Hebrews of old, that is, were the first displaced persons.

The Bible tells a story of power, violence, and conquest, but—and this sets the Bible apart—it tells that story from the point of view of the victims of power, not the possessors of power. When plagues strike a country—disease, economic collapse, political anarchy, blood in the water—the country, for the purposes of social order, typically heaps its distress onto a marginal, despised minority. They become a scapegoat (a word that refers to the sacrificial goat that the Israelites, in Leviticus 16, send away in an act of atonement). Once that victim is expelled, the nation can seem to heal—which is, of course, the fantasy that Trump has, with his plan to deport eleven million undocumented immigrants. The scapegoat story is usually told by those doing the scapegoating. But the Bible, beginning with the Exodus exile, flips that narrative to affirm that God stands with those who have been cast out.

God's solidarity with the disenfranchised is not just a function of his omnidirectional love. No, love is the concern of those at the top of the social order. Those at the bottom want not love but justice—and the Bible offers it by seeing everything from below, from south to north. Thus, when people are scapegoated and driven out, God goes with them. This is the radical vision that so-called religion has, across the millennia, sought to domesticate, or even delete. Religion has continually realigned God with the powerful, and that is the religion invoked against Francis by Trump and the others.

In the United States—decisively including the Obama Administration, which has been so ruthless about deportations—Latino migrants are the paradigmatic scapegoat of the moment. (In Europe, the scapegoated people are Muslims, and Francis has stood with them, too.) His presence at the border in Juárez may have special resonance because he is the first Latin American Pope, but his stance transcends personal identity, just as it transcends politics and religion. He is offering neither an explicit critique of U.S. immigration policy nor a solution to the many dilemmas that bedevil its reform. He is simply suggesting that there is another point of view that must be reckoned with. Standing at the Rio Grande with Mexicans, Pope Francis was only being Biblical.

Friday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 228

Reading 1 [EZ 18:21-28](#)

Thus says the Lord GOD:

If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed,
if he keeps all my statutes and does what is right and just,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.
None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him;
he shall live because of the virtue he has practiced.
Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked?
says the Lord GOD.
Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way
that he may live?

And if the virtuous man turns from the path of virtue to do evil,
the same kind of abominable things that the wicked man does,
can he do this and still live?
None of his virtuous deeds shall be remembered,
because he has broken faith and committed sin;
because of this, he shall die.
You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:
Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?
When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies,
it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.
But if the wicked, turning from the wickedness he has committed,
does what is right and just,
he shall preserve his life;
since he has turned away from all the sins that he committed,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm PS 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7A, 7BC-8

R. (3) **If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

R. **If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?**

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?

But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R. **If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?**

I trust in the LORD;
my soul trusts in his word.
My soul waits for the LORD
more than sentinels wait for the dawn.

Let Israel wait for the LORD.

R. **If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?**

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption;
And he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

R. **If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?**

Verse Before The Gospel EZ 18:31

Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the Lord,
and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

Teachings on Forgiveness

(Matt 5:20-26)

Jesus taught his followers:

“I tell you,
unless your righteousness surpasses that

of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment,
and whoever says to his brother, *Raqa*,
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin,
and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fires burning in the Valley of
Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that someone in your community⁸³
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

Homily

DRAFT OF ARTICLE BY PETER C. HINDE, O. CARM. ON FRANCIS’ VISIT TO JUAREZ 2.17.2016

2ns Commentary

Ken, Here’s my attempt that it be in first person, our experience. Be sure to check the photos that follow all the way down to page 6. Maybe you can find more suited ones on your own. I hope this - maybe with your heavy editing adjustments - will work for the Review.

Pope Francis: Mercy and Hope in the Midst of Tears in
Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

There was excitement on both sides of this border dividing El Paso and Juarez. The two diocese from early January began talking plans with the city officials to handle the flood of visitors to arrive for Pope Francis’s visit. For city officials and police security for the Pope was of maximum concern. The local media reported daily in anticipation with related questions and commentary. From Feb. 12 on the Holy Father’s talks and gestures in the

⁸³ NAB: *brother*

Capitol, Chiapas, and Michoacan streamed in our national media stirring further excitement.

Thank God, the day dawned fair with mild temperature. But how get to the site of the events planned for Pope Francis's visit to Cd. Juarez? This question had plagued the author of this article, his friends and associates for weeks prior to the February 17, day of his visit. The city stopped all traffic from midnight and all day over the Pan-Am Highway from the airport in the south to *La Punta* (Fair Ground site of the 4 pm Mass) at the border in the north. No cross was traffic allowed... the city in two halves...the same done with streets leading off that major route to the Federal Prison and Seminary.

The preparation would insure that the actual event would be truly significant. The Vatican sent lead organizers as also did the Federal government. The diocesan papers filled pages and whole editions with a catechesis on the Church's teaching on social Justice and Peace, Pope Francis's teaching in "Joy of the Gospel" and "Our Common Home." Bishop Jose Guadalupe Torres of Juarez gave media video presentations and fine talks as at different venues to present our Holy Father. Acolytes and young musicians were chosen to be at the airport: acolytes for his arrival, musicians to play at his departure.

Just from our parish – one of 70 – hundreds of young men were recruited for monitoring crowds along the route and at venues for the Pope, many to head for their stations as early as midnight. People from El Paso across the border left at 4:30 a.m. At six in the morning the very day of the Mass Sister Betty and Emilia joined people leaving by a special bus from the nearby parish church to one of 11 designated places for a relay in yet more buses on to La Punta. People had to walk the last mile or two and - according to the color of their ticket - to one of five entrances to the walled-off fair grounds.

Yours truly, like other priests, at 8 a.m. gathered at the parish *Sagrada Familia* to be treated like royalty with a great breakfast, bottles of water, wrapped sandwiches before piling into buses. We walked our share of the miles from the point of drop-off and immediately met merchants hawking Papal flags. Blocks away from our destination we met thousands of people moving in various directions looking for their assigned entrance. Long lines already formed. By some intuition we found the entrance with no line of people into a major fire station inside the fair grounds at the back-side of the imposing sanctuary built for the occasion.

The only mess-up occurred when we were blocked from ascending the backside walk-way up to the sanctuary. The 100+ needed to be checked as on the list of concelebrants. We headed back to the spacious fire-station building where over the next hours of wait we met priests from other dioceses, from other parts of Mexico, the US and other countries. The 100+ choir members hung out there also awaiting the call to the sanctuary.

We missed during that wait the TV coverage of the Pope at the other venues, which the crowd out front watched on the huge TV screens set up for

the occasion. That same tech-system was used for the Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso for another near 40 thousand people. Betty and Emelia quote people of the 200 thousand behind, standing in the hot sun that for them, too, the time passed fast. A whole line of people in wheel chairs were in front with an unobstructed view from immediately before the Sanctuary.

The more important question was

“What will Pope Francis say when he addresses the people and reality of this Border city? As important as his message conveyed in his talks were, the symbols, gestures, places and people he chose to visit: in Mexico City the sick, widows, and orphans, in Chaipas with its oppressed native peoples and refugees from violence in Central America, in Michoacan the families victimized by the violence of State and Narcos; in Juarez prisoners, woefully under-paid workers, youth without opportunity, and forced migration.

In most of his talks he named the evils of today: the selfishness and indifference of those well-off, avarice for unnecessary wealth, the kidnapping, extortion, trafficking of persons, the consumerism leading to *el descarte* (trashing) of things and people. “Descarte” he would repeat with emphasis in most of his talks. He decried the lack of opportunity in education and jobs for the young that set them up for crime as the only way out of a dead-end situation

Suddenly in the Fair Grounds, from the back of the crowd, cheering spread to envelope the whole crowd including us concelebrants in our assigned places jumping up, moving to get a better view. The Pope-Mobile could be seen passing the distant Juarez Stadium where another 15,000 people watched TV screen. Back and forth thru aisles in the most distant part of the crowd, then down along the north side to stop at the foot of a cement ramp. (cf diagram) He walked up the ramp to a 15 foot cross mounted at the very edge of the river border. Here not the clergy, but the people in the audience had the advantage to see on the TV screens that at the heart of the cross was a painting of a migrant Holy Family: Mary with Jesus on a donkey and Joseph leading in a desert landscape.

Pope Francis there blessed that cross and then placed flowers at two small crosses, symbol of the many who died trying to cross this border. He said a prayer there for migrants. After a brief silence he turned to his right and waved to the little crowd of people permitted on the El Paso side. He also pointed in the direction of those in the more distant Sun Bowl Stadium watching him on their big screen and in both places they broke into appreciative applause. He would repeat this gesture to that audience in El Paso during his homily.

The Pope then rode to the backside of the Sanctuary. Suddenly he was there at the altar and vested for Mass. He was another level higher and to the right of where yours truly was seated. Some six Cardinals and 70 bishops had occupied seats on both sides at the same level as the altar. The choir broke into song an entrance song: “God is faithful to His Covenant to free his

people...a people on the march across a burning desert.” Pope Francis followed strictly the formula of the Mass.

Pope Francis began his homily at the Mass telling he had tears as he kissed and blessed a boy crippled by some accident. He prayed that we all would receive the gift of tears as we celebrate the year of mercy he designated as for 2016. Mercy and tears for the power to forgive, to reconcile, to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. That we exclude no one, that we reach out to those hurt, struggling, and often forgotten.

He cited from the first Scripture reading in the Book of Jonah how the people and king of Nineveh turned from evil ways to gain the blessings of the God of peace. Now in this year of Mercy we must end exaggerated competition, put aside hatred, give aid to brothers and sisters in need, and do the hard work for peace and reconciliation.

The El Paso Times Feb 18 helps here, for we lacked recording equipment for exact quotes. “As expected, Pope Francis' homily focused on the plight of migrants and refugees. Here in Ciudad Juárez, as in other border areas, there are thousands of immigrants from Central America and other countries, not forgetting the many Mexicans who also seek to pass over to the other side. Each step, a journey laden with grave injustices: the enslaved, the imprisoned and extorted; so many of these brothers and sisters of ours are the consequence of a trade in human beings....We cannot deny the humanitarian crisis, which in recent years has meant the migration of thousands of people, whether by train or highway or on foot, crossing hundreds of kilometers through mountains, deserts and inhospitable zones....This crisis should be measured with names, stories and families – not numbers and statistics.”

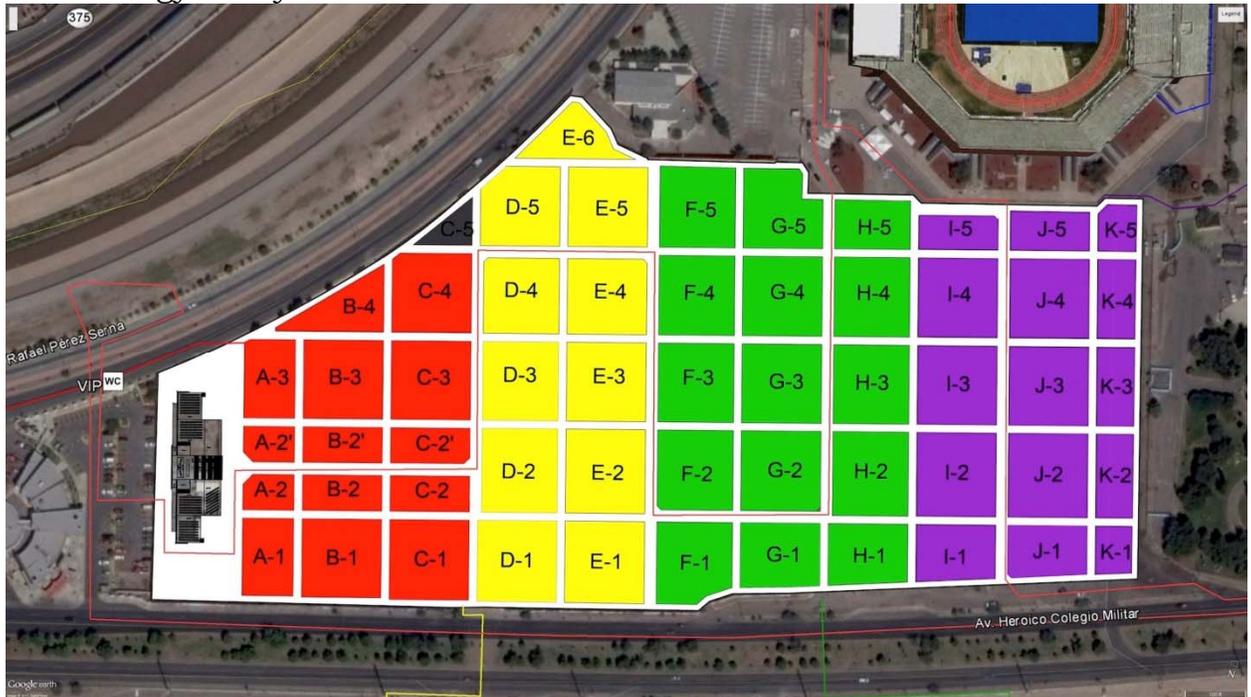
Pope Francis might well have pointed to the work of Sister Betty who in our back patio here at Casa Tabor has painted murals with the names of hundreds of the force-ably disappeared, the tortured and murdered, remembered by their individual names, not just as numbers and statistics. She has a special mural for the 215 media people murdered in Mexico since 1993 underscoring:”The cost of telling the truth!”

Pope Francis ended his homily with that same prayer for the gift of tears, but emphasized that we have the hope and confidence in God and Mexico's patroness Lady of Guadalupe. Like the people and king of Nineveh, cited in the Scripture reading of the day, we must go through a conversion from a consumer economy that trashes God's creation and trashes God's people, and work hard for a new society.

For the Canon of the Mass the concelebrants alternated with Francis. At the Consecration the stillness of the massive crowd below was awesome. At the kiss of peace we had been instructed to avoid delay, stay in place and greet just those within reach. Francis personally greeted the Cardinals and a few bishops. For communion a minister suddenly appeared with consecrated hosts on our level, he but one of hundreds spread throughout the crowd, thus to avoid a glut of ministers around the altar. Quiet again settled at the call for silent communion.

Pope Francis at the conclusion of the Mass simply reminded us to be Merciful during the Jubilee Year of *Misericordia*. He gave the blessing and as in all his talks added a P.S: “And don’t forget to pray for me!”

We add our own postscript to answer a serious complaint: “How could the Pope in a case of worldwide scandal for Mexico fail to meet with the families of the 43 young students force-ably disappeared on September 26, 2014 at the hands of government agents?” One must remember that in the whole country since 2006 over 160,000 murdered and 25,000 disappeared...11 massacres just in Juarez. So the Pope had to choose among thousands of cases what he found possible to address on this rapid trip...that truly left him spent of all energy. Pray for him.



Seating only provided in the red zone. The Juarez Stadium above right seated 15,000 with screen for TV projection. The crosses are at the very edge of the river-bank at the first bend of red line leading to the left from A-3. Credit the Juarez diocesan weekly, *Presencia*.



Ana Ortega 7, a first-grader, was chosen by the diocese of Juarez as one of four children to present flowers to the Pope at the airport in Juarez (This is a picture of Pope Francis before which she and her mother are standing.)



Pope Francis blesses the altar ambient with smoking incense at the beginning of his Mass at the border en Juarez, Feb. 17th. Printed in El Paso Times Feb. 18.

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 229

Covenant Promulgation (Deut 26:16—27:10)

DEUT 26:16-19

Moses taught the people:

Today⁸⁴ YHWH, your divine patron, commands you to observe the stipulations of this covenant. Be careful, then, to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Today you are making this covenant with YHWH, who alone is your divine patron and you are to walk in the ways of YHWH and observe the stipulations of this covenant between YHWH and Israel, and to listen to the voice of YHWH.

Today YHWH is making this covenant with you, who to be the people of YHWH as promised, provided you follow the way of YHWH, who will then raise you high in praise and renown and glory above all other peoples created by YHWH, and you will be a people sacred to YHWH, your divine patron, as YHWH promised.

⁸⁴ *Today* is a liturgical present which emphasizes that not only the generation at Sinai were clients of YHWH, because of one, unique historical experience, but that every generation has the same opportunity to encounter YHWH. Time and space is suspended. Catholic teachings uses the theology of a liturgical present to emphasize that at every Mass participants are present at the Last Supper with Jesus on the night before he died.

(Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹Wise are those whose way is blameless,
Wise are those who walk in the teachings⁸⁵ of YHWH.
²Wise⁸⁶ are those who learn from the instructions⁸⁷ of YHWH,
who seek YHWH with their whole hearts,⁸⁸
³ who do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of YHWH.
⁴ You have commanded your instructions
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in learning from your instructions! ⁸⁹
⁶ Then I shall not be shamed,
having my eyes fixed on all your teachings.⁹⁰

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your instructions;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your teachings.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed me, YHWH;
teach me your instructions.

⁸⁵ NRSV: way

⁸⁶ NRSV: Happy – they will succeed in life

⁸⁷ NRSV: keep the teachings

⁸⁸ NRSV: with their whole heart = with their whole mind – without reservation

⁸⁹ NRSV: keeping your instructions

⁹⁰ NRSV: teachings

Vow

- 13 With my lips I declare
 all the teachings of your mouth.
14 I delight in the way of your instructions
 as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your teachings,
 and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your instructions;
 I will not forget your word.

petition

- 17 Deal bountifully with your client,⁹¹
 so that I may live and follow your word.
18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
 what wondrous things your way brings forth.
19 I live as an outsider in the land;
 do not hide your teachings from me.
20 My soul is consumed with longing
 for your instructions at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
 who wander from your teachings;
22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
 for I have kept your teachings.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
 your client will meditate on your instructions.
24 Your teachings are my delight,
 they are my counselors.
25 My life drains into the soil;
 revive me according to your word.
26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
 teach me your teachings.
27 Make me understand the way of your instructions,
 and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
28 My life has collapsed from grief;
 Your word will raise me up.⁹²
29 Put false ways far from me;

⁹¹ NRSV: client

⁹² William L. Moran, "Note on Psalm 119:28," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (01/01, 1953), 10-10. MT reads : *dâl^epâ napsî mittûgâ qayy^emént kid^ebâr^ekâ*. I propose to render the first colon, "My soul has *collapsed* from grief." That the proposed meaning of *dip* is not foreign to Hebrew follows from Eccl 10:18, in which *dip* appears in parallelism with *mkk*, interpreted in the light of the Ugaritic parallelism, *mkk/ngs/dlp*. For, though "the house leaks" makes good sense in the Eccl passage, still the Ugaritic parallelism must be considered. In the latter, however, any such meaning as "drip, leak" seems impossible, and though the exact

- graciously teach me your ways.
- ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your teachings before me.
- ³¹ I cling to your instructions, YHWH;
let me not be put to shame.
- ³² I run the way of your teachings,
for you broaden my understanding.
- ³³ Teach me, YHWH, the way of your instructions,
and I will observe it to the end.
- ³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may keep your teachings
and observe it with my whole heart.
- ³⁵ Lead me in the path of your instructions,
for I delight in it.
- ³⁶ Turn my heart to your teachings,
and not to selfish gain.
- ³⁷ Turn my eyes from looking at short term success;⁹³
give me life in your ways.
- ³⁸ Confirm to your client your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- ³⁹ Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your teachings are good.
- ⁴⁰ See, I have longed for your instructions;
in your righteousness give me life.
- ⁴¹ Let your steadfast love come to me, YHWH,
your salvation according to your promise.
- ⁴² Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
- ⁴³ Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your teachings.
- ⁴⁴ I will keep your instructions continually,
for ever and ever.
- ⁴⁵ I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your teachings.
- ⁴⁶ I will also speak of your instructions before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
- ⁴⁷ I find my delight in your teachings,
because I love them.
- ⁴⁸ I revere your instructions, which I love,
and I will meditate on your teachings.
- ⁴⁹ Remember your word to your client,
in which you have made me hope.

meaning is hard to determine, still "collapse" cannot be wrong by much. Once, therefore, this meaning of Hebrew *dip* is recognized, the parallelism with *qayy*menī*, "raise me up," certainly favors, if it does not make imperative, our proposal.

⁹³ NRSV: *vanities*

Declaration of innocence

- 50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
- 51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your way.
- 52 When I think of your teachings from of old,
I take comfort, YHWH.
- 53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your way.
- 54 Your instructions have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
- 55 I remember your name in the night, YHWH,
and follow your teachings.
- 56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your instructions.
- 57 YHWH is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
- 58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
- 59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your teachings;
- 60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your instructions.
- 61 Though the nets of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your teachings.
- 62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous instructions.
- 63 I am a companion of all who act morally even when they are alone,
of those who follow your teachings.
- 64 The earth, YHWH, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your instructions.

Petition

- 65 You have dealt well with your client,
YHWH, according to your word.
- 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your teachings.
- 67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
- 68 You are good and do good;
teach me your instructions.
- 69 The arrogant smear me with lies,

- but with my whole heart I keep your instructions.
- 70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your way.
- 71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your teachings.
- 72 The way of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.
- 73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your instructions.
- 74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
- 75 I know, YHWH, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
- 76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your client.
- 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your way is my delight.
- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your teachings.
- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your instructions.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in your teachings,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*
- 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your teachings.
- 84 How long must your client endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
- 85 The arrogant have dug pits to ambush me;
they flout your way.
- 86 All your teachings are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
- 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your instructions.
- 88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the teachings of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 YHWH exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- 91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all creatures are your clients.
- 92 If your teachings had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your instructions,
for by them you have given me life.
- 94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your instructions.
- 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your teachings.
- 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your teachings are exceedingly broad.
- 97 Oh, how I love your instructions!
It is my meditation all day long.
- 98 Your teachings make me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your instructions are my meditation.
- 100 I understand more than my ancestors,
for I keep your teachings.
- 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
- 102 I do not turn away from your instructions,
for you have taught me.
- 103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- 104 Through your teachings I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

- 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
- 106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous teachings.
- 107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, YHWH, according to your word.

Profession of faith

- 108 Accept my offerings of praise, YHWH,
and teach me your instructions.
- 109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your way.
- 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your instructions.
- 111 Your teachings are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
- 112 I incline my heart to perform your teachings
forever, to the end.
- 113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your way.
- 114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
- 115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the teachings of my God.

Petition

- 116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
- 117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your teachings continually.
- 118 You spurn all who go astray from your instructions;
for their cunning is in vain.
- 119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I follow your teachings.
- 120 My body trembles like a woman in labor before you,
and I act morally even when I am alone.
- 121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
- 122 Guarantee your client's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
- 123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
- 124 Deal with your client according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your instructions.
- 125 I am your client; give me understanding,
so that I may know your teachings.
- 126 It is time for YHWH to act,
for your way has been lost.

Declaration of innocence

- 127 Truly I love your teachings
more than gold, more than fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all your instructions;
I hate every false way.
- 129 Your teachings are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your teachings.

Petition

- 132 Turn back to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your instructions.
135 Make your face shine upon your client,
and teach me your teaching.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your way is not kept.
- 137 You are righteous, YHWH,
and your judgments are right.
138 You have appointed your teachings in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your client loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your teachings.
142 Your wisdom is eternal,
and your teachings are true.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your instructions are my delight.
144 Your teachings are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, YHWH.
I will follow your teachings.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your teachings.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
YHWH, in your justice save my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your way.
151 Yet you are near, YHWH,
and all your teachings are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your teachings
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget follow your way.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your instructions.
156 Great is your mercy, YHWH;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your teachings.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your instructions;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your way.
164 Seven times a day I praise you

for your righteous ordinances.

165 Great peace have those who love your way;
nothing can make them stumble.

166 I hope for your salvation, YHWH,
and I fulfill your teachings.

167 My soul keeps your teachings;
I love them exceedingly.

168 I keep your instructions and teachings,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, YHWH;
give me understanding according to your word.

170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your instructions.

172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your teachings are right.

173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your instructions.

174 I long for your salvation, YHWH,
and your way is my delight.

175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your client, for I do not forget your teachings.

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Teachings on Insiders and Outsiders

(Matt 5:43-48)

Jesus taught his followers:

You have been taught: *You shall keep your commitments to insiders and make no commitments to outsiders*, but I am teaching you to love outsiders and pray for those who persecute you. Imitate your godparent in the heavens, who lets sun shine on the bad and the good, and lets the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. If you fulfill your covenant stipulations only with insiders, what virtue is there in doing so? Do not the tax collectors who collaborate with the Romans do as much? If you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not all peoples do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Homily

Yesterday Allen came over to visit with his son Joey. Joey has grown so quickly! He's already seven years old and is fluent in French and English. He even uses a bit of slang he's picked up on the street.

Raising children here is very different from the way we raise children at home. Here parents believe that "freedom is necessary for a child's development."

During the two hours that Allen and I were talking, Allen had to keep a constant eye on Joey. Joey played, chattered away, and interrupted us, making it impossible to carry on a real conversation. I gave him several picture books for children but he barely glanced at them before tossing them aside and interrupting our conversation again. He demands the constant attention of grown-ups.

Later, Joey put on his jacket and went outside side to play with a neighbor's child. I asked Allen, "Do you find family life easy?" Allen didn't answer directly. He said that during the past few weeks, since the birth of Ana, he had been unable to sleep any length of time. During the night, Sue wakes him up and-because she is too tired herself-asks him to check to make sure Ana is still breathing. "I get up and look at the baby and then come back and fall asleep again. Sometimes the ritual happens two or three times a night."

"Is family life easier than being a bachelor?" I asked.

Allen didn't answer directly. But I understood.

I asked another question: "A lot of people say that if you have a family you're less lonely and have more security. Is that true?" Allen nodded his head and mumbled something softly. But I understood.

Then Allen said, "I've discovered a way to have a lot more time. In the past, I used to look at my time as if it were divided into several parts. One part I reserved for Joey, another part was for Sue, another part to help with Ana, another other part for household work. The time left over I considered my own. I could read, write, do research, go for walks. "But now I try not to divide time into parts anymore. I consider my time with Joey and Sue as my own time. When I help Joey with his homework, work, I try to find ways of seeing his time as my own time. I go through his lesson with him, sharing his presence and finding ways to be interested in what we do during that time. The time for him becomes my own time. The same with Sue. The remarkable thing is that now I have unlimited time for myself!" Allen smiled as he spoke.

I was surprised. I knew that Allen hadn't learned this from reading any books. This was something he had discovered for himself in his own daily life.⁹⁴

Dividing our world into friends and enemies is self-destructive. Dividing our lives into past and present keeps up from being mindful – embracing,

⁹⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (pp. 2-3). Kindle Edition.

paying attention to -- the sacrament of the present moment which is all we have.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

Lectionary: 231

An Annunciation to Hannah

(1 Sam 1:1-20 DCB)

¹There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ²He had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³ Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to YHWH of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of YHWH. ⁴On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; ⁵but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though YHWH had closed her womb. ⁶Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because YHWH had closed her womb. ⁷So it went on year after year; as often as she went up to the house of YHWH, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. ⁸Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?'

⁹ After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before YHWH. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of YHWH. ¹⁰She was deeply distressed and prayed to YHWH, and wept bitterly. ¹¹She made this vow: 'O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.'

¹² As she continued praying before YHWH, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.'¹⁵But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before YHWH. ¹⁶Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been

speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.’¹⁷ Then Eli answered, ‘Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.’¹⁸ And she said, ‘Let your servant find favour in your sight.’ Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

¹⁹ They rose early in the morning and worshipped before YHWH; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and YHWH remembered her. ²⁰ In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked him of the LORD.’

²¹ The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to YHWH the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. ²² But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of YHWH, and remain there for ever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time.’ ²³ Her husband Elkanah said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may YHWH establish his word.’ So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. ²⁴ When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of YHWH at Shiloh; and the child was young. ²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ And she said, ‘Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to YHWH. ²⁷ For this child I prayed; and YHWH has granted me the petition that I made to him. ²⁸ Therefore I have lent him to YHWH; as long as he lives, he is given to YHWH.’

She left him there for YHWH.

A Hymn
(Ps 50:1-23 DCB)
Dedicated to Asaph

Creation story

- ¹ The mighty one, our divine patron YHWH,
speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- ² From the top of Mt. Zion, the perfection of beauty,
Our divine patron shines forth.
- ³ Our divine patron comes and does not keep silence,
before YHWH is a devouring fire,
A mighty tempest all around our divine patron.
- ⁴ YHWH calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that our divine patron may judge the people:
- ⁵ *‘Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!’*
- ⁶ The heavens above declare the righteousness of YHWH,
for our divine patron is their judge.

Selah

- ⁷ *‘Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am your divine patron.*
- ⁸ *Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt-offerings are continually before me.*
- ⁹ *I will not accept a bull from your house,
or goats from your folds.*
- ¹⁰ *For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.*
- ¹¹ *I know all the birds of the air,
and all that moves in the field is mine.*
- ¹² *‘If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and all that is in it is mine.*
- ¹³ *Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?*
- ¹⁴ *Offer to your divine patron a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and pay your vows to the Most High.*
- ¹⁵ *Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.’*

¹⁶ But to the wicked your divine patron says:

*'What right have you to recite my teachings,
or take my covenant on your lips?*

¹⁷ *For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words behind you.*

¹⁸ *You make friends with a thief when you see one,
and you keep company with covenant breakers.*

¹⁹ *'You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.*

²⁰ *You sit and speak against your kin;
you slander your own mother's child.*

²¹ *These things you have done and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one just like yourself.
But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you.*

²² *'Mark this, then, you who forget your divine patron,
or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.*

²³ *Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way
I will show the salvation of your divine patron.*

Teachings on Humility

(Matt 12:1-12 DCB)

Jesus taught the crowds and his followers:

The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.'

As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. Call no one on earth your father. You have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master.' You have but one master, our Teacher.

The greatest among you must be your client. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Homily

In contrast to the arrogance of many politicians, the political model of Pope Francis is humility. He does not lord it over the people he serves, he actually serves them.

Valdez: Is the Pope political? You betcha!

[Linda Valdez](#)

The Republic | [azcentral.com](#)
3:10 p.m. MST February 19, 2016

He was an angry prophet railing at the border: [“No more death! No more exploitation!”](#)

Was he political?

Hell, yes.

And that was just the beginning. Pope Francis subsequently opined that a candidate for the presidency of the United States "is not Christian" if he says the things Donald Trump says. The pope later said it was [nothing personal](#).

So Trump was right for once. Pope Francis is a [“very political person.”](#)

Trump started this hissing match, which is nothing new. But Trump will found the pope a far more formidable foe than Megyn Kelly.

The pope’s words were more than just political. They represented a call to morality that has long been lacking from the milquetoast politicians like Trump.

It takes real courage to speak the truth about what’s been going on at our southern border.

The scapegoating and name-calling that politicians like Trump peddle is an easy way out of engaging in an honest debate. Just blame the migrant. Blame the thousands who died trying to get to jobs or family on this side. Blame the kids fleeing gang violence in Central America.

Then wash your hands of responsibility. That’s an old trick.

Pope Francis could give a seminar to candidates for U.S. president on the proper use of political power.

The first pontifical PowerPoint slide would be entitled: Why enter the political arena?

Motives matter.

Pope Francis acts on behalf of people, particularly those who are frequently run over in a hyper-speed pursuit of profits.

During the trip to Mexico that culminated with a Mass in Juarez, Pope Francis tweeted: “Earnings and capital are not more important than the human person, but should be at the service of the common good.”

He told the indigenous people of Chiapas that “some have considered your values, culture and traditions to be inferior, others, intoxicated by power, money and market trends, have stolen your lands or contaminated them. How sad this is.”

The sorrow Pope Francis expresses over injustice looks genuine. It reflects a desire to make things better for poor people.

Trump’s ginned up rage is all about capitalizing on the insecurity of relatively comfortable people who have long considered themselves superior.

For many politicians, elected office is just a tire pump to inflate already bloated egos. The pope’s politics demonstrate a keen understanding of the words “public servant.”

“There is a kind of ‘service’ which serves others,” the pope said at a [Mass in Cuba](#) last year, “yet we need to be careful not to be tempted by another kind of service, one which is ‘self-serving’ with regard to others. There is a way to go about serving which is interested in only helping ‘my people’, ‘our people’. This service always leaves ‘your people’ outside, and gives rise to a process of exclusion.”

Few American politicians speak up on behalf of the migrants who have died trying to cross the border.

But the pope did.

Few put the blame for illegal immigration where it belongs: economic systems on both sides of the border that benefit from exploiting immigrant labor, irrational U.S. immigration laws that enable that exploitation in this country, and on violence and corruption that drives desperate people to make dangerous journeys.

But the pope did.

“We cannot deny the humanitarian crisis which in recent years has meant the migration of thousands of people, whether by train or highway or on foot, crossing hundreds of kilometers through mountains, deserts and inhospitable zones,” [Pope Francis said](#). “The human tragedy that is forced migration is a global phenomenon today.”

Political? You bet.

“The Pope, with his moral and spiritual ministry, may have a political impact. That is clear to the whole world by now,” Vatican spokesman Rev. Federico Lombardi said [in response to Trump’s observation](#) of the obvious.

The pope is political by design. And he’s far, far better at it than those full-time professional shovelers of political rhetoric.

A

Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

Lectionary: 232

A Lament of Jeremiah for Jerusalem

(Jer 18: 18-20)

complaint

The people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem said: *Let us plot against Jeremiah. We will not lose the prayers of the priests, nor teachings of the wise, nor verdicts announced by prophets. If we are going to get him to incriminate himself, we need to pay attention to every word he says.*

petition

Answer me, YHWH. Listen to what my enemies say. Must good be repaid with evil that they should dig a pit to take my life?

profession of faith

Remember that I stood before you to speak in their behalf, to turn away your wrath from them.

A Lament

(Ps 31:1-24)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Petition

¹ In you, YHWH, I seek refuge;
Do not let me be shamed;
In your righteousness
Deliver me.

² Incline your ear to me;
Rescue me quickly.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
A strong fortress to save me.

³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
For your name's sake lead me and guide me,

⁴ Take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
For you are my refuge.

Profession of faith

⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, YHWH, my faithful divine patron.

⁶ You hate those who pay regard to powerless idols,
But I trust in the YHWH.

Vow

⁷ I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
Because you have seen my affliction;
You have taken heed of outsiders,
⁸ You have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a broad place.

Complaint

⁹ Be gracious to me, YHWH, for I am in distress;
My eye wastes away from grief,
My soul and body also.

¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
My years with sighing;
My strength fails because of my misery,
My bones waste away.

¹¹ I am the scorn of all outsiders,

A horror to my neighbors,
An object of dread to insiders;
Those who see me in the street flee from me.
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken eating bowl.
13 For I hear the whispering of many:
Surround him!⁹⁵
They scheme together against me,
They plot to take my life.

Profession of faith

14 But I trust in you, YHWH;
I say, 'You are my divine patron.'
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

Petition

16 Let your face shine upon your client;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be shamed, YHWH,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be shamed;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

Profession of faith

19 How abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who act wisely even when they are alone
Accomplished for those who take refuge in you
in the sight of everyone!
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.
21 Bless YHWH,
for YHWH has wondrously shown steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege
22 I had said in my alarm: *I am driven far from your sight.*
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.

⁹⁵ NRSV: *terror on every side*

²³ Love YHWH, all you holy ones.
YHWH preserves the faithful,
but punishes those who act arrogantly.
²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for YHWH.

(Matt 20: 17-28)

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem,
he took the Twelve disciples aside by themselves,
and said to them on the way,
“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem,
and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests
and the scribes,
and they will condemn him to death,
and hand him over to the Gentiles
to be mocked and scourged and crucified,
and he will be raised on the third day.”

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons
and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something.
He said to her, “What do you wish?”
She answered him,
“Command that these two sons of mine sit,
one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom.”
Jesus said in reply,
“You do not know what you are asking.
Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”
They said to him, “We can.”
He replied,
“My chalice you will indeed drink,
but to sit at my right and at my left,
this is not mine to give
but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”
When the ten heard this,
they became indignant at the two brothers.
But Jesus summoned them and said,
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and the great ones make their authority over them felt.
But it shall not be so among you.
Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant;
whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.

Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Homily

POPE FRANCIS, CIUDAD JUAREZ, FEBRUARY 17, 2016

"Siempre hay posibilidad de cambio, estamos a tiempo de reaccionar y transformar, modificar y cambiar", proclamó el Papa, "convertir lo que nos está destruyendo como pueblo, lo que nos está degradando como humanidad". "La misericordia de Dios es nuestro escudo y nuestra fortaleza", añadió.

"Jonás ayudó a ver, ayudó a tomar conciencia", indicó el Papa. **"Son las lágrimas las que pueden ablandar el corazón**, las que pueden purificar la mirada y ayudar a ver el círculo de pecado en el que muchas veces se está sumergido. Son las lágrimas las que logran sensibilizar la mirada adormecida ante el sufrimiento ajeno. Son las lágrimas las que pueden generar una ruptura capaz de abrirnos a la conversión. Así le pasó a Pedro después de haber renegado de Jesús.... lloró, y las lágrimas le abrieron el corazón".

"Esta palabra es la voz que grita en el desierto y nos invita a la conversión.⁹⁶ En este Año de la Misericordia, y en este lugar, **quiero implorar la misericordia divina**, quiero pedir con ustedes el don de las lágrimas, el don de la conversión. Aquí en Ciudad Juárez, como en otras zonas fronterizas, se concentran miles de inmigrantes, sin olvidar de tantos mexicanos, que también buscan pasar al otro lado", clamó el Papa.

Un paso, **"un camino cargado de terribles injusticias, esclavizados, secuestrados, extorsionados..."**. "Muchos hermanos nuestros son víctimas del negocio del tráfico humano, de la trata de personas. **No podemos negar la crisis humanitaria** que en los últimos años ha significado la migración de miles de personas, atravesando cientos de kilómetros por montañas, desiertos, caminos inhóspitos (...). Esta tragedia humana es un fenómeno global. Esta crisis que se puede medir en cifras, queremos medirlas por nombres, por historias, por familias. Son hermanos y hermanas que salen expulsados por la pobreza y la violencia, por el narcotráfico y el crimen organizado".

⁹⁶ *...la voz que grita* – famous words for Mexico – the *Grito de Dolores*, a battle cry of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain, first uttered by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, parish priest of the city of Dolores-Hidalgo on Sept. 16, 1810.

Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

Lectionary: 233

A Teaching on Wisdom

(Jer 17:5-10)

A Word of YHWH

Cursed is anyone who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from YHWH. Such people are like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava field, a salt and empty earth.

Blessed is anyone who trusts in YHWH, whose hope is YHWH. Such people are like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.

More tortuous than all else is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it? I, YHWH, alone probe the mind and test the heart, to reward everyone according to his ways, according to the merit of their deeds.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6](#)

R. (40:5a) **Blessed are they who hope in YHWH.**

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of YHWH
and meditates on his law day and night.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in YHWH.**

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in YHWH.**

Not so, the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For YHWH watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in YHWH.**

Verse Before The Gospel [SEE LK 8:15](#)

Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.

Gospel[LK 16:19-31](#)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day.

And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.

Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.

When the poor man died,

he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me.

Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’

Abraham replied, ‘My child,

remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad;

but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.

Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing

who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’

He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house,

for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them,

lest they too come to this place of torment.’

But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets.

Let them listen to them.’

He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham,

but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

Then Abraham said,

‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,

neither will they be persuaded

if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Homily

Monday of the Third Week of Lent

Lectionary: 237

(2 Kgs 5:1-15)

Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, was highly esteemed and respected by his master, for through him the LORD had brought victory to Aram. But valiant as he was, the man was a leper. Now the Arameans had captured in a raid on the land of Israel a little girl, who became the servant of Naaman's wife. "If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria," she said to her mistress, "he would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman went and told his lord just what the slave girl from the land of Israel had said. "Go," said the king of Aram. "I will send along a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festal garments. To the king of Israel he brought the letter, which read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy."

When he read the letter, the king of Israel tore his garments and exclaimed: "Am I a god with power over life and death, that this man should send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? Take note! You can see he is only looking for a quarrel with me!" When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his garments, he sent word to the king: "Why have you torn your garments? Let him come to me and find out that there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. The prophet sent him the message: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean." But Naaman went away angry, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the LORD his God,

and would move his hand over the spot,
and thus cure the leprosy.
Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar,
better than all the waters of Israel?
Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?"
With this, he turned about in anger and left.

But his servants came up and reasoned with him.
"My father," they said,
"if the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary,
would you not have done it?
All the more now, since he said to you,
'Wash and be clean,' should you do as he said."
So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times
at the word of the man of God.
His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God.
On his arrival he stood before him and said,
"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth,
except in Israel."

A Lament (Ps 42:1-11)

To the leader. A Maskil of the Household of Korah⁹⁷

Petition

¹ As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, Yahweh.
² My soul thirsts for my divine patron,
for my life-giving divine patron.
When shall I come and behold
the face of my divine patron?

Complaint

⁹⁷ Anan ben David (715-795) founded a tradition of Jewish spirituality whose followers adopted the name *Karaites*. Their spirituality was based on the Bible alone; they rejected all subsequent rabbinic teachings both oral and written in Mishnah and Talmud (<http://www.karaite-korner.org/>). They considered the Psalms to have been written under divine inspiration by David and Moses. William P. Brown, "The Psalms: An Overview," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)9.

³ My tears have been my food day and night,
People say to me continually: *Where is your divine patron?*

Profession of faith

⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
How I led them in procession to the house of my divine patron,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in my divine patron; for I shall again praise YHWH,
my help⁶ and my divine patron.

Declaration of innocence

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore, I remember you
From the valley of the Jordan River,
From Mt. Hermon and Mt. Mizar.

⁷ Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your rapids;⁹⁸
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

⁸ By day Yahweh commands steadfast love,
at night the song of YHWH is with me,
-- a prayer to the divine patron of my life.

Complaint

⁹ I say to my divine patron, my rock -- my midwife:
Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about lamenting
because the enemy oppresses me?

¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me;
They say to me continually:
Where is your divine patron?

Profession of faith

⁹⁸ NRSV: *cataracts*

¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
Why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in our divine patron;
Because I shall again praise YHWH, my help and my divine patron.

(Luke 4:24-30)

Jesus taught the people in the synagogue at Nazareth:

“Amen, I say to you,
no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel
in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”
When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built,
to hurl him down headlong.
But he passed through the midst of them and went away

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

Lectionary: 238

A Lament

(Dan 3:25, 34-43)

Azariah stood up in the fire and prayed:

Petition

“For your name’s sake, O YHWH, do not deliver us up forever,

or make void your covenant.
Do not take away your mercy from us,
for the sake of Abraham, your beloved,
Isaac your servant, and Israel your holy one,
To whom you promised to multiply their offspring
like the stars of heaven,
or the sand on the shore of the sea.

Complaint

For we are reduced, O YHWH, beyond any other nation,
brought low everywhere in the world this day
because of our sins.
We have in our day no prince, prophet, or leader,
no burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, or incense,
no place to offer first fruits, to find favor with you.

Petition

But with contrite heart and humble spirit
let us be received;
As though it were burnt offerings of rams and bullocks,
or thousands of fat lambs,
So let our sacrifice be in your presence today
as we follow you unreservedly;
for those who trust in you cannot be put to shame.
And now we follow you with our whole heart,
we fear you and we pray to you.
Do not let us be put to shame,
but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy.
Deliver us by your wonders,
and bring glory to your name, O YHWH.”

A Lament

(Ps 25:1-22)

Dedicated to David

Petition

¹ To you, YHWH, I lift up my soul.

² O my divine patron, in you I trust;

Do not let me be put to shame;

Do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Do not let those who wait for you to deliver them be shamed;

- Shame instead the treacherous.
- ⁴ Make me to know your ways, YHWH;
Teach me your paths.
- ⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
You alone are the divine patron of my salvation;
I wait for you all day long.
- ⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, YHWH, and of your steadfast love,
Which you showed in times past.
- ⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
Remember me only with your steadfast love.
Show your goodness for my sake, YHWH!

Profession of faith

- ⁸ Good and upright is YHWH;
My divine patron instructs sinners in the way.
- ⁹ My divine patron leads the humble in what is right,
YHWH shows the humble the way.
- ¹⁰ All the paths of YHWH are steadfast love and faithfulness,
For those who are faithful to the covenant and decrees of YHWH.

Petition

- ¹¹ For your name's sake, YHWH,
Pardon my guilt, for it is great.
- ¹² Who are they that live morally?⁹⁹
YHWH will teach them the way that they should choose.
- ¹³ They will abide in prosperity,
their households¹⁰⁰ shall possess the land.
- ¹⁴ The friendship of YHWH is for those who live morally,
Who makes the covenant known to them.
- ¹⁵ My eyes are ever towards YHWH,
for my divine patron will pluck my feet out of the net.
- ¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
- ¹⁷ Relieve the troubles of my heart,
bring me out of my distress.
- ¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my trouble,
forgive all my sins.
- ¹⁹ Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
- ²⁰ O guard my life, and deliver me;

⁹⁹ NRSV: *fear the Lord*

¹⁰⁰ NRSV: *children*

do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
²¹ May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.
²² Redeem Israel, O our divine patron,
out of all its troubles.

A Teaching on Forgiveness (Matt 18:21-35)

Peter approached Jesus and asked him: *Teacher, if another of your followers ¹⁰¹ sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?*

Jesus answered: *I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.*

A Parable on Forgiveness

That is why the kingdom in the heavens above may be likened to a patron¹⁰² who decided to settle accounts with his clients.¹⁰³

When a patron began to settle accounts with his clients, one client¹⁰⁴ was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

Since the client had no way of paying his patron back, his patron¹⁰⁵ ordered him to be sold into slavery, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, to pay his debt.

When he heard his sentence, the client prostrated before his patron, and pleaded: Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.

Moved with compassion the patron set aside the sentence and forgave the client's debt.

When that client left, however, he found one of his fellow clients who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding: Pay me what you owe me.

¹⁰¹ NAB: *brother*

¹⁰² NAB: *king*

¹⁰³ NAB: *servants*

¹⁰⁴ NAB: *debtor*

¹⁰⁵ NAB: *master*

Prostrating before the first client, his fellow client pleaded with him: Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.

The first client refused. Instead, he put his fellow client in prison until his household paid back the debt.

When the other clients saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their patron and reported the whole affair.

The patron summoned the first client and indicted him: You are an unfaithful¹⁰⁶ client! I forgave your entire debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have done the same for your fellow client? Then in his anger the patron sentenced the first client to be tortured until his household repaid his entire debt.

So my Father in the heavens above will do to you here on earth, unless you forgive one another unconditionally.¹⁰⁷

Homily

Thank you 'Abba for waking me up this morning.

Semitic cultures use numbers like *seven* and *seventy* as codes for important concepts (Gen 4:24; Matt 19:24). Here Peter asks: Should I always forgive another follower of Jesus -- *seven times*? Jesus teaches him: You should forgive another follower of mine more than always – *seventy times seven times*.

Peter is not proposing a seven strikes and you're out policy, and Jesus is not teaching that forgiveness is a limit offer of 490 times. Peter is trying to show that he has learned the lesson of forgiveness, and Jesus is saying: You should not even have to ask, forgiveness is the only response his followers are to make to harm they suffer at the hands of another followers.

For the Hebrews seven is YHWH's fingerprint in the cosmos. From Earth the unaided eye can see seven great celestial bodies: the sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. In the world of the Bible the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are personified as males; the Moon, Venus and Mercury as females. The moon completes its cycle of 28 days in four seven-day weeks, a calendar for menstruation.

¹⁰⁶ NAB: *wicked*

¹⁰⁷ NAB: *from your heart*

The Hebrews assumed that YHWH created the cosmos using the mathematical base seven, a number more connected with the experience of women than of men. Although Apophis and *yam sup* (Exod 10:19) — Egypt's personifications of chaos—are male, Tiamat in Mesopotamia and *tōhu wābōhu* (Gen 1:2) are female. Here YHWH, a male creator, wages war on the peoples of Syria-Palestine, portrayed as the female personifications of chaos, and their divine patrons.

Brother here is parallel to *neighbor* in Deuteronomy. For example, the instruction: *Neither shall you commit adultery* (Deut 5:18) teaches fathers not to compete with one another for women – *your neighbor's wife*. *Your neighbor* here is not every other human being, but *your Hebrew neighbors*. Adultery was not just a sexual assault on a married woman, but an act of economic aggression by the father of one household against the father of another for its resources, represented by the mothers of the households. These women were taboo: only one designated male could have intercourse with them. Marriages ratified covenants between two households for the right to bear children and to plant and graze land. Adultery challenged the right of a household to its land and people.

Similarly, followers of Jesus who did not forgive one another were not simply emotionally estranged from one another, they imposed economic sanctions on one another. They would not buy or sell to one another. They would not borrow or lend from one another. They would not accept marriages between members of their households. They would not come to the defense of one another if they were attacked by outsiders. By not forgiving one another they placed an embargo on their households. By not forgiving they declared war on one another, and sentenced each other to death by economic embargo.

Followers of Jesus practice forgiveness not as a practice of jurisprudence, but to remind one another that because they are forgiven by their godparent, they need to forgive one another. The corollary is that unless they remember their own forgiveness by forgiving one another, their godparent will not forgive them.

Friday of the Third Week of Lent

Lectionary: 241

(Hos 14:2-10 DCB)

A WORD OF YHWH

Return, O household of Israel, to YHWH, your divine patron. The weight of your guilt is crushing you. Lift up your voices ¹⁰⁸ and return to YHWH. Cry out: Forgive our sins. Look only at the good we do, Accept our sacrifices -- bulls from our stalls. Assyria will not save us, nor shall we have their horses to mount. We shall no longer pray: *Our divine patron* to the work of our hands; for only in you can orphans find compassion.

I will heal their self-inflicted wounds, says YHWH. I will love them unconditionally, because I have turned my wrath away from them. I will be like the dew on the fields of the household of Israel. Their crops shall blossom like lilies. The household of Israel shall sink roots like the cedars of Lebanon, and grow new branches. The splendor of the household of Israel shall be like olive trees, and its aroma like the cedars of Lebanon. Their people shall dwell in my shade and raise grain. They shall bloom like vines, and the reputation of the household of Israel shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

Why does the household Ephraim follow the divine patrons of outsiders?¹⁰⁹

I have humbled the household of Ephraim, but I will restore it. I am like a cypress tree in full bloom -- because of me you bear fruit!

LET THE WISE UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS. LET THE PRUDENT APPRECIATE THEM. STRAIGHT ARE THE PATHS OF YHWH. THE WISE FOLLOW THESE PATHS. FOOLS STUMBLE BEFORE TAKING THEIR FIRST STEP.

A Hymn (Ps 81 DCB)

To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

Call to worship

- ¹ **Sing** aloud to our divine patron our strength;
shout for joy to the Our divine patron of Jacob.
- ² **Raise** a song, sound the tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.
- ³ **Blow** the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon, on our festal day.

Creation story

¹⁰⁸ NAB: Take with you words

¹⁰⁹ NAB: What more has he to do with idols?

⁴ For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the divine patron of the household of Jacob.
⁵ Jacob made it a decree in the household of Joseph,
when he went out over the land of Egypt.

I, YHWH, hear the lament of a people I did not know.
⁶ I relieved your shoulder of the burden;
your hands were freed from the basket.
⁷ In distress you called, and I rescued you;
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

Selah

⁸ Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
O household of Israel, if you would but listen to me!
⁹ There shall be no patron of outsiders among you;
you shall not bow down to the divine patrons of outsiders.
¹⁰ I am YHWH your divine patron,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

¹¹ But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
¹³ O that my people would listen to me,
that the household of Israel would walk in my ways!
¹⁴ Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes.
¹⁵ Those who hate YHWH would cringe before their divine patron,
and their doom would last forever.
¹⁶ I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.¹¹⁰

(Mark 12:28-34)

A scribe asked Jesus: *What is the most important commandment?*

¹¹⁰ YHWH promises to feed and protect the Hebrews – but they continue to try and feed and protect themselves by negotiating covenants with outsiders, who promise, but fail to feed and protect them.

Jesus taught: The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! YHWH is our only divine patron! You shall love YHWH your divine patron with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength* (Deut 6:4). The second is this: *You shall love your fellow Jews as yourself* (Deut 19:18). There is no other commandment greater than these.

The scribe said to Jesus: *Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, YHWH is One and there is no other divine patron. To love YHWH with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love other Jews as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

When Jesus saw that the scribe answered with understanding, he said to him: *You are not far from the Kingdom of your Divine Patron.*

No one dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

Homily

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

Lectionary: 242

(Hos 6:1-6 DCB)

Come, let us return to YHWH, who has rent, but who will also heal us. YHWH has struck us, but our divine patron will bind our wounds. YHWH will revive us after two days; on the third day our divine patron will raise us up, to live in the divine presence. Let us know, let us strive to know YHWH; as certain as the dawn is the coming of our divine patron, and the judgment of YHWH shines forth like the light of day! Our divine patron will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth.

What can I do with you, household of Ephraim? What can I do with you, household of Judah? Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away. Therefore, I sent my prophets to indict their households. I personally sentenced them. I look for faithfulness to our covenant, not sacrifice; knowledge of your divine patron rather than burnt offerings.

A Lament

(Ps 51:1-19 DCB)

To the leader
David's Lament, when Nathan confronted him, after he raped Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
My sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
I have done what is evil in your sight,
You are justified in your sentence,
You are blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
My mother conceived me as a sinner.¹¹¹

Petition

- ⁶ You desire me to be honest even with myself;
Teach me to be wise even when I am alone.¹¹²
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be clean.¹¹³
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
Blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰ Create in me a sincere heart,¹¹⁴ my divine patron,
Put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
Do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
Sustain in me a willing spirit.

¹¹¹ Important tradition supporting theology of original sin.

¹¹² Hebrew: *secret* only – the word *heart* is missing in Hebrew

¹¹³ NRSV: *whiter* Christians of color do not want to be *white*, just forgiven. Non-white people of faith find such metaphors offensive or colonial.

¹¹⁴ *Clean heart* is the Hebrew idiom for *sincere*

Vow

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

¹⁵ YHWH, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.¹¹⁵

¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a humble¹¹⁶ spirit;
a humble and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good to Mt. Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

¹⁹ then you will delight in true¹¹⁷ sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Parable of a Pharisee and a Tax Collector

(Luke 18:9-14 DCB)

Jesus told this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.

Two people went up to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.

¹¹⁵ My mantra: *Our Lord open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise; O God come to my assistance, O Lord make haste to help me.*

See: John Main, OSB who teaches a mantra-based style of meditation similar to Centering Prayer that he learned from his Hindu teacher -- Swami Satyananda. Main alleges that this technique was also taught by St. John Cassian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These are the same Catholic sources claimed by those who practice centering prayer and some scholars question Main's interpretation of the Catholic contemplative tradition and its relationship to the Hindu tradition.

¹¹⁶ NRSV: *humble*

¹¹⁷ NRSV: *right*

The Pharisee took up his position and said this prayer to himself: 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.

The tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to the heavens above, beat his breast and prayed: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner.*

I tell you, the tax collector went home justified, not the Pharisee. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Homily

In unusual video, pope speaks of his longing for Christian unity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5TwrG8B3ME>

Cindy Wooden

[Catholic News Service](#)

Feb-20-2014

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- In an unusual video message, recorded on an iPhone by a Pentecostal pastor Pope Francis knew in Argentina, the pope says all Christians share blame for their divisions, speaks of his "longing" [mistranslated in the subtitles for the video as *nostalgia*] for their unity and insists that God will bring the miracle of Christian unity to completion.

"Pray to the Lord that he will unite us all," the pope tells a group of Pentecostals meeting in the United States. "Let's move forward, we are brothers; let us give each other that spiritual embrace and allow the Lord to complete the work he has begun. Because this is a miracle; the miracle of unity has begun."

In the video, posted on YouTube and never released by the Vatican, the pope quotes a character from a novel by Alessandro Manzoni; the character says, "I have never found that the Lord began a miracle without finishing it well.' He will finish well this miracle of unity," the pope added.

The Vatican did not release any details when it announced Jan. 14 that Pope Francis had met with "Anthony Palmer, bishop and international ecumenical

officer for the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches," a group that is not affiliated with the Anglican Communion.

The video, which Palmer said he took with his iPhone, begins in English with the pope apologizing that he will have to switch to Italian, although mostly, he said, he would speak from the heart, which is "a more simple, more authentic language."

Addressing Palmer as "my brother, a bishop-brother" and saying they had "been friends for years," the pope offered what he said were greetings "both joyful and full of longing" to participants in a forthcoming meeting of the Kenneth Copeland Ministries, a Pentecostal group that sponsors large prayer gatherings around the world.

The joy, the pope said, comes from knowing that "The Lord is working all over the whole world."

But he said he is full of longing because Christians are still separated, "separated because of sin, our sins."

"Who is at fault?" he asked. "All of us are, we are all sinners. There is only one who is just and that is the Lord."

Pope Francis said he longs for the day when "this separation would end and there would be communion."

"Let's allow our longing to increase so that it propels us to find each other, embrace each other and to praise Jesus Christ as the only Lord of history," the pope said.

The video begins with Palmer telling a Pentecostal gathering about the importance of Christian unity for preaching salvation in Christ to the world.

Palmer said that the Catholic-Protestant divisions have had no reason to exist since the 1999 Catholic-Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. The agreement recognized that "by grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works."

"Brothers and sisters, Luther's protest is over," Palmer told his audience. "Is yours?"

"We are not protesting the doctrine of salvation (taught) by the Catholic Church anymore," he said. "We now preach the same Gospel."

The Catholic Church has celebrated the agreement on justification and other ecumenical agreements, while insisting that further progress must be made to resolve other differences before there is full unity and sacramental sharing. Those differences include how different Christians view the sacraments and how they see the role of the papacy.

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 244

A Trial Mitigation

(Isa 65:17-21)

A Word of YHWH

Watch¹¹⁸ while I create new heavens and a new earth;
Past sorrow shall not be remembered.
Yesterday's suffering will be forgotten,
There will only be rejoicing in the new world I am creating.
I will create a Jerusalem full of joy
The people of Jerusalem will be happy.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem
I will exult in my people.
No longer shall weeping be heard;
No longer shall crying be heard.
No infants shall live only a few days;
No old men shall not live full lifetimes.
Those who die at 100 will be considered young;
Those who die before 100 will be considered cursed.
My people shall live long enough to live in the houses they build;
They shall live long enough to eat the fruit of the vineyards they plant.

A Lament

(Ps 30:1-12)

¹¹⁸ NAB: *Lo*

*A Hymn for the Consecration of the Temple
Dedicated to David.*

Vow

¹ I will extol you, YHWH, for you have drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

Profession of faith

² YHWH, my divine patron, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

³ YHWH, you brought me up from *Sheol*,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

⁴ Sing praises to YHWH, O you his faithful ones
and give thanks to the holy name.

⁵ For the anger of YHWH is but for a moment;
the favor of YHWH is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

Declaration of innocence

⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity:
I shall never be moved.

⁷ By your favor, YHWH,
you had established me as a strong mountain;

Complaint

you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

Petition

⁸ To you, YHWH, I cried,
and to YHWH I made supplication:

⁹ What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit of *Sheol*?

Will unworked clay praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?

¹⁰ Hear, YHWH, and be gracious to me!
YHWH, be my helper!¹¹⁹

Vow

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,

¹² so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
YHWH, my divine patron, I will give thanks to you forever.

A Miracle Story

(John 4:43-54)

At that time Jesus left the city of Samaria for the Galilee. For Jesus himself taught that a prophet has no honor in his native land. When he came into the Galilee, the people of the Galilee welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Then he returned to the village of Cana in the Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

Now there was a Roman official whose son was ill in the village of Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in the Galilee from the land of Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was dying.

Jesus said to him: *Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.*

The Roman official said to him: *Sir, come down before my child dies.*

Jesus said to him: *You may go; your son will live.*

The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While the man was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover.

They told him,
“The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon.”

¹¹⁹ Hebrew: *‘eretz*. The same word used for the woman in the Stories of Adam and Eve.

The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he and his whole household came to believe.

Now this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to the Galilee from Judea.

Homily

The readings today offer the same encouragement as the books of Daniel and Revelation. They tell the suffering that their suffering will end; that their suffering will end soon; and when their suffering ends, good, not evil will prevail. The intention of apocalyptic traditions is to tell the powerless not to lose hope. Despair is perhaps the greatest temptation for the powerless. Lives of suffering have no reason to believe that anyone cares. Isaiah and Jesus today say forcefully: Someone cares. YHWH cares. My godparent cares.

Simple acts of kindness will not take away suffering. Only the dramatic structural changes envisioned by Isaiah will create a world of equality, rather than exploitation. Nonetheless, acts of kindness remind those showing kindness of the work that needs to be done. Jesus brings the Roman’s son back to life to remind him that the empire needs to empower, not to enslave the peoples of Samaria and Judea. Acts of kindness also give the powerless hope that such kindness is a promise that as Isaiah promises new heavens and a new earth are coming.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 245

A Time Voyage

(Ezek 47:1-12)

¹Then my guide brought me back to the gate of the Temple facing east. Water was flowing east from below the threshold of the Temple. The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the Temple, south of the altar. ²Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate that faces towards the east; and the water was coming out on the south side.

³ Walking east with a tape measure in his hand, my guide measured about 1500 ft,¹²⁰ and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep.

⁴My guide measured another 1500 ft, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep.

My guide measured another 1500 ft, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist.

⁵Finally, my guide measured another 1500 ft, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed.

⁶Then my guide asked: *Son of Man,*¹²¹ *what do you see?*

Then my guide led me along the bank of the river. ⁷On the way I saw a great many trees on one side and on the other.

⁸ My guide explained: *This water flows east and goes down into the Arabah Valley. When it enters the Salt Sea – also called the Dead Sea because it has no outlet -- the water will remain fresh. ⁹Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. The water will remain fresh. Wherever the river goes everything will live. ¹⁰People all the way from the village of En-gedi to the village of En-eglaim will fish on its banks. They will cast their nets from its banks, and its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹²On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of fruit trees. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.*

A Hymn (Ps 46:1-11)

*Note to the leader of the Household of Korah
Sing using the Alamothe melody*

Creation story

¹²⁰ NRSV: *1000 cubits*

¹²¹ NRSV: *Mortal*

- ¹ Our divine patron is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Selah

- ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the City of Our Divine Patron,
the Holy House¹²²of the Most High.
⁵ Our divine patron is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
Our divine patron will help it when the morning dawns.
⁶ The peoples are in an uproar, states totter;
YHWH speaks¹²³, the earth melts.
⁷ The Commander of the Divine Warriors¹²⁴ is with us;
the divine patron of Jacob is our refuge.

Selah

- ⁸ Come, behold the works of YHWH;
see what desolations YHWH has brought on the earth.
⁹ YHWH makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
YHWH breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
YHWH burns the shields with fire.
¹⁰ 'Be still, and know that I am your divine patron!
I am exalted among all peoples,
I am exalted in the earth.'
¹¹ The Commander of the Divine Warriors is with us;
the divine patron of Jacob is our refuge.

Selah

A Miracle Story

(John 5:1-16)

During one of the Jewish holy days, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Market Gate a pool surrounded by five covered walkways called *Bethesda* (Hebrew: *beth* + *hesed*). A large number of

¹²² NRSV: habitation

¹²³ NRSV: utters his voice

¹²⁴ NRSV: Lord of hosts

ill, blind, lame, and crippled lay along the walkways. One man was there who had been ill for 38 years.

When Jesus saw the man and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him: *Do you really want to be healed?*

The sick man answered: *Teacher, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.*

Jesus said to him: *Get up, roll up your mat, and walk.*

Immediately the man was healed, rolled up his mat, and walked.

Now that day was a Sabbath. So some Jewish leaders said to the man who was healed: *It is the Sabbath, and it is unlawful for you to carry your mat.*

The man answered: *The man who made me well told me: Roll up your mat and walk.*

The leaders asked: *Who is the man who told you: Roll up your mat and walk?*

The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him at the Temple and said: *Now that you are well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may happen to you.*

The man went and told the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the one who had healed him. Therefore, they began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a Sabbath.

Homily

Do something today for someone who is ill. Something which will give them hope. Carry them to the water.

Do not, as Jesus does and as the Jewish leaders do, tell them that if they only repent of the sins they are committing, they will get better. Sickness is not a punishment for sin. Observing the Sabbath is not a health insurance policy. Sickness is simply part of human experience, and reminds us that we are fragile.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 246

(Isa 49:8-15)

A Word of YHWH

In a time of favor I answer you,
on the day of salvation I help you;
and I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people,
To restore the land
and allot the desolate heritages,
Saying to the prisoners: Come out!
To those in darkness: Show yourselves!
Along the ways they shall find pasture,
on every bare height shall their pastures be.
They shall not hunger or thirst,
nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them;
For he who pities them leads them
and guides them beside springs of water.
I will cut a road through all my mountains,
and make my highways level.
See, some shall come from afar,
others from the north and the west,
and some from the land of Syene.
Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth,
break forth into song, you mountains.
For YHWH comforts his people
and shows mercy to his afflicted.

But Zion said, "YHWH has forsaken me;
my Lord has forgotten me."
Can a mother forget her infant,
be without tenderness for the child of her womb?
Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.

A Hymn (Ps 145:1-21)

A Hymn Dedicated to David.

Call to worship

¹ **Extol** my divine patron and ruler,

- Bless** the name of YHWH for ever and ever.¹²⁵
- ² **Bless** YHWH every day,
Praise the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is YHWH, therefore, **praise** YHWH greatly;
the greatness of YHWH is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Creation Story

- ⁸ YHWH is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ YHWH is good to all,
the compassion of YHWH is over all creation.

Call to worship

- ¹⁰ All your works -- **give thanks** to YHWH,
all your faithful -- **bless** you.
- ¹¹ **Speak** of the glory of your kingdom,
tell of your power,
- ¹² **Make known** to all people your mighty deeds,
the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Creation Story

YHWH is faithful in every word,

¹²⁵ Calls to worship challenge their audiences to praise and acknowledge Yahweh as their divine patron who delivered them from slavery and endowed them with land and children. The standard call is "Praise Yahweh!" or "Alleluia." These calls are best translated in the imperative. Therefore, "Bless Yahweh!" captures the sense of a call to worship better than "Blessed be Yahweh!" When it appears in a call to worship the Hebrew word "bless" does not mean something that the Hebrews do for Yahweh, but rather calls on the Hebrews to acknowledge what Yahweh has done for them. Other verbs like "Come!" "Sing!" "Shout!" "Give thanks!" "Extol!" are also calls to worship.

- and gracious in every deed.¹²⁶
- 14 YHWH upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- 16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
- 17 YHWH is just in every way,
and kind in all his doings.
- 18 YHWH is near to all who call out,
to all who call on their divine patron in truth.
- 19 YHWH fulfills the desire of all who live morally;¹²⁷
YHWH also hears their cry, and saves them.
- 20 YHWH watches over all who fulfill their covenant responsibilities,¹²⁸
but all the wicked YHWH will destroy.

Call to worship

- 21 My mouth --- **praise** YHWH,
All flesh -- **bless** YHWH's holy name for ever and ever.

A Teaching

(John 5:17-30)

Jesus taught one group of Jewish leaders: *My Godparent is at work until now, so I am at work.*

Therefore, some Jewish leaders continued to conspire to assassinate Jesus, because he not only broke the Sabbath but he also called their divine patron his own Godparent, presenting himself as divine.

Jesus continued:

Trust me, I say to you, the heir of the household cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the father of the household doing; for what he does, the heir of the household will do also. For the father of the household loves the heir of the household and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed. For just as the father of the household raises the dead and gives life, so also the heir of the household gives life to whomever he wishes. The father of the

¹²⁶ NRSV: *...in all his wordsin all his deeds*

¹²⁷ NRSV: *fear him*

¹²⁸ NRSV: *love him*

household does not judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the heir of the household, so that all may honor the heir of the household just as they honor the father of the household. Whoever does not honor the heir of the household does not honor the father of the household who sent him.

Trust me, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.

Trust me, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the heir of the household of our divine patron, and those who hear will live. For just as the father of the household has life in himself, so also he gave to the heir of the household the possession of life in himself. The father of the household gave his heir authority to exercise judgment, even though he is only human.¹²⁹ Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation. I cannot do anything on my own. I judge as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me.”

¹²⁹ NAB: *Son of Man*

Homily

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 247

(Exod 32:7-4)

The LORD said to Moses,
“Go down at once to your people
whom you brought out of the land of Egypt,
for they have become depraved.
They have soon turned aside from the way I pointed out to them,
making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it,
sacrificing to it and crying out,
‘This is your God, O Israel,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt!’
The LORD said to Moses,
“I see how stiff-necked this people is.
Let me alone, then,
that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them.
Then I will make of you a great nation.”

But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying,
“Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people,
whom you brought out of the land of Egypt
with such great power and with so strong a hand?
Why should the Egyptians say,
‘With evil intent he brought them out,
that he might kill them in the mountains
and exterminate them from the face of the earth’?
Let your blazing wrath die down;
relent in punishing your people.
Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel,
and how you swore to them by your own self, saying,
‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky;
and all this land that I promised,
I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.’”
So the LORD relented in the punishment
he had threatened to inflict on his people.

A Hymn (Ps 106:1-48)

Call to worship

¹ Praise Yahweh!

O give thanks to Yahweh, who is good;
The steadfast love of Yahweh endures forever.

² Who can utter the mighty doings of Yahweh,
Who can praise Yahweh enough?

³ Wise¹³⁰ are those who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times.

Petition

⁴ Remember me, Yahweh, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you deliver them;

⁵ that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your people,¹³¹
that I may glory in your heritage.

Creation story

⁶ Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.

⁷ Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
so that he might make known his mighty power.

⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry;
he led them through the deep as through a desert.

¹⁰ So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.

¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.

¹² Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot his works;

¹³⁰ NRSV: Happy

¹³¹ NRSV: nation

they did not wait for his counsel.
14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;
15 he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of Yahweh.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the faction of Abiram.
18 Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.

19 They made a calf at Horeb
and worshipped a cast image.
20 They exchanged the glory of God
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God, their Saviour,
who had done great things in Egypt,
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.
23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

24 Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.
25 They grumbled in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of Yahweh.
26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them
that he would make them fall in the wilderness,
27 and would disperse their descendants among the nations,
scattering them over the lands.

28 Then they attached themselves to the Baal of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
29 they provoked Yahweh to anger with their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and interceded,
and the plague was stopped.
31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness
from generation to generation forever.

32 They angered Yahweh at the waters of Meribah,

and it went ill with Moses on their account;
33 for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke words that were rash.

34 They did not destroy the peoples
as Yahweh commanded them,
35 but they mingled with the nations
and learned to do as they did.
36 They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.
37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
and the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus they became unclean by their acts,
and prostituted themselves in their doings.

40 Then the anger of Yahweh was kindled against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
41 he gave them into the hand of the nations,
so that those who hated them ruled over them.
42 Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into subjection under their power.
43 Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their purposes,
and were brought low through their iniquity.
44 Nevertheless, he regarded their distress
when he heard their cry.
45 For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
46 He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.

Petition

47 Save us, Yahweh, our divine patron,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

Call to worship

48 Bless Yahweh, the divine patron of Israel,

from everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say: *Amen*.
Praise Yahweh!

Gospel [JN 5:31-47](#)

Jesus said to the Jews:

“If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is not true.
But there is another who testifies on my behalf,
and I know that the testimony he gives on my behalf is true.
You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth.
I do not accept human testimony,
but I say this so that you may be saved.
He was a burning and shining lamp,
and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light.
But I have testimony greater than John’s.
The works that the Father gave me to accomplish,
these works that I perform testify on my behalf
that the Father has sent me.
Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf.
But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form,
and you do not have his word remaining in you,
because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent.
You search the Scriptures,
because you think you have eternal life through them;
even they testify on my behalf.
But you do not want to come to me to have life.

“I do not accept human praise;
moreover, I know that you do not have the love of God in you.
I came in the name of my Father,
but you do not accept me;
yet if another comes in his own name,
you will accept him.
How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another
and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God?
Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father:
the one who will accuse you is Moses,
in whom you have placed your hope.
For if you had believed Moses,
you would have believed me,
because he wrote about me.
But if you do not believe his writings,
how will you believe my words?”

Homily

The Catholic Roots of Obama's Activism

JASON HOROWITZ

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/us/the-catholic-roots-of-obamas-activism.html>

CHICAGO — In a meeting room under Holy Name Cathedral, a rapt group of black Roman Catholics listened as Barack Obama, a 25-year-old community organizer, trained them to lobby their fellow delegates to a national congress in Washington on issues like empowering lay leaders and attracting more believers.

“He so quickly got us,” said Andrew Lyke, a participant in the meeting who is now the director of the Chicago Archdiocese’s Office for Black Catholics. The group succeeded in inserting its priorities into the congress’s plan for churches, Mr. Lyke said, and “Barack Obama was key in helping us do that.”

By the time of that session in the spring of 1987, Mr. Obama — himself not Catholic — was already well known in Chicago’s black Catholic circles. He had arrived two years earlier to fill an organizing position paid for by a church grant, and had spent his first months here surrounded by Catholic pastors and congregations. In this often overlooked period of the president’s life, he had a desk in a South Side parish and became steeped in the social justice wing of the church, which played a powerful role in his political formation.

Mr. Obama's organizing job was paid for by a church grant, and he spent his first months in Chicago surrounded by Catholic pastors and congregations.

This Thursday, Mr. Obama will meet with Pope Francis at the Vatican after a three-decade divergence with the church. By the late 1980s, the Catholic hierarchy had taken a conservative turn that de-emphasized social engagement and elevated the culture wars that would eventually cast Mr. Obama as an abortion-supporting enemy. Mr. Obama, who went on to find [his own faith](#) with the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr.’s Trinity United Church of Christ, drifted from his youthful, church-backed activism to become a pragmatic politician and the president with a terrorist “[kill list](#).” The meeting this week is a potential point of confluence.

A White House accustomed to archbishop antagonists hopes the president will find a strategic ally and kindred spirit in a pope who preaches [a gospel of social justice and inclusion](#). Mr. Obama’s old friends in the priesthood pray that Francis will discover a president freed from concerns about re-election and willing to rededicate himself to the vulnerable.

But the Vatican — aware that Mr. Obama has far more to gain from the encounter than the pope does, and wary of being used for American political consumption — warns that this will hardly be like the 1982 meeting at which President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II agreed to fight Communism in Eastern Europe.

“We’re not in the old days of the great alliance,” said a senior Vatican official who was granted anonymity to speak frankly about the mind-set inside the Holy See. While Mr. Obama’s early work with the church is “not on the radar screen,” the official said, his recent arguments with American bishops over issues of religious freedom are: Catholic leaders have [objected to a provision](#) in the administration’s health care law that requires employers to cover contraception costs, and have sharply questioned the morality of the administration’s use of drones to fight terrorism.

As in many reunions, expectations, and the possibility for disappointment, run high.

In 1967, as the modernizing changes of the Second Vatican Council began to transform the Catholic world, Ann Dunham, Mr. Obama’s mother, took her chubby 6-year-old son occasionally to Mass and enrolled him in a new Catholic elementary school in Jakarta, Indonesia, called Santo Fransiskus Asisi. At school, the future president began and ended his days with prayer. At home, his mother read him the Bible with an anthropologist’s eye.

Pious he was not. “When it came time to pray, I would pretend to close my eyes, then peek around the room,” Mr. Obama wrote in his memoir “Dreams From My Father.” “Nothing happened. No angels descended. Just a parched old nun and 30 brown children, muttering words.”

In 1969, Mr. Obama transferred to a more exclusive, state-run school with a mosque, but a development in the United States would have a greater impact on his future career. American Catholic bishops responded to the call of the Second Vatican Council to focus on the poor by creating what is now known as the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#), an antipoverty and social justice program that became one of the country’s most influential supporters of grass-roots groups.

By the early 1980s, when Mr. Obama was an undergraduate at Columbia University, the campaign was financing a project to help neighborhoods after the collapse of the steel mills near Chicago. The program’s leaders, eager to expand beyond Catholic parishes to the black Protestant churches where more of the affected community worshiped, sought an African-American for the task. In 1985, they found one in Mr. Obama, a fledgling community organizer in New York who answered a want ad for a job with the Developing Communities Project. The faith-based program aimed to unify South Side residents against unsafe streets, poor living conditions and political neglect. Mr. Obama’s salary was less than \$10,000 a year.

Mr. Obama had a small office on the ground floor of the church.

The future president arrived in Chicago with little knowledge of Catholicism other than the Graham Greene novels and “Confessions” of St.

Augustine he had read during a period of spiritual exploration at Columbia. But he fit seamlessly into a 1980s Catholic cityscape forged by the spirit of Vatican II, the influence of liberation theology and the progressivism of Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, the archbishop of Chicago, who called for a “consistent ethic of life” that wove life and social justice into a “seamless garment.”

On one of his first days on the job, Mr. Obama heard Cardinal Bernardin speak at an economic development meeting. He felt like a Catholic novice there, he wrote in his memoir, and later decided “not to ask what a catechism was.” But he was a quick study.

“He had to do a power analysis of each Catholic church,” said one of his mentors at the time, Gregory Galluzzo, a former Jesuit priest and disciple of the organizer Saul Alinsky. Mr. Obama, Mr. Galluzzo said, soon understood the chain of command and who had influence in individual parishes.

Mr. Obama had a small office with two cloudy glass-block windows on the ground floor of Holy Rosary, a handsome red brick parish on the South Side, where he would pop down the hall to the office of the Rev. William Stenzel, raise a phantom cigarette to his lips and ask, “Want to go out for lunch?” Besides sneaking smoke breaks with the priest on the roof, Mr. Obama listened to him during Mass. “He was on an exposure curve to organized religion,” Father Stenzel said.

The future president’s education included evangelizing. Mr. Obama often plotted strategy with the recent Catholic convert who had hired him, Gerald Kellman, about how to bring people into the program and closer to the church. The effort to fill the pews “was what Bernardin really bought into,” Mr. Kellman said.

To expand congregations as well as the reach of his organizing program, Mr. Obama went to Holy Ghost Catholic Church in South Holland, Ill., to ask Wilton D. Gregory, an African-American bishop and a rising star in the hierarchy, for a grant for operating costs. Archbishop Gregory, who now leads the Archdiocese of Atlanta, recalled Mr. Obama as a persuasive man who “wanted to engage the people of the neighborhood.” He recommended that Cardinal Bernardin release the funds.

As the months went on, Mr. Obama became a familiar face in South Side black parishes. At Holy Angels Church, considered a center of black Catholic life, he talked to the pastor and the pastor’s adopted son about finding families willing to adopt troubled children. At Our Lady of the Gardens, he attended peace and black history Masses and conferred with the Rev. Dominic Carmon on programs to battle unemployment and violence. At the neo-Gothic St. Sabina, he struck up a friendship with the Rev. Michael L. Pflieger, the firebrand white pastor of one of the city’s largest black parishes. The two would huddle in a back room and commiserate about the liquor stores and payday loan businesses in the neighborhood.

But even as Mr. Obama effectively proselytized for the church and its role in improving the community, and even as he opened meetings in the backs of

churches with the Lord's Prayer and showed a comfort with faith that put the people he hoped to organize at ease, Catholic doctrine did not tempt him. He was not baptized Catholic, priests said. But it was amid the trappings of Catholicism, according to his fellow organizers, that the future president began to express a spiritual thirst.

As Mr. Obama helped expand the program from Catholic parishes to megachurches and Protestant congregations, he felt that need slaked by the prevailing black liberation theology, inspired by the civil rights movement and preached by African-American ministers like Mr. Wright of Trinity. The notion that Jesus delivered salvation to communities that expressed faith through good deeds suited Mr. Obama's instincts — and perhaps his interests.

For an ambitious black politician, Mr. Galluzzo said, "it was not politically advantageous to be in a Catholic church."

Mr. Obama nevertheless maintained his Catholic connections, so much so that when he turned up in the basement of the Holy Name complex in 1987, "there was a need to clarify" that he was not a member of the flock, said the Rev. David Jones, who was at the meeting. And some members still tried to draw him in, in more ways than one.

"He was a man of integrity, very much to my disappointment," joked Cynthia Norris, then the director of the Chicago Archdiocese's black Catholics office, who found the young Mr. Obama appealing. The future president, who was dating another woman, did turn to Ms. Norris for a Harvard Law School recommendation, and kept in touch during a trip to Europe in 1988.

"I wander around Paris, the most beautiful, alluring, maddening city I've ever seen; one is tempted to chuck the whole organizing/political business and be a painter" on the banks of the Seine, Mr. Obama scribbled to Ms. Norris, along with "Love, Barack," on one side of a postcard. On the other was a picture of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame.

Mr. Obama entered Harvard in 1988, the same year he was baptized at Trinity, the power church of Chicago's black professional class. Trinity served Mr. Obama well through his dizzying political ascent, which coincided with a period in which black Catholic churches in Chicago closed and the hierarchy shifted away from the progressive social engagement that had characterized Mr. Obama's early years here.

Cynthia Norris, then the director of the Chicago Archdiocese's black Catholics office, wrote Mr. Obama a Harvard Law School recommendation, and kept in touch during a trip to Europe in 1988.

In 1997, the year Mr. Obama was sworn in as an Illinois state senator, Cardinal Francis George succeeded Cardinal Bernardin as archbishop of Chicago. One of the church's leading conservative intellectuals, called "Francis the Corrector" by local liberal priests, Cardinal George was emblematic of the bishops installed by John Paul II and his successor, Benedict XVI. Some of them looked with skepticism at the social justice wing that had financed Mr. Obama's organizing efforts, and later sought to block his election as president

by suggesting that Catholics could not in good conscience vote for a candidate who supported abortion rights.

Mr. Obama still won the Catholic vote in 2008. In his campaign, he had held out the goal of finding common ground between supporters and opponents of abortion rights, chiefly by reducing unintended pregnancies and increasing adoptions. Cardinal George quickly dashed those hopes. “The common good can never be adequately incarnated in any society when those waiting to be born can be legally killed at choice,” he said in November 2008 in his opening address as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Mr. Obama, seeking to avoid confrontation with the church, invited Cardinal George to the White House in March 2009; said at a news conference that April that abortion rights were “not my highest legislative priority”; and told graduates at the University of Notre Dame in May, after some initial boos from the crowd, that Cardinal Bernardin had touched “my heart and mind.” He recalled his years in Chicago’s Catholic parishes and said that after branching out to work with other Christian denominations, “I found myself drawn not just to the work with the church; I was drawn to be in the church.”

Two months later, speaking to reporters from Catholic publications, he said again that the Campaign for Human Development and Cardinal Bernardin had inspired him. “I think that there have been times over the last decade or two where that more holistic tradition feels like it’s gotten buried under the abortion debate,” he said.

Church leaders were unimpressed. A week after his session with Catholic reporters, Mr. Obama met with Benedict, who pointedly offered him a Vatican document on bioethics that condemned abortion and stem cell research. The relationship deteriorated further during Mr. Obama’s push for health care reform, specifically the provision on contraception, which will be argued before the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

Mr. Obama sent a postcard to Ms. Norris when he visited Paris in the summer of 1988.

Still, Mr. Obama had not lost all his friends in the church. As the president’s relations with Catholic leaders reached their nadir, Father Stenzel, Mr. Obama’s old smoke-break friend, visited the White House. As they walked into the Oval Office, Mr. Obama joked to his staff that the priest had given him his first office in Chicago. Father Stenzel reminded him that his old surroundings were far humbler: “The office I gave you had two rows of glass-block windows!”

Mr. Obama’s parish days seemed far behind him when he won re-election in 2012 with a slimmer margin of Catholic votes. Not only did Catholic conservatives view him as a secularist forcing them to pay for contraceptives, but some of his old allies in the church’s left wing criticized his use of drones and lack of emphasis on the poor.

But the [election of Pope Francis](#) last March seemed to breathe new life into the Catholic Church and, potentially, into the relationship between Mr. Obama and the institution that gave him his start. While far from an

ideological progressive, Francis does sometimes appear cloaked in Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment." His de-emphasis of [issues like abortion and same-sex marriage](#) and his championing of the poor and vulnerable — articulated in his mission statement, "[The Joy of the Gospel](#)" — have impressed a second-term president who [argues that income inequality](#) undermines human dignity.

"Whether you call that the 'seamless garment' or 'the joy of the Gospel' or what, I've said to the president I consider that a pretty Catholic way of looking at the world," said Denis McDonough, the White House chief of staff, who is Roman Catholic. Mr. McDonough added that the community-organizer-turned-president had expressed admiration to him about "how important it is for the Holy Father to be so in the community."

Last month, Catholic activists made their case for social justice on Capitol Hill. Afterward, relaxing over beers and a buffet in the Russell Senate Office Building, they discussed whether Cardinal George, who is retiring as archbishop of Chicago, would be replaced by Archbishop Gregory, who helped secure Mr. Obama's church grant application in the 1980s. Among them was Mr. Lyke, the man who had received coaching from Mr. Obama years earlier in the basement of Holy Name Cathedral. He characterized Francis and Mr. Obama as a match made in heaven.

Mr. Lyke's view is not universal. Vatican officials have made clear Mr. Obama will not get special treatment, and leaders of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, also gathered in the Russell Building, saw the coming papal audience as a chance for Mr. Obama to return to the church's social justice values, not the other way around.

Dylan Corbett, one of the Campaign for Human Development leaders, said the president was "welcome to the conversation" that the pope was driving about income inequality and poverty. He added with a grin, "We're happy to have him back, actually."

Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectinary: 248

A Teaching on How to Live Wisely
(Wis 2:1-22)

¹Fools reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves:

Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end, and no one has been known to return from the afterlife.¹³² ²For we were born by mere chance, and hereafter we shall be as though we had never been, for the breath in our nostrils is like smoke, and reason is a spark kindled

¹³² NRSV: *Hades*

by the beating of our hearts; ³when it is extinguished, the body will turn to ashes, and the spirit will dissolve like empty air. ⁴ Our name will be forgotten in time, and no one will remember our works; our life will pass away like the traces of a cloud, and be scattered like mist that is chased by the rays of the sun and overcome by its heat. ⁵ For our allotted time is the passing of a shadow, and there is no return from our death, because it is sealed up and no one turns back.

⁶ 'Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that exist, and make use of the creation to the full as in youth. ⁷ Let us take our fill of costly wine and perfumes, and let no flower of spring pass us by. ⁸ Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither. ⁹ Let none of us fail to share in our revelry; everywhere let us leave signs of enjoyment, because this is our portion, and this our lot. ¹⁰ Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow or regard the grey hairs of the aged. ¹¹ But let our might be our law of right, for what is weak proves itself to be useless.

¹² 'Let us lie in wait for the wise,¹³³ because they are inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; they reproach us for sins against the law, and accuse us of sins against our training. ¹³ They profess to have knowledge of our divine patron, and call themselves *people of YHWH*.¹³⁴ ¹⁴ They criticize our thoughts; ¹⁵ the very sight of them is a burden, because their lifestyle is unlike that of others, and their customs are strange. ¹⁶ We are considered by them as something base, and they avoid our customs as unclean; they call the last end of the wise happy, and boast that our divine patron is their godparent.

¹⁷ Let us see if the words of the wise are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of their lives; ¹⁸ for if the wise are the people of YHWH, then our divine patron will help them,¹³⁵ and will deliver them from the hand of their enemies. ¹⁹ Let us test them with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle they are, and just see how long they can hold out. ²⁰ Let us condemn them to shameful deaths, for, according to what they say, they will be protected.'

¹³³ NRSV: *righteous man*

¹³⁴ NRSV: *child of the Lord*

¹³⁵ See Matt 27:45-54: ⁴⁵ From noon on, darkness came over the whole land* until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶ And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ⁴⁷ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' ⁴⁸ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'

²¹ Thus the fools reasoned, but they were wrong. Their foolishness blinded them. ²²They did not know the secret purposes of our divine patron, nor hoped for the wages of holiness, nor discerned the prize for the wise.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ NRSV: *blameless souls*

Responsorial Psalm **PS 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 AND 23**

R. (19a) **YHWH is close to the brokenhearted.**

YHWH confronts the evildoers,
to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.
When the just cry out, YHWH hears them,
and from all their distress he rescues them.

R. **YHWH is close to the brokenhearted.**

YHWH is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.
Many are the troubles of the just man,
but out of them all YHWH delivers him.

R. **YHWH is close to the brokenhearted.**

He watches over all his bones;
not one of them shall be broken.
YHWH redeems the lives of his servants;
no one incurs guilt who takes refuge in him.

R. **YHWH is close to the brokenhearted.**

Verse Before The Gospel **MT 4:4B**

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of Our divine patron.

GospelJN 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Jesus moved about within Galilee;
he did not wish to travel in Judea,
because the Jews were trying to kill him.
But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near.

But when his brothers had gone up to the feast,
he himself also went up, not openly but as it were in secret.

Some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said,
“Is he not the one they are trying to kill?
And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him.
Could the authorities have realized that he is the Christ?
But we know where he is from.
When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.”
So Jesus cried out in the temple area as he was teaching and said,
“You know me and also know where I am from.
Yet I did not come on my own,
but the one who sent me, whom you do not know, is true.
I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.”
So they tried to arrest him,
but no one laid a hand upon him,
because his hour had not yet come.

Homily

I started meditating during my junior year of high school. As the son of a soldier, I was inspired by Ignatius of Loyola from Spain, who left his career in the military to found the Society of Jesus. I too would combine my military upbringing with sanctity.

I went to the library and borrowed a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises* to begin my journey. My hero Ignatius would teach me how to meditate. The document *Perfectae Caritatis* promulgated by the Second Vatican Council (October 28, 1965) urged religious orders to renew themselves by returning to the spirit and traditions of their founders. For the Society of Jesus, that renewal meant, among other things, revising the *Exercises*. At the Thirty-First General Congregation, the first to meet after Vatican II, the Society called for a reworking of the Exercises to unfold their spiritual riches to everyone in the Church.

I, however, began my spiritual journey before the Jesuits revised the *Spiritual Exercises* to embrace the more positive theology of Vatican II. My copy contained the medieval world view of confronting death in order to live a disciplined life to prepare for the next world. The nobleman, Iñigo López de Loyola, had come face to face with his own death when a cannon ball crushed his leg while charging the French troops who had laid siege to Pamplona in Italy (1521) during the Franco-Habsburg War (1521-1529).

Also referred to as the Franco-Spanish War. Continued conflict between the Habsburg and Valois Dynasties, over territory in Italy (mainly Milan) and elsewhere (Navarra, Burgundy). Emperor Charles V. was angered about French support for the Comuneros Revolt in Castile 1520-1521 and Francis' 1519 bid for the Imperial crown. The Emperor was supported by the Papal State, Florence and Mantua.

The nobleman, Iñigo López de Loyola, had a conversion experience after a cannon ball crushed his leg while charging the French troops who had laid siege to Pamplona in Italy (1521) during the Franco-Habsburg War (1521-1529).

B.) The War

A French force invaded Upper Navarra and took the Navarrese capital of Pamplona (1521; during the siege, Ignatius of Loyola, later the founder of the Jesuit Order, was injured by a cannon ball). Still in 1521, the French suffered a defeat at the hands of the Spanish in the Battle of Pamplona. Imperial troops took Milan in 1522, defeated the French in the Battle of Bicocca 1522, took hitherto French-held Genoa later that year and in 1524 invaded the Provence (French since 1483). King Francis I. of France then lead an army into Italy, but suffered a decisive defeat in the Battle of Pavia Feb.

24th 1525 and was taken prisoner. He was compelled to sign the treaty of Madrid, in which he renounced French claims on Upper Navarra and Milan and, in addition, ceded the Duchy of Burgundy.

After his release, he violated his treaty obligations, and resumed the war against the Emperor. However, Imperial troops held on to Milan and to Navarra.

In 1526, Pope Clement VII (1523-1534) dared to join the League of Cognac, allying himself with France and Venice against the Emperor. Imperial troops in 1527 sacked Rome ([Sacco di Roma](#), an event treated in a separate file. The Medici, relatives of Pope Clement VII., were ousted a second time from Florence.

In 1529 the Treaty of Cambrai was signed, in which Francis again renounced his claim on Upper Navarra, Naples and Milan, but held on to the Duchy of Burgundy.

The **Battle of Pampeluna** (also spelled [Pamplona](#)) occurred on May 20, 1521, between French-backed [Navarrese](#) and Spanish troops, during the [Spanish conquest of Iberian Navarre](#) and in the context of the [Italian War of 1521–26](#). Most Navarrese towns rose at once against the Spanish, who had [invaded Navarre](#) in 1512. The Spanish resisted the siege sheltered inside the city castle, but they eventually surrendered and the Navarrese took control of the town and the castle of Pamplona.

It was at this battle that Inigo Lopez de Loyola, better known as [St. Ignatius of Loyola](#), suffered severe injuries, a Navarrese cannonball shattering his leg. It is said that after the battle the Navarrese so admired his bravery that they carried him all the way back to his home in Loyola. His meditations during his long recovery set him on the road of a conversion of life from soldier to priest. He would eventually found the [Society of Jesus](#) (the Jesuits), and create the [Spiritual Exercises](#), which is the basis for the idea of "retreats" as an experience of prayer as practiced in the Roman Catholic Church.

At his family home in Loyola, Ignatius became aware of various movements in his soul and found an awareness of God working actively and intimately in his life. The fruits of his deep and passionate prayer during his 11 months at Manresa are the beginnings of the Spiritual Exercises.

The Spiritual Exercises grew out of Ignatius Loyola's personal experience as someone seeking to become more aware of God in his life by discerning God's will for him.¹³⁷ Ignatius kept a journal of his spiritual experiences. After recovering from a leg wound incurred during the Siege of Pamplona in 1521, Ignatius made a retreat with the [Benedictines](#) of [Montserrat](#). They introduced him to the "Ejercitatoria de la vida espiritual" of Garcia de Cisneros, based in large part on the teachings of the [Brothers of the Common Life](#), promoters of the "[devotio moderna](#)". From there, he spent ten months at [Manresa](#), where he discovered [The Imitation of Christ](#) of [Thomas à Kempis](#).^[3] Parts of the *Exercises* were completed while he was a student in Paris. He added to these notes as he directed other people and discovered what worked. Eventually Ignatius gathered these prayers, meditations, reflections, and

¹³⁷ <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises#sthash.DJwpETb2.dpuf>

directions into a carefully designed framework of a retreat, which he called *spiritual exercises* – strategies for living as Jesus lived.

Ignatius wrote that the Exercises: “have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one’s life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.” He wanted individuals to undertake these exercises with the assistance of an experienced spiritual director who would help them shape the retreat and understand what they were experiencing. The book of *Spiritual Exercises* is a handbook to be used by the director, not by the person making the retreat.

Ignatius organized the Exercises into four “weeks.” These are not seven-day weeks, but stages on a journey to spiritual freedom and wholehearted commitment to the service of God.

First week. The first week of the Exercises is a time of reflection on our lives in light of God’s boundless love for us. We see that our response to God’s love has been hindered by patterns of sin. We face these sins knowing that God wants to free us of everything that gets in the way of our loving response to him. The first week ends with a meditation on Christ’s call to follow him.

Second week. The meditations and prayers of the second week teach us how to follow Christ as his disciples. We reflect on Scripture passages: Christ’s birth and baptism, his sermon on the mount, his ministry of healing and teaching, his raising Lazarus from the dead. We are brought to decisions to change our lives to do Christ’s work in the world and to love him more intimately.

Third week. We meditate on Christ’s Last Supper, passion, and death. We see his suffering and the gift of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of God’s love.

Fourth week. We meditate on Jesus’ resurrection and his apparitions to his disciples. We walk with the risen Christ and set out to love and serve him in concrete ways in our lives in the world.

Prayer in the Exercises

The two primary forms of praying taught in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation. In **meditation**, we use our minds. We ponder the basic principles that guide our life. We pray over words, images, and ideas.

Contemplation is more about feeling than thinking. Contemplation often stirs the emotions and enkindles deep desires. In contemplation, we rely on our imaginations to place ourselves in a setting from the Gospels or in a scene proposed by Ignatius. We *pray* with Scripture. We do not study it.

The **discernment of spirits** underlies the Exercises. We notice the interior movements of our hearts, and discern where they are leading us. A regular practice of discernment helps us make good decisions.

All the characteristic themes of Ignatian spirituality are grounded in the Exercises. These include a sense of collaboration with God’s action in the world, spiritual discernment in decision making, generosity of response to

God's invitation, fraternity and companionship in service, and a disposition to find God in all things. Spiritual integration is a prominent theme of the Exercises: integration of contemplation and action, prayer and service, and emotions and reason.

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 249

Reading 1 [JER 11:18-20](#)

I knew their plot because the LORD informed me;
at that time you, O LORD, showed me their doings.

Yet I, like a trusting lamb led to slaughter,
had not realized that they were hatching plots against me:
“Let us destroy the tree in its vigor;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will be spoken no more.”

But, you, O LORD of hosts, O just Judge,
searcher of mind and heart,
Let me witness the vengeance you take on them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause!

A Lament

(Ps 7:1-17)

A drinking song¹³⁸ of David, which he sang to Yahweh concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

Petition

¹ O Yahweh my divine patron, in you I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,
² or like a lion they will tear me apart;
they will drag me away, with no one to rescue.

Declaration of innocence

³ O Yahweh my Divine patron, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,
⁴ if I have repaid my ally with harm
or plundered my foe without cause,
⁵ then let the enemy pursue and overtake me,
trample my life to the ground,
and lay my soul in the dust.

Selah

Petition

⁶ Rise up, O Yahweh, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake, O my divine patron; you have appointed a judgment.
⁷ Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered around you,
and over it take your seat on high.
⁸ Yahweh judges the peoples;
judge me, O Yahweh, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.
⁹ O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
but establish the righteous,
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous divine patron.
¹⁰ Divine patron is my shield,

¹³⁸ NRSV: *Shiggaion*

who saves the upright in heart.

¹¹ Divine patron is a righteous judge,
and a Divine patron who has indignation every day.

¹² If one does not repent, divine patron will whet his sword;
he has bent and strung his bow;

¹³ he has prepared his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.

¹⁴ See how they conceive evil,
and are pregnant with mischief,
and bring forth lies.

¹⁵ They make a pit, digging it out,
and fall into the hole that they have made.

¹⁶ Their mischief returns upon their own heads,
and on their own heads their violence descends.

Vow

¹⁷ I will give to Yahweh the thanks due to his righteousness,
and sing praise to the name of Yahweh, the Most High.

Gospel [JN 7:40-53](#)

Some in the crowd who heard these words of Jesus said,
“This is truly the Prophet.”

Others said, “This is the Christ.”

But others said, “The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he?
Does not Scripture say that the Christ will be of David’s family
and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?”

So a division occurred in the crowd because of him.

Some of them even wanted to arrest him,
but no one laid hands on him.

So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees,
who asked them, “Why did you not bring him?”

The guards answered, “Never before has anyone spoken like this man.”

So the Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived?

Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?

But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed.”

Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them,
“Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him
and finds out what he is doing?”

They answered and said to him,

“You are not from Galilee also, are you?

Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”

Then each went to his own house.

Homily

The Christian Penumbra

Ross Douthat
March 29, 2014

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/30/opinion/sunday/douthat-the-christian-penumbra.html?_r=0

HERE is a seeming paradox of American life. On the one hand, there is a broad social-science correlation between religious faith and various social goods — health and happiness, upward mobility, social trust, charitable work and civic participation.

Yet at the same time, some of the most religious areas of the country — the Bible Belt, the deepest South — struggle mightily with poverty, poor health, political corruption and social disarray.

Part of this paradox can be resolved by looking at nonreligious variables like race. But part of it reflects an important fact about religion in America: The social goods associated with faith flow almost exclusively from religious participation, not from affiliation or nominal belief. And where practice ceases or diminishes, in what you might call America’s “Christian penumbra,” the remaining residue of religion can be socially damaging instead.

Consider, as a case study, the data on divorce. Earlier this year, a pair of demographers released a study showing that regions with heavy populations of conservative Protestants had higher-than-average divorce rates, even when controlling for poverty and race.

Their finding was correct, but incomplete. As the sociologist Charles Stokes pointed out, practicing conservative Protestants have much lower divorce rates, and practicing believers generally divorce less frequently than the secular and unaffiliated.¹³⁹

But the lukewarmly religious are a different matter. What Stokes calls “nominal” conservative Protestants, who attend church less than twice a month, have higher divorce rates even than the nonreligious. And you can find similar patterns with other indicators — out-of-wedlock births, for instance,

¹³⁹ <http://family-studies.org/findings-on-red-and-blue-divorce-are-not-exactly-black-and-white/>

are rarer among religious-engaged evangelical Christians, but nominal evangelicals are a very different story..

It isn't hard to see why this might be. In the Christian penumbra, certain religious expectations could endure (a bias toward early marriage, for instance) without support networks for people struggling to live up to them. Or specific moral ideas could still have purchase without being embedded in a plausible life script. (For instance, residual pro-life sentiment could increase out-of-wedlock births.) Or religious impulses could survive in dark forms rather than positive ones — leaving structures of hypocrisy intact and ratifying social hierarchies, without inculcating virtue, charity or responsibility.

And it isn't hard to see places in American life where these patterns could be at work. Among those working-class whites whose identification with Christianity is mostly a form of identity politics, for instance. Or among second-generation Hispanic immigrants who have drifted from their ancestral Catholicism. Or in African-American communities where the church is respected as an institution without attracting many young men on Sunday morning.

Seeing some of the problems in our culture through this lens might be useful for the religious and secular alike. For nonbelievers inclined to look down on the alleged backwardness of the Bible Belt, it would be helpful to recognize that at least some the problems they see at work reflect traditional religion's growing weakness rather than its potency.

For believers, meanwhile, the Christian penumbra's pathologies *could* just be seen as a kind of theological vindication — proof, perhaps, of the New Testament admonition that it's much worse to be lukewarm than hot or cold.

But it's better to regard these problems as a partial indictment of America's churches: Not only because their failure to reach the working class and the younger generation is making the penumbra steadily bigger, but because a truly healthy religious community should be capable of influencing even the loosely attached somewhat for the better.

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 251

A Parable of a Beautiful Woman

(Dan 13:1-62 LXX/DCB)

1 There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. ²He married the daughter of Hilkiah, named Susanna, a very beautiful woman and one who acted morally even when no one was watching.¹⁴⁰ ³Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the teachings of Moses in Deuteronomy.¹⁴¹ ⁴Joakim was very rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his house; some Jewish leaders used to come to him because he was the most honored of them all.

5 One year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them YHWH had said: *Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people.* ⁶These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there.

7 When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk.

⁸Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to conspire to rape her. ⁹They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking up to the heavens or remembering their duty to administer justice. ¹⁰Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress,¹¹for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to rape her. ¹²Day after day they watched eagerly to see her. ¹³One day they said to each other: Let us go home, for it is time for lunch.' So they both left and parted from each other. ¹⁴But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. Then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

15 Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, Susanna went in as before with only two slaves,¹⁴² and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. ¹⁶No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. ¹⁷She said to her slaves, 'Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe.'¹⁸They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding.

¹⁴⁰ NRSV: *feared God*

¹⁴¹ NRSV: *the law of Moses* – Deuteronomy. Indicates that the pre-exilic version of Deuteronomy continued to be revised in Exile to help prevent the assimilation of the Jews like the two elders into Babylonian culture.

¹⁴² NRSV: *maids*

19 When the slaves had gone out, the two elders got up and ran to her.²⁰They said, 'Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and have intercourse with us. ²¹If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your slaves away.

22 Susanna began to lament: *I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands.* ²³*I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of YHWH.*

24 Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. ²⁵And one of them ran and opened the garden doors.²⁶When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. ²⁷And when the elders told their story, the slaves felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

28 The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they testified: ²⁹Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim.

³⁰So the assembly sent for Susanna, and she came before the assembly with her parents, her children, and all her relatives.

31 Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. ³²As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. ³³Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

34 Then the two elders stood up before the assembly and laid their hands on her head. ³⁵Through her tears she looked up towards Heaven, for her heart trusted in YHWH. ³⁶The elders said, 'While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two slaves, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the slaves. ³⁷Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. ³⁸We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. ³⁹Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we are, and he opened the doors and got away. ⁴⁰We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, ⁴¹but she would not tell us. These things we testify.'

Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

42 Then Susanna lamented out loud: O eternal divine patron, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; ⁴³you know that these men have given false testimony against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!

44 YHWH heard her lament. ⁴⁵Just as she was being led off to execution, her divine patron stirred up the holy spirit of a young man named Daniel, ⁴⁶and he shouted with a loud voice: I want no part in shedding this woman's blood!

47 The assembly turned to him and asked, 'What is this you are saying?'⁴⁸Taking his stand among them he said, 'Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts? ⁴⁹Reconvene the assembly, for these men have given false evidence against her.'

50 So the assembly reconvened. And the rest of the elders said to him, 'Come, sit among us and inform us, for our divine patron has given you the standing of an elder.'⁵¹Daniel said to them, 'Separate them from each other, and I will examine them.'

52 When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said to him, 'You dirty old man, your past sins have now come home, ⁵³pronouncing unjust judgements, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though YHWH said: You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death. ⁵⁴Now then, if you really saw this woman, tell me this: Under what tree did you see them being intimate with each other?' He answered, 'Under a mastic tree.'⁵⁵And Daniel said, 'Very well! This lie has cost you your head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from our divine patron and will immediately cut you in two.'

56 Then, putting the first witness to one side, he ordered them to bring the other. And he said to him, 'You bastard whose father was from Canaan and not from Judah, beauty has beguiled you and lust has perverted your heart. ⁵⁷This is how you have been treating the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear; but a daughter of Judah would not tolerate your wickedness. ⁵⁸Now then, tell me: Under what tree did you catch them being intimate with each other?' He answered, 'Under an evergreen oak.'⁵⁹Daniel said to him, 'Very well! This lie has cost you also your head, for a

messenger from our divine patron¹⁴³ is waiting with his sword to split you in two, so as to destroy you both.

60 Then the whole assembly sang a hymn to it divine patron, who delivered people of faith. ⁶¹Then they carried out the sentence which the assembly imposed on the two elders, because out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of bearing false witness; they did to them as they had wickedly planned to do to their neighbor. ⁶²Acting in accordance with the teachings of Moses in Deuteronomy, they put them to death. Thus innocent blood was spared that day.

63 Hilkiyah and his wife sang a hymn to their divine patron for their daughter Susanna, and so did her husband Joakim and all her relatives, because she was found innocent of a shameful deed. ⁶⁴From that day forward Daniel had a great honor among the exiles in Babylon.

¹⁴³ NRSV: *an angel of God*. The same motif of divine messengers present to witness a sacrifice appears in the Inauguration of Abraham on Mt. Moriah. There the messengers prevent Abraham from murdering Isaac, and again the unjust death of an innocent is averted.

A Hymn

(Ps 23:1-6 DCB)

creation story

When YHWH shepherds my household, I shall not want.

YHWH grazes my sheep in green pastures;

YHWH leads them to still waters;

YHWH brings my household to life.

YHWH leads the sheep only along safe paths

For the sake of the name of YHWH.

Even when the sheep walk in the valley of darkness,

I fear no evil;

For YHWH is always with me;

Your rod and your staff protect me.

You prepare a table before me;

You set a table in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My food bowl overflows.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me

All the days of my life;

My household shall dwell in the house of YHWH

My whole life long.

A Teaching on Trust

(John 8:12-20 DCB)

Jesus taught:

I am a lamp for the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

So the Pharisees said to him: *You cannot be your own witness, and expect us to find your teaching to be reliable.*

Jesus answered: *Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony is admissible, because my godfather sent me and I am returning to my godfather. You do not know where I come from or where I am going.*



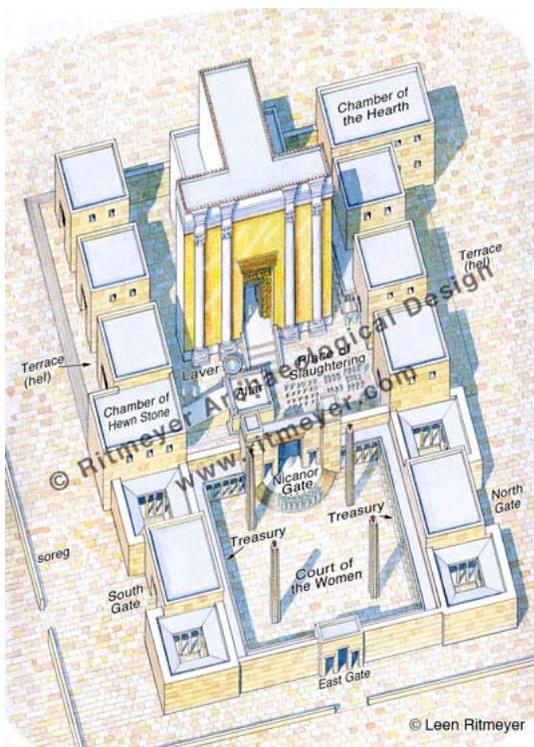
Your judgement of my teaching is based only on what you can see. I do not testify only on what I can see. Even if I should, my testimony would still be admissible, because I have faith that I am not alone, because my godfather¹⁴⁴

who sent me is here with me. Even your teaching on the Torah says that the testimony of two witnesses is admissible. I testify on my behalf, but so does my godfather who sent me.

So the Pharisees asked: *Where is your godfather?*

Jesus answered: *You do not believe me and you do not believe my godfather. If you believed in me, you would know where my godfather is.*

Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the Courtyard of the Temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.¹⁴⁵



¹⁴⁴ NAB: *Father*

¹⁴⁵ NAB: *treasury in the temple area, also know at the Court of the Women. Jesus did not or could not enter the Great Room of the Temple because he was not a Levite.*

<http://www.ritmeyer.com/2015/05/15/the-treasury-of-the-temple-in-jerusalem/>

Homily

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 252

(Num 21:4-9)

From Mount Hor the children of Israel set out on the Red Sea road, to bypass the land of Edom. But with their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!”

In punishment the LORD sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died. Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned in complaining against the LORD and you. Pray the LORD to take the serpents away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people, and the LORD said to Moses, “Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and whoever looks at it after being bitten will live.” Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

A Lament

(Ps 102:1-28)

A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the Yahweh.

Petition

- ¹ Hear my prayer, O Yahweh;
let my cry come to you.
² Do not hide your face from me
on the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily on the day when I call.

Complaint

- ³ For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
⁴ My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
⁵ Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.
⁶ I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
⁷ I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
⁸ All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a curse.
⁹ For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
¹⁰ because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
¹¹ My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

Profession of faith

- ¹² But you, O Yahweh, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
¹³ You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favor it;
the appointed time has come.
¹⁴ For your servants hold its stones dear,

and have pity on its dust.

¹⁵ The nations will fear the name of Yahweh,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.

¹⁶ For Yahweh will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.

¹⁷ He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and will not despise their prayer.

Vow

¹⁸ Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the Yahweh:

¹⁹ that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the Yahweh looked at the earth,

²⁰ to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die;

²¹ so that the name of the Yahweh may be declared in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem,

²² when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the Yahweh.

²³ He has broken my strength in mid-course;
he has shortened my days.

²⁴ 'O my God,' I say, 'do not take me away
at the mid-point of my life,
you whose years endure
throughout all generations.'

Profession of faith

²⁵ Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

²⁶ They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.

You change them like clothing, and they pass away;

²⁷ but you are the same, and your years have no end.

²⁸ The children of your servants shall live secure;
their offspring shall be established in your presence.

Gospel [JN 8:21-30](#)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

“I am going away and you will look for me,
but you will die in your sin.

Where I am going you cannot come.”

So the Jews said,

“He is not going to kill himself, is he,
because he said, ‘Where I am going you cannot come?’”

He said to them, “You belong to what is below,
I belong to what is above.

You belong to this world,
but I do not belong to this world.

That is why I told you that you will die in your sins.

For if you do not believe that I AM,
you will die in your sins.”

So they said to him, “Who are you?”

Jesus said to them, “What I told you from the beginning.

I have much to say about you in condemnation.

But the one who sent me is true,
and what I heard from him I tell the world.”

They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father.

So Jesus said to them,

“When you lift up the Son of Man,
then you will realize that I AM,
and that I do nothing on my own,
but I say only what the Father taught me.

The one who sent me is with me.

He has not left me alone,
because I always do what is pleasing to him.”

Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.

Homily

An Online Generation Redefines Mourning

HANNAH SELIGSON

MARCH 21, 2014

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/fashion/an-online-generation-redefines-mourning.html?_r=0

Zoe Feldman, the founder of Lisa Frank Mixtape, at MUD coffee in the East Village, the last place that she saw her girlfriend, who died in 2012.

In 2010, when Rebecca Soffer's father died of a heart attack on a cruise to the Bahamas, the condolence notes came pouring in, many in the form of text messages. "I got so many from very good friends," Ms. Soffer, 37, said from the couch of her Upper West Side apartment not long ago. "They said they were 'sorry' or 'how r u?'"

Text message was also the preferred medium of a 20-something who asked a funeral home in Los Angeles to text him a picture of his mother's corpse to help him avoid having to go in and identify the body. Caitlin Doughty, 29, a director at the funeral home at the time, said in a phone interview that she initially thought, "No, I'm not going to send you a text of your mother's corpse, but as someone who believes in interacting with the reality of death as intentionally as possible, I thought a text was better than nothing."

Ms. Doughty is an undertaker and the founder of [The Order of the Good Death](#), a website about mortality. The funeral home, which had never before received such a request, asked the son to sign a form saying he understood the emotional distress that might result from the photo before sending it.

Gabrielle Birkner, left, and Rebecca Soffer, who started Modern Loss, a website geared to people around their age to address the many permutations of loss, from miscarriages to a parent's death.

The social norms for loss and the Internet are clearly still evolving. But Gen Y-ers and millennials have begun projecting their own sensibilities onto rituals and discussions surrounding death. As befits the first generation of digital natives, they are starting blogs, YouTube series and Instagram feeds about grief, loss and even the macabre, bringing the conversation about bereavement and the deceased into a very public forum, sometimes with jarring results.

Last November, to give the topic a generationally specific space, Ms. Soffer and Gabrielle Birkner, 34, started [Modern Loss](#), a website geared to people around their age to address many permutations of loss, from miscarriages to a parent's death. Both women have confronted the latter: Four years before Ms. Soffer's father's heart attack, her mother was killed in a car accident. And in 2004, Ms. Birkner's father and stepmother were murdered at their home in Sedona, Ariz., by a methamphetamine addict.

Ms. Soffer and Ms. Birkner found the emotional and psychological support resources for people in their early adult life-stage lacking. "I went to a family of homicide victims support group run through Safe Horizons in a church basement in Harlem when I was living on the Upper West Side and there was no one in my generation," said Ms. Birkner, a Brooklyn-based writer and editor. "Still, it did save my life." Ms. Soffer said she was the only person under 65 at the grief support groups she joined, adding that among those her own age, "I barely know anyone who had lost both their parents."

For a generation known for broadcasting internal monologue across the Internet, some of its members seem eager for spaces to express not just the good stuff that litters everyone's Facebook newsfeed, but also the painful. In November, Melissa Lafsky Wall, 35, the founder of New York-based Brick Wall Media, turned to Modern Loss after a miscarriage, posting an essay called "The Silent Sorrow." "The Internet should speak to the parts of life that we all experience, but aren't represented in most media, a large one being grief and loss," Ms. Wall said, adding that the feedback she got was all positive, which she attributes to the site. "If you are going to write about your miscarriage on Reddit, for instance, it's going to be a very different community."

Modern Loss is a repository of essays, resources and advice that the founders try to edit so that it doesn't sound glib, overly religious or trite. For instance, you'll never hear, "At least they are in a better place." ("Our least favorite line ever," Ms. Soffer said.) The website also examines decidedly 21st century topics like what to do when Gmail keeps suggesting someone who has died as a contact, a topic that Esther D. Kustanowitz, the founder of the blog My Urban Kvetch, explored in a post called "Deleting My Mother." Befitting the target audience, it is not overly earnest. "Stay tuned for upcoming Modern Loss events in real life," the site's "about us" page says. "Because misery loves company, and nachos. And margaritas."

Ms. Soffer, a former producer at "The Colbert Report," said of the site, "You have to have a sense of humor."

Another mourning site speaking to the younger generation is [Lisa Frank Mixtape](#), promising "90s Music, 21st Century Grief." Its founder, Zoe Feldman, 29, solicits essays about human loss (sorry, no pets), sending her contributors

a mix tape in return for submitting an essay about a human loss they have experienced. Named after the company Lisa Frank, known for its brightly colored products that Ms. Feldman said are to her the antithesis of grief, the venture was inspired after her former girlfriend and Smith College classmate, Rebecca Rosenthal, known as Becca, died in October 2012 at age 27.

“I went to a Shaman, a healer and every psychiatrist in Manhattan, and the only thing that helped me was talking to people my age who had experienced some devastating loss,” said Ms. Feldman, who works on business strategy for PepsiCo in New York and has mailed around 50 mixtape cassettes (she will burn a CD for those who don’t have a tape player). “One person wrote and said it’s like being part of a weird, sad tribe,” she said.

Those who are accustomed to social media as a way to tout how fabulous your life is, beware: these sites can be unflinchingly graphic and wrenching. In November, K. H. (submitters use their initials on Lisa Frank Mixtape) wrote, “My dad passed away on May 31, 2003 in my arms as I tried to give him CPR.”

Ms. Doughty, the author of a forthcoming book “Smoke Gets In Your Eyes: And Other Lessons From the Crematory,” to be published by W. W. Norton in September, said she is seeing a cultural shift happening around what she calls “death awareness.” Her peers are engaging in more-open and public discussions about mortality and loss, a movement of which her [“Ask a Mortician”](#) channel on YouTube is on the frontier.

The series has received over a million views since 2011, fielding questions such as: “How do you become a mortician?” (Go to mortuary school) and “Can you bake cremated remains into a chocolate cake?” (Yes, but it’s kind of gross.) On Ms. Doughty’s blog, contributors discuss issues like, “What do dead bodies really look like?” and “Suicide is the cause of death. Do you share?”

Meanwhile, “Girls,” the HBO show about young people making their way in modern-day Brooklyn, has twice tackled the issue of grief and death this season, first when Hannah Horvath’s e-book editor, David, is found dead in the Hudson River. “Do you happen to know another publisher that I could maybe slip the manuscript to if I decide that I really want to try to keep it alive?” Ms. Horvath asks her editor’s widow at his funeral. (She promptly tells Hannah, using an expletive, to leave the reception; the protagonist seems to become more sensitive later in the season, when her grandmother dies.)

The show also highlighted how the Internet has made grief more public and casual, and therefore more fraught. “Why aren’t you mourning quietly?” asks Adam, Hannah’s boyfriend, after she reads him a part of her editor’s obituary on Gawker, which in real life has a tag called “And Now They’re Dead.”

Twitter responses to death, like the hashtag RIP, which was widely used after the news of the fashion designer L'Wren Scott's suicide, can also seem more like display than distress.

Ms. Birkner, a former obituary writer, said: "It's not the nature of social media, generally, to react thoughtfully to things and think, 'How can I really help?' It would be great if everyone said, 'Can I buy your groceries, or can I start a meal train?'"

Last February, on what would have been Ms. Rosenthal's 28th birthday, Ms. Feldman found a long post on her dead friend's Facebook wall from another friend speculating about how Ms. Rosenthal had died. "A lot of what she wrote wasn't true," Ms. Feldman said. "Becca's mother was so upset, and I spent the whole day trying to do crisis management." Ms. Feldman's explanation for that kind of behavior is "performative grief," she said, adding: "That's the only excuse I can think of. The nature of the Internet allows for that sort of self-indulgent, 'look at me' behavior." On the other hand, Ms. Birkner said she found support on Facebook on long-forgotten death anniversaries.

"It's such a push-pull around the pros of allowing for a sense of community that the Internet builds and the distancing that it allows from having to personally interact with others," said Heather Servaty-Seib, a professor at Purdue in the field of thanatology, the study of death and dying, with an emphasis on adolescent grief.

Then there's the lingua franca of social media — the like button — that's totally discordant with death. "My God, is there anything creepier than a post announcing someone lost a loved one and seeing '136 people like this' underneath?" Ms. Soffer said. Facebook floated the idea of a "sympathize button," something that came out of its annual hackathon, but has no plans to pursue it, according to the company. (Facebook does offer an option to memorialize an account that prevents anyone from logging into it in the future, but allows friends and family, depending on privacy setting, to leave posts on the timeline.)

The fact that the Internet is perhaps not the best channel for grief (with gaffes immortalized in cyberspace) is why David Fajgenbaum, 28, the founder of National Students of AMF, a support network for college students with sick or deceased parents, said his organization of 40 chapters on campuses has been cautious about integrating an online component. "Someone could say the wrong thing online, and could really hurt someone," said Mr. Fajgenbaum, who started the support group in his mother's memory while an undergraduate at Georgetown.

Miss Manners, a.k.a. Judith Martin, writes rather unequivocally on the matter. "Letters of condolence should be written by hand," she said.

“Burdensome as it may be, it offers the comfort of knowing that one is representing the deceased to those who cared about him.”

But as Mr. Fajgenbaum acknowledged, young people are eager for that virtual connection; after all, technology and the Internet are a ubiquitous part of their existence. That’s what Jason Feifer, 33, creator of the instantly viral Tumblr “Selfies at Funerals,” discovered when he posted a few dozen photos of teenagers taking pictures of themselves at funerals. In doing so, Mr. Feifer, an editor at Fast Company magazine, said he was documenting a newfangled mourning practice. “It’s important for the older generation to see more than disrespect and to see some kind of genuine communication,” he said.

Admittedly, though, some of the images made him cringe, in particular the young woman who wrote: “Love my hair today. Hate why I’m dressed up #funeral.”

Mr. Feifer said, “I think there are a lot of kids who saw this Tumblr and will not take a selfie at a funeral, but it doesn’t mean that the kids who did take these photos don’t know how to grieve.”

Correction: March 21, 2014

An earlier version of a picture caption with this article misspelled the surname of Gabrielle Birkner, a founder of the website Modern Loss.

Correction: March 22, 2014

An earlier version of this article misstated the position held Caitlin Doughty at a Los Angeles funeral home. She was one of the directors there, not the sole director. It also misstated the name of the organization founded by David Fajgenbaum. It is National Students of AMF, not Actively Moving Forward with Grief.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 253

Teaching Story

(Dan 3:1-30)

¹ The Great King Nebuchadnezzar commissioned a golden statue whose height was almost 10 stories high (sixty cubits) and almost 10 feet wide (Hebrew: *six cubits*).¹⁴⁶ He ordered it against the walls of Babylon.

²Then Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of *Nebuchadnezzar's Statue*.¹⁴⁷

³So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of *Nebuchadnezzar's Statue*. When they were standing before *Nebuchadnezzar's Statue*, ⁴the herald proclaimed aloud, 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship *Nebuchadnezzar's Statue of gold*.⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.'

⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages prostrated and swore allegiance before *Nebuchadnezzar's Statue of gold*.

⁸ Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'O king, live for ever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall prostrate and swear their allegiance before your *Golden Statue*, ¹¹and whoever does not prostrate and swear allegiance shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your divine patrons and they do not swear allegiance to you before your *Golden Statue*.

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my divine patrons and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble

¹⁴⁶ Base six and the number 6 are important in Mesopotamia – ancient enough to have divine proportions.

¹⁴⁷ The great king not only commissioned the statue, he, no doubt, also posed for it.

to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?’

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. ¹⁷If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.’

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary, ²⁰and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. ²¹So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. ²²Because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, ‘Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?’ They answered the king, ‘True, O king.’ ²⁵He replied, ‘But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.’ ²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!’ So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king’s command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.’ ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

A Lament

(Ps 3:1-8)

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

Complaint

- ¹ O Yahweh, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
² many are saying to me,
‘There is no help for you in my divine patron.’¹⁴⁸

Selah

Profession of faith

- ³ But you, O Yahweh, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.
⁴ I cry aloud to Yahweh,
and he answers me from his holy hill.¹⁴⁹

Selah

- ⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for Yahweh sustains me.
⁶ I am not afraid of tens of thousands¹⁵⁰ of people
who have set themselves against me all around.

Petition

- ⁷ Rise up, O Yahweh!
Deliver me, O my divine patron!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;¹⁵¹
you break the teeth of the wicked.
- ⁸ Deliverance belongs to Yahweh;
may your blessing be on your people!

¹⁴⁸ Confusing pronouns. Your divine patron is not going to help you

¹⁴⁹ Zion, Saphon, Sinai?

¹⁵⁰ Surrounded by tens of detachments

¹⁵¹ A left-right punch; once to the cheek, once in the mouth

Selah

Hymn of Azariah

(Dan 3:52-56 LXX)

Blessed are you, YHWH, the divine patron of our ancestors.¹⁵²

Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Blessed is your holy and glorious name.

Praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.

Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory.

Praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.

Blessed are you on the throne of your Kingdom,

Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths of the sea from your throne on the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven.

Praiseworthy and glorious forever.

¹⁵² NRSV: fathers

Teachings on Choosing a Teacher

(John 8:31-42)

Jesus taught some Jewish leaders:¹⁵³ *If you listen to my teachings, you will truly be my followers, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

The leaders answered: *We belong to the household of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you promise: You will become free?*

Jesus answered: *Trust me. Those who sin become slaves of sin. Slaves do not remain with households forever, but heirs do. So if the heir¹⁵⁴ frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you belong to the household of Abraham, but you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen when I was with the father of my household, and you should what my father tells you to do.*

The Jewish leaders answered: *The father of our household is Abraham.*

Jesus replied: *If you belonged to the household of Abraham, you would do what Abraham has taught you to do. Nevertheless, you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from our divine patron. Abraham did not tell you to do this. You are doing the works of some other father!¹⁵⁵*

The leaders angrily declared: *We are not bastards!¹⁵⁶ We have only one Father – our divine patron.*

Jesus insisted: *If our divine patron were the father of your household, you would follow me, because I came from our divine patron and am here. I did not come on my own, but our divine patron sent me.*

¹⁵³ Strange. The Jews who believed in him are so unwilling to listen to Jesus, or who argue with him. Is this the questioning dialogue or actual argument? Probably a dittography. Jesus is saying: If you listen to my teaching, you will be my followers, but these leaders of the Jews do not listen, and are not followers of Jesus. The first phrase about followers is a dittography of the second phrase inviting them to become his followers.

¹⁵⁴ The divinely appointed heir

¹⁵⁵ The Father of Lies

¹⁵⁶ bastards

Homily

Audiobooks and the Return of Storytelling

T. M. Luhrmann
Feb 22, 2014

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/opinion/sunday/luhrmann-audiobooks-and-the-return-of-storytelling.html? r=0>

STANFORD, Calif. — THE ferns under my oak trees evoke moments from “The Great Gatsby” for me. I read the book many years ago, but I listened to it last summer while planting 50 polypodium californicas and 50 festuca idahoensis in the dappled light beneath my oaks. Now, when I look at them, I think about that last awful accident, the yellow Rolls-Royce screaming past the repair shop, and what F. Scott Fitzgerald’s narrator called Gatsby’s extraordinary gift for hope.

The sale of audiobooks has skyrocketed in recent years. In 2012, total industry sales in the book business fell just under 1 percent over all, but those of downloadable audiobooks rose by more than 20 percent. That year, 13,255 titles came out as audiobooks, compared with 4,602 in 2009. Publishers seem to be paying more attention to their production. When Simon and Schuster published Colm Toibin’s “Testament of Mary” last autumn, the narrator was Meryl Streep.

We tend to regard reading with our eyes as more serious, more highbrow, than hearing a book read out loud. Listening to a written text harkens back to childhood, when we couldn’t read it ourselves, or a time when our parents left off reading the chapter out loud in the middle, a nudge that we’d use our school-taught skills to finish it off by ourselves.

The great linguist Ferdinand de Saussure thought we treated writing as more important than speaking because writing is visual. Speech is ephemeral — you hear a word, and then it is gone. The word written down remains, and so we attach more significance to it. Saussure wrote that when we imagined text as more important than speech, it was as if we thought we would learn more about someone from his photograph than from his face.

But so it is. The ability to read has always been invested with more importance than mere speech. When only a small priestly elite could read, books were sacred mysteries. When more people could read, literacy became a

means to move forward in the world. These days, the ability to read is a prerequisite for full participation in the social order.

But for most of human history literature has been spoken out loud. The Iliad and the Odyssey were sung. We think that the Homeric singers of those tales mastered the prodigious mnemonic task presented by those thousands upon thousands of lines of text through an intricate combination of common phrases — rosy-fingered dawn, the wine-dark sea — and nested plots that could be expanded or shortened as the occasion demanded.

Even after narratives were written down, they were more often heard than read. The Roman elites could read, but gatherings at which people recited their poetry were common. And before the modern era, when printing made books widely available and literacy became widespread, reading was an oral act. People read aloud not only to others but also to themselves, and books, as the historian William Graham puts it in “Beyond the Written Word,” were meant for the ears as much, or more so, than for the eyes.

In the early 17th century the Jesuit missionary to China Matteo Ricci captured the orality of writing in this letter to a Peking publisher: “The whole point of writing something down is that your voice will then carry for thousands of miles, whereas in direct conversation it fades at a hundred paces.” Mr. Graham writes that in Europe, silent private reading became widespread only in the second half of the 19th century.

What happens when you hear a text rather than read it? The obvious thing is that you can do something else with your eyes. That is why I can listen to books when I garden. My hands and eyes can work. And so listening to a book is a different sensory experience than reading it. The inner imagining of the story becomes commingled with the outer senses — my hands on the trowel, the scent of tansy in the breeze. The creation of this sensory richness was in fact an explicit goal of the oral reading of the Bible in the medieval European cloister, so that daily tasks would be infused with Scripture, and Scripture would be remembered through ordinary tasks.

I find that when I listen to a story, instead of reading it on a page, my memory of the book does change. I remember more of the action and less of the language, although sometimes when I listen a sentence will drop into my mind and shock me into attention in a way that is less common when I read. (Mind you, it helps to have a good reader.) You don't check back on previous paragraphs or read the last page first when you listen. You move forward, and what you carry with you is person and event.

I listen the way I read books as a child, as if I were there watching. The author becomes more transparent, the characters more real. Listening to

“Bring Up the Bodies,” I don’t think, what is the author, Hilary Mantel, up to? I feel the threat of death damp on my skin. And when I have listened to a book in a particular place — the ferns beneath the oak trees — I remember the book when I come back to that place, as if my hands in the soil were digging up the words.

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Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 254

A Covenant between Yahweh and Abraham¹⁵⁷

(Gen 17:3-9)

When Abram prostrated himself, his divine patron spoke to him:

TITLE

My Covenant with You

CREDENTIALS

You are to become the father of a host of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations. I will render you exceedingly fertile; I will make nations of you; monarchs shall stem from you. I will maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an everlasting covenant, to be your divine patron and the divine patron of your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land in which you are now staying, the whole land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their divine patron.

Then, his divine patron said to Abraham:

STIPULATIONS

On your part, you and your descendants after you must keep my covenant throughout the ages.

¹⁵⁷ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr, 2004), 95-107.; Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 91-96.

A Hymn

(Ps 105:1-

CALL TO WORSHIP

- ¹ Give thanks to Yahweh,¹⁵⁸
 Call on the name of Yahweh,
Proclaim the great works of Yahweh among the peoples.
 ² Sing to Yahweh,
Praise Yahweh;
 Tell of all the wonderful works of Yahweh.
³ Glory in the holy name of Yahweh;
 Let the hearts of those who seek Yahweh rejoice.
⁴ Seek Yahweh and the strength of Yahweh;
 Seek the presence of Yahweh continually.
⁵ Remember the wonderful works Yahweh has done,
 Remember the miracles and the judgments Yahweh has pronounced.

⁶ O offspring of his servant Abraham,
 O children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

CREATION STORY

- ⁷ Yahweh is our divine patron;
 The judgments of Yahweh are in all the earth.
⁸ He is mindful of his covenant forever,
 of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
⁹ the covenant that he made with Abraham,
 his sworn promise to Isaac,
¹⁰ which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
 to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
 as your portion for an inheritance.'

¹² When they were few in number,
 of little account, and strangers in it,
¹³ wandering from nation to nation,
 from one kingdom to another people,
¹⁴ he allowed no one to oppress them;
 he rebuked kings on their account,
¹⁵ saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones;
 do my prophets no harm.'

¹⁵⁸¹⁵⁸ The call to worship summons each of the twelve tribes to praise Yahweh. There are 12 imperatives in the call. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction*, 267-270

16 When he summoned famine against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of Yahweh kept testing him.¹⁵⁹
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler of all his possessions,
22 to instruct his officials at his pleasure,
and to teach his elders wisdom.

23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
24 And Yahweh made his people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their foes,
25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.

26 He sent his servant Moses,
and Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They performed his signs among them,
and miracles in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled against his words.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
and lightning that flashed through their land.
33 He struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their country.
34 He spoke, and the locusts came,
and young locusts without number;
35 they devoured all the vegetation in their land,

¹⁵⁹ Throughout the Bible, Yahweh does not *test* humans to see if they are faithful; Yahweh *trains* or *coaches* humans so that they can survive. Ibid., 65-69

and ate up the fruit of their ground.

³⁶ He struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the first issue of all their strength.

³⁷ Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.

³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.

³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.

⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.

⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.

⁴² For he remembered his holy promise,¹⁶⁰
and Abraham, his servant.

⁴³ So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.

⁴⁴ He gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,

⁴⁵ that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise Yahweh!

¹⁶⁰ Yahweh always remembers; humans always forget.

Audit of Life (John 8:51-59)

Jesus said to the Jews:

Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever keeps my word will never see death.

So the Jews said to him,

“Now we are sure that you are possessed.
Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say,
‘Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.’
Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died?
Or the prophets, who died?
Who do you make yourself out to be?”

Jesus answered:

If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing;
but it is my Father who glorifies me,
of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’
You do not know him, but I know him.
And if I should say that I do not know him,
I would be like you a liar.
But I do know him and I keep his word.
Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day;
he saw it and was glad.”

So the Jews said to him,

“You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?”
Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you,
before Abraham came to be, I AM.”

So they picked up stones to throw at him;
but Jesus hid and went out of the temple area.

Homily

How hard it is to have faith that what our godparent has promised, our godparent will fulfill.

How easy it is to misunderstand what we have been told, the directions we have received. Every failure seems like a broken promise, when, in fact, failure is only the way our godparent trains or coaches us – not tests us -- to succeed.

Life is a challenge, but our godparent is ...with us. It is not about us; it is about our godparent.

When we are lost, when we fail, the most appropriate response is to ask for directions. That is why we are here today – to stop for a moment and listen to the directions on more time.

Here in the *Gospel of Jesus according to John* uses a genre parallel to both the *audit* in the book of Ecclesiastes (Hebrew: *Qoheleth*) common in Semitic cultures, and the *Socratic Dialogue* in the works of Plato common in Hellenistic cultures.

Audits review the traditional teachings of the wise in the world of the Bible, like those preserved in the book of Proverbs (Deut 31:30; Ezek 23:47; Prov 26:26). The wise continued to review and evaluate their teachings. Like the wise woman in the book of Proverbs, who was there when Yahweh created the cosmos (Prov 8:27), Qoheleth is the wise woman who was there when David ruled Jerusalem (Eccl 1:1).¹⁶¹

For the books of Job and Ecclesiastes, blind obedience was disloyal. Unquestioning loyalty was treason. Untested faith was heresy. The only true faith was a questioning faith. The only real loyalty was a tested loyalty. The only genuine obedience was an obedience given by students who had passed through the novitiate of doubt. The wise woman is not a skeptic. She is a quality-control engineer like the snake in the book of Genesis or the Satan in the book of Job. This wise woman is responsible for assembling and evaluating traditions like those in the book of Proverbs, not to destroy them, but to improve them. The title page assures audiences that the book of Ecclesiastes is an official audit of Israel's teaching traditions, and not an eccentric rejection of them.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 305-306

The wise woman reviews the book of Proverbs in order to remind students that its teachings are wise, but not all-wise. Discipline and learning and material possessions have value, but they do not always bring happiness. The wise woman formulates her assessment of the book of Proverbs with the words *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity* (Eccl 1:2).

In Hebrew *vanity* does not mean *useless*, but *limited*. Like a breath of air (Isa 57:13; Job 7:16; Ps 39:5–11; 62:9; 78:33; 94:11; 144:4; Prov 21:6), wisdom is important, but limited. This *wind* (Eccl 1:17) is absolutely necessary for life, but it is hopeless to try and save or *chase after* it. Humans must inhale one breath at time, then exhale and discard it. The teachings in the book of Proverbs are not useless, but they are limited.

The most common genre in the teaching of the wise woman is an audit. Audits have four parts: a citation, a mandate, a research report, and an evaluation. The mandate explains how the Proverbs tradition will be evaluated: *I said to myself, "I will test pleasure."* The research report explains the method that the wise woman used to test the Proverbs tradition: *I cheered my body with wine . . . I acted like a clown to see if this is how humans should live their lives* (Eccl 2:1–3). The evaluation presents the wise woman's conclusions: *laughter is insanity and pleasure is foolishness* (Eccl 2:2).

In the book of Proverbs the wise enjoy sensual pleasures. They *laugh at the days to come* (Prov 31:25) because they can anticipate the future without anxiety. The wise woman tests this teaching by satiating the senses in search of laughter, only to discover laughter is not happiness, but lunacy. Those who laugh are not the wise, but fools whose overindulgence destroys their ability to learn.

The *Socratic dialogue* – learning by asking questions is the primary educational strategy in the Greek and Roman classics. Ancient learners question their teachers, not out of disrespect, but rather to clarify what is being taught. ¹⁶²

Although Socrates (424–348 B.C.E.) is the character in works like *The Symposium* and *The Republic*, the teacher is actually Plato (427–347 B.C.E.). Socrates was Plato's teacher, and Plato attributed his own work to his teacher but casting him in the role of teacher in his own works.

The Socratic dialogue is an educational strategy which leads learners through two stages, clearly demonstrated in the *Meno* where Socrates teaches

¹⁶² Gene Edward Veith and Andrew Kern, *Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America* (Washington DC: Capital Research Center, 2001).; Andrew Kern, "Circe Institute," <http://www.circeinstitute.org/2011/03/what-is-socratic-dialogue> March 21, 2013).

geometry to a slave. The dialogue focuses on widespread assumptions – what people take for granted in order to demonstrate that what people think they know, they do not know.

The first stage is *deconstruction*. Here Plato asks questions to help learners see the contradictions and inadequacies in their assumptions. Once learners can say: *We do not know*, they experience *metanoia* – a *turnaround* from arrogance to docility. The arrogant know everything, and so cannot learn. The docile know that they do not know everything, and so are ready to learn. They are teachable.

The second stage is *remediation*. Here Plato shows learners how to *remedy their ignorance* and restore harmony by placing assumptions on which they live their lives on a more solid foundation.

Socratic Dialogue itself rests on four assumptions. First, there are reliable assumptions – truths – on which humans can base their lives. Second, these assumptions are knowable. Third, these assumptions can be discovered. Fourth, these assumptions fit together into a harmonious symphony of being for all humanity.

Sophists made four opposing assumptions. First, there were no reliable assumptions on which human can base their lives. Second, even if there were, they were beyond human comprehension. Third, even if humans could comprehend these truths, they could not teach them to one another. Fourth, truths are simply individual opinions.

Some Postmodernists today are more Sophists than Postmodernists. The Socratic Method and Postmodernism deconstruct in order to promote learning; Postmodern Sophists deconstruct in order to demonstrating that learning is impossible.

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Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 255

A Lament for the People of Yahweh

(Jer 20:10-13)

COMPLAINT

I hear the whisperings of many:
"Terror on every side!
Denounce! let us denounce him!"
All those who were my friends
are on the watch for any misstep of mine.
"Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail,
and take our vengeance on him."
But Yahweh is with me, like a mighty champion:
my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph.
In their failure they will be put to utter shame,
to lasting, unforgettable confusion.

PETITION

Yahweh, who commands the divine warriors,¹⁶³

¹⁶³ hosts

you who train¹⁶⁴ the just,
who probe mind and heart,
Let me witness the vengeance you take on them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause.

vow

I will sing to Yahweh,
I will praise Yahweh,
For Yahweh has rescued the life of the poor
from the power of the wicked!

A Lament

(Ps 18:1-50)

To the leader. A Psalm of David the servant of Yahweh, who addressed the words of this song to Yahweh on the day when Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

PROFESSION OF FAITH

- ¹ I love you, Yahweh, my strength.
² Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
my divine patron, my rock in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³ I call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised;
so I shall be saved from my enemies.

COMPLAINT

- ⁴ The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
⁵ the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.
- ⁶ In my distress I called upon Yahweh;
to my divine patron I cried for help.
From the Temple Yahweh heard my voice,
and my cry reached the ears of Yahweh.
- ⁷ Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because Yahweh was angry.
⁸ Smoke went up from the nostrils of Yahweh,
and devouring fire from the mouth of Yahweh;
glowing coals flamed forth from Yahweh.
⁹ Yahweh bowed the heavens, and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
¹⁰ He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
¹¹ He made darkness his covering around him,
his canopy thick clouds dark with water.
¹² Out of the brightness before him
there broke through his clouds
hailstones and coals of fire.
¹³ Yahweh also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice.

- 14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.
- 15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O Lord,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.
- 16 He reached down from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters.
- 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
- 18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity;
but Yahweh was my support.
- 19 He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 20 Yahweh rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
- 21 For I have kept the ways of Yahweh,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 22 For all his ordinances were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away from me.
- 23 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
- 24 Therefore Yahweh has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
- 25 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
- 26 with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
- 27 For you deliver a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.
- 28 It is you who light my lamp;
Yahweh, my God, lights up my darkness.
- 29 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
- 30 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of Yahweh proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.
- 31 For who is God except Yahweh?
And who is a rock besides our God?—
- 32 the God who girded me with strength,

and made my way safe.
33 He made my feet like the feet of a deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your right hand has supported me;
your help has made me great.
36 You gave me a wide place for my steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.
37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them;
and did not turn back until they were consumed.
38 I struck them down, so that they were not able to rise;
they fell under my feet.
39 For you girded me with strength for the battle;
you made my assailants sink under me.
40 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
and those who hated me I destroyed.
41 They cried for help, but there was no one to save them;
they cried to Yahweh, but he did not answer them.
42 I beat them fine, like dust before the wind;
I cast them out like the mire of the streets.

43 You delivered me from strife with the peoples;
you made me head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.
44 As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me;
foreigners came cringing to me.
45 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their strongholds.

46 Yahweh lives! Blessed be my rock,
and exalted be the God of my salvation,
47 the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples under me;
48 who delivered me from my enemies;
indeed, you exalted me above my adversaries;
you delivered me from the violent.

49 For this I will extol you, O Lord, among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
50 Great triumphs he gives to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

An Audit on Son of God

(John 10:31-42)

The leaders of the Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus.

Jesus answered them: "I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?"

The leaders of the Jews answered him: "We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God."

Jesus answered them: "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, 'You are gods'? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not perform my Father's works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Then they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped from their power.

He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained.

Many came to him and said: "John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true." And many there began to believe in him.

Homily

We suffer for what we do, and what we say, even when what we do is good, what we say is the measure of our value. Although we say actions speak louder than words, most of us, including Jesus, are judged not by what we do, but by what we say.

Doing good is simpler for most of us than saying something we do not believe. We cannot speak words which our conscience – which God – tells us are not true. We cannot repeat the words of popes, pastors, preachers, politicians which our conscience tells us are not true. God does not bar women from church leadership. God does not prohibit couples from planning the size of their families. God does not consider gay men and women to be disordered. God does not consider the possession of assault weapons and 30 round ammunition clips to be a divine right. You can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, teach the children, clear the path of the blind, but if you say these things you will be stoned to death.

So, how to respond? Embrace the death which faithfulness to the voice of God within us entails. Jesus did. So should we.

One of the most powerful genres in the book of Jeremiah is the confession or lament. Because these laments have often been understood as insights into the agony of the prophet himself, they have inspired generations of Jews, Christians, and Muslims during their own suffering. They have been read as a reflection on the pain and frustration that fill the lives of people of faith.

Like the words of Job, the laments of Jeremiah have been read as a protest against Yahweh for failing to help and support the faithful. This interpretation has helped many people of faith survive suffering. If Job and Jeremiah suffer, then suffering is not the result of failure or sin. If Job and Jeremiah cry out in protest against Yahweh, then it is not failure or sin for other people of faith to do the same.

The world of the Bible, however, did not focus either on individuals or on internal feelings. The Hebrews looked at the world from the perspective of the community. The base community was the household. The Hebrews considered external actions to be more important for understanding their world than internal feelings. Therefore, although the laments describe plots against the life of Jeremiah himself (Jer 11:18–23; 12:1–6; 15:10–21, 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–13), it is better to read them as the words of a Jeremiah who mourns not only for himself, but also for Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah speaks for the

people of Yahweh. He cries out against Yahweh for failing to feed them and to protect them against Babylon.

A similar lament for a city about to be destroyed appears in the books of Samuel-Kings (1 Sam 11:1–15). The messengers come to the village of Saul and, like mourners, lament the imminent destruction of Jabesh-gilead by the soldiers of Rabbath Ammon.¹⁶⁵

Mourners were the midwives of the dead. Like midwives, mourners washed and anointed the bodies of the dead. Like midwives who swaddled the newborn, mourners shrouded the dead. Like midwives who celebrated the birth of the newborn with hymns, mourners announced the passage of the dead with laments. The lamenting of mourners was not simply a clinical symptom of pain, but a legal petition for admittance into the afterlife -- to petition the long dead to accept the newly deceased as members of their household. Just as the primal scream of the newborn was understood as a legal petition to enter a household in the clan, the lament of mourners was considered to be a primal scream on behalf of the dead. It was a legal petition for admittance to the world of the dead.

Most psalms are laments. Standard laments have five components: a complaint, a petition, a vow, a declaration of innocence, and a profession of faith. The core of most laments is a complaint describing the suffering of the household. Complaints express the anger of a clan at Yahweh for breaking the covenant in which Yahweh promised to protect its villages from their enemies. This anger is not simply an internal emotion. It is a legal protest filed in a public forum. Complaints do not simply help the households vent their feelings. Complaints are a form of judicial outrage. The clan has suffered a loss, and it is demanding that Yahweh compensate it for its loss.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr, 2004), 381-382.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 272-273 Don C. Benjamin and Victor H. Matthews, "Mourners and the Psalms," in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible*, eds. M. Patrick Graham, Rick R. Marrs and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield, Eng: Sheffield Academic Pr, 1999), 56-77.

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Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 256

A Pantomime

(Ezek 37:15-28)

ACTION PANTOMIME

15 The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁶Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph -- the stick of Ephraim -- and all the house of Israel associated with it'; ¹⁷and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸And when your people say to you, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' ¹⁹say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph -- which is in the hand of Ephraim -- and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then says to them:

WORD INTERPRETATION

Thus says Yahweh our divine patron:

I will take the children of Israel from among the nations to which they have come, and gather them from all sides to bring them back to their land. I will make them one nation upon the land, in the mountains of Israel, and there shall be one prince for them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.

No longer shall they defile themselves with their idols, their abominations, and all their transgressions. I will deliver them from all their sins of apostasy, and cleanse them so that they may be my people and I may be their divine patron. My servant David shall be prince over them, and there shall be one shepherd for them all; they shall live by my statutes and carefully observe my decrees. They shall live on the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived; they shall live on it forever, they, and their children, and their children's children, with my servant David their prince forever. I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their divine patron, and they shall be my people. Thus the nations shall know that it is I, Yahweh, who make Israel holy, when my sanctuary shall be set up among them forever.

A Hymn (Jer 31: 10-14)

Call to worship

¹⁰ Hear the word of Yahweh, O peoples,¹⁶⁷
 Declare it in the coastlands far away;
Proclaim: *Yahweh who scattered Israel will gather him,*
 Yahweh will keep him as a shepherd keeps a flock.

Creation story

¹¹ For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob,
 Yahweh has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

Call to worship

¹² Come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
 Be radiant over the goodness of Yahweh
 -- over grain, wine, oil, the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
 and they shall never languish again.
¹³ Dance and rejoice young women,
 Be merry young men and old.

Creation story

I will turn their mourning into joy,
 I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
 my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says Yahweh.

¹⁶⁷ NRSV: nations

A Trial of Jesus

(John 11:45-56)

Many Judeans¹⁶⁸ who had come to Mary and seen what Jesus had done began to believe in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said: *What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation.*

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, *You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.*¹⁶⁹

He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of our divine patron. So from that day on they planned to kill him.

So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Judeans, but he left for the region near the desert, to a village called *Ephraim*, and there he remained with his disciples.

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves. They looked for Jesus and said to one another as they were around the Temple area: *What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?*

¹⁶⁸ Jews

¹⁶⁹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Johns Hopkins Univ Pr, 1977).

Homily

The readings of Jeremiah are full of hope; the reading for John is foreboding. In Jeremiah Yahweh reunites the Hebrew people, but in John they Judeans are united in their hatred of Jesus. Jesus is indicted not for what he says or what he does, but because of political expediency. The rationale was only one of several painful efforts to explain how Jesus could have been put to death.

Expediency is never worth a human life. We should never lay down our lives for a technicality. I never wanted to have it said of me: *They defrocked him because he would not wear the maniple.*

How sad it is that often only hatred creates a community. Humans more often respond to what they hate, than to what they love. Standing for someone has value; standing against someone does not.

The prophets of ancient Israel like Jeremiah were masters not only of the sounded art of word, but the silent art of movement as well.

Pantomime is the art of gesture or movement like dance. First celebrated in the cave paintings and dances of the Stone Age, pantomime is a *movie* – a medium of action which appeals to the sense of sight. It is quite distinct from story, whose medium of sound appeals to the sense of hearing.

Pantomimes use gestures to address those human realities whose profundity demands silence. Pantomime is not solely a representational art describing events, but also a sympathetic art that brings about events. Therefore, it is a genre of social change that highlights and ridicules the faults of the powerful.

There are at least three kinds of pantomime in the Bible. First, prophets can mime with a single action. In the Pantomime of the Unwashed Clothes, Jeremiah buys, and wears, an item of clothing, but does not take care of it (Jer 13:1–11). These pantomimes have the same sensational effect on the audience as newspaper headlines. They are shocking, and trigger questions in their audiences. The answers develop into commentaries notarized with the formula: *says Yahweh* (Jer 16:11).

Second, prophets can mime with repeated or sustained movements. Jeremiah remains celibate (Jer 16:1–4), and does not attend funerals (Jer 16:5–7) or weddings (Jer 16:8–9). Celibacy is a form of asceticism.

Third, prophets can mime, not as actors, but as docents or guides, who interpret the actions of others such as a vintner (Jer 13:12–14) or a potter (Jer 18:1–12). They draw the attention of the audience past the surface of wine-making or pottery-making to its deep significance. Divinations belong to this third type of pantomime.

Other studies of human sacrifice in western Mediterranean cultures argue that sacrifice was a strategy for controlling aggression or competition which consistently threatens to destroy human communities.¹⁷⁰ Human sacrifice focused this aggression on a single member of the community. By sacrificing one human being the community vented its hostility, thereby protected other members. Once the victims were dead, they were often deified, as an act of restitution. The portion served to each household during the meal following the sacrifice reestablished the social structure that was threatened by the violence neutralized by the sacrifice.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Johns Hopkins Univ Pr, 1977).

¹⁷¹ Don C. Benjamin, *Stones & Stories: An Introduction to Archaeology & the Bible* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 81-83.

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Monday of Holy Week

Lectionary 258

Reading I

[Is 42:1-7](#)

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
 my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
 Upon whom I have put my Spirit;
 he shall bring forth justice to the nations,
 Not crying out, not shouting,
 not making his voice heard in the street.
 A bruised reed he shall not break,
 and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,
 Until he establishes justice on the earth;
 the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

Thus says Our divine patron, Yahweh,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spreads out the earth with its crops,
 Who gives breath to its people
 and spirit to those who walk on it:
 I, Yahweh, have called you for the victory of justice,
 I have grasped you by the hand;
 I formed you, and set you
 as a covenant of the people,

¹⁷² Benjamin, D. C. (2004). *The Old Testament Story* (232–233). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

a light for the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

Psalm 27

- ¹ Yahweh is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
Yahweh is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
- ² When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
- ³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.
- ⁴ One thing I asked of Yahweh,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of Yahweh
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of Yahweh,
and to inquire in the sanctuary.
- ⁵ For Yahweh will hide me here
in the day of trouble;
Yahweh will conceal me under the cover of the tent;
Yahweh will set me high on a rock.
- ⁶ Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in the tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to Yahweh.
- ⁷ Hear, O YAHWEH, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
- ⁸ “Come,” my heart says, “seek the face!”
Your face, YAHWEH, do I seek.
- ⁹ Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O Our divine patron of my salvation!
- ¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me,

- Yahweh will take me up.
- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O YAHWEH,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
- ¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.
- ¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh
in the land of the living.
- ¹⁴ Wait for Yahweh;¹⁷³
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for Yahweh!
-

Tuesday of Holy Week

Lectionary: 259

Inauguration of a Servant of Yahweh

(Isa 49:1-6)

Hear me, O islands,
listen, O distant peoples.
Yahweh called me from birth,
from my mother's womb Yahweh gave me my name.
Yahweh made of me a sharp-edged sword
concealed me under the arm.
Yahweh made me a polished arrow,
Yahweh hid me in a quiver.

You – people of Judah -- are my servant, Yahweh declared,
the Israel, through whom I show my glory.

Though I thought I had toiled in vain,
and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength,
Yet my reward is with Yahweh,
my recompense is with my divine patron.
For now Yahweh has spoken
who formed me as a servant from the womb,
That Jacob may be brought back to his divine patron
and Israel gathered to Yahweh;
And I am made glorious in the sight of Yahweh,

¹⁷³ A primary virtue in ancient Israel was patience == the ability to wait for Yahweh to fulfill the promises of the covenant, especially when there was no evidence that those promises were being fulfilled now! See Guadalupe in Rain of Gold by Victor Villasenor.

and my divine patron is now my strength!

It is too little, Yahweh says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

A Lament

(Ps 71:1-24)

PETITION

- ¹ In you, O Yahweh, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
² In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
³ Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress, to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- ⁴ Rescue me, O my Divine patron, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
⁵ For you, O Yahweh, are my hope,
my trust, O Yahweh, from my youth.

DECLARATION OF INNOCENCE

- ⁶ I have leaned on you from birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.
⁷ I have been like a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.
⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all day long.

PETITION

- ⁹ Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
do not forsake me when my strength is spent.

COMPLAINT

- ¹⁰ For my enemies speak concerning me,
and those who watch for my life consult together.
¹¹ They say: *Pursue and seize that person*

*whom Divine patron has forsaken,
for there is no one to deliver.'*

PETITION

- 12 Be my divine patron,
do not be far from me;
Be my divine patron,
make haste to help me!
- 13 Let my accusers be put to shame
Let my accusers be consumed;
let those who seek to hurt me be covered with scorn
Let those who seek to hurt me be shamed.

VOW

- 14 But I will hope continually,
and will praise you yet more and more.
- 15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.
- 16 I will come praising the mighty deeds of Yahweh, my divine patron,
I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

DECLARATION OF INNOCENCE

- 17 From my youth you, my divine patron, have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
- 18 So even to old age and grey hairs,
My divine patron, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might
to all the generations to come.
Your power ¹⁹and your righteousness, my divine patron,
reach the high heavens.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

- You who have done great things,
My divine patron, who is like you?
- 20 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities
will revive me again;
from the depths of the earth
you will bring me up again.
- 21 You will increase my honor,
and comfort me once again.

vow

- ²² I will also praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness as my Divine patron;
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
- ²³ My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praises to you;
my soul also, which you have rescued.
- ²⁴ All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help,
for those who tried to do me harm
have been put to shame, and disgraced.

A Trial of Judas and Peter (John 13:21-38)

²¹ After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared: *Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.*

²²The disciples looked at one another; uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³One of his disciples — the one whom Jesus loved — was reclining next to him; ²⁴Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him: *Teacher,¹⁷⁴ who is it?*

²⁶Jesus answered: *It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.* So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon, a man (Aramaic: *is*) from Kerioth (Aramaic: *Cariot*; Josh 15:25).¹⁷⁵ Lord

²⁷After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him: *Do quickly what you are going to do.*

¹⁷⁴ NRSV: Lord

¹⁷⁵ NRSV: Iscariot. *Annals of Mesha of Moab* record that he conquered Ataroth and executed its Israelite inhabitants. He annexed the city and confiscated the altar from its Yahweh sanctuary donated in memory of David. Mesha moved the altar to the Chemosh sanctuary in Kerioth (Arabic: *el-Qereiyat*), a village on the end of the same ridge occupied by Ataroth. The Chemosh sanctuary marked the northwestern border of Moab facing Ataroth whose Yahweh sanctuary marked southwestern border of Israel. Mesha resettled Ataroth with people from two other unknown places: Sharon and Mahaaroth Anson F. Rainey et al., *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 203-205.

²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him: *Buy what we need for the festival*; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said: *Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.* ³²*If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.*³³*Little children, I am with you only a little longer.*

You will look for me; and as I said to the people of Judea so now I say to you: Where I am going, you cannot come.

³⁴*I give you a new commandment, that you are faithful to one another. Just as I have been faithful to you, you also should be faithful to one another.* ³⁵*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you are faithful to one another.'*

36 Simon Peter said to him: *Lord, where are you going?*

Jesus answered, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterwards.'

³⁷Peter said to him: *Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.*

³⁸Jesus answered: *Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.*

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning....'

In Isaiah the people of Judah describe their vocation as messenger of Yahweh.

In Psalms mourners pray for divine protection from their enemies.

In John Jesus announces that one of his disciples will betray him. The irony of the world where we live is that we persecute the good for doing good. Not even the gospel of capitalism keeps its promise that competition will allow only those with the best product or best service will survive. Darwin, however, never argued that the *best* would survive, only the *fittest*. The fit are not good; they are powerful. They know how to take advantage of the weak, and do so.

This is not the world any of us would choose to live in, but it is the world where we live, and it was the world where Jesus lived.

Jesus is not a defeatist; Jesus is a realist. Jesus affirms with the Latin poet Terence: *Homo sum. Humani nil a me alienum puto* (Publius Terentius Afer, 160 B.C.E.) *I am human. Everything that humans experience, I have experienced* -- including betrayal and death.

Jesus accepts betrayal. He is not bitter, he is simply honest. What adds to the predictable suffering in our lives is that we believe that we are innocent, that we do not deserve to suffer, and, in most cases, we are right. But the reality is that even when we are doing good, we, like Jesus, will be persecuted. The response that Jesus models is to be realistic. We do not deserve it, but we are going to get it. That is not the will of God, but it is our nature as human beings – to persecute and put to death those who announce the good news to us, even when the messenger is a Servant of Yahweh and a Son of God.

Wednesday of Holy Week

Lectionary: 260

(Isa 50:4-9)

Yahweh, my divine patron, has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.

Morning after morning Yahweh opens my ear that I may hear. I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.

The Yahweh OUR DIVINE PATRON is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.
He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me,
let us appear together.
Who disputes my right?
Let him confront me.
See, the Yahweh OUR DIVINE PATRON is my help;
who will prove me wrong?

A Lament

(Ps 69:1-36)

To the leader: according to Lilies. Dedicated to David.

Petition

¹ Save me, my divine patron,

Complaint

The waters have come up to my neck.

² I sink deep into the mud,
There is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters,
Flood waters sweep over me.

³ I am weary with my crying;
My throat is parched;
My eyes grow dim waiting for my divine patron.

⁴ More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause;
many are those who would destroy me,
my enemies who accuse me falsely.

Declaration of Innocence

]

What I did not steal
must I now restore?

⁵ My divine patron, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Petition

⁶ Do not let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me,
O Yahweh, chief of the divine warriors;¹⁷⁶
do not let those who seek you be dishonored because of me,
O divine patron of Israel.

Declaration of Innocent

⁷ It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that shame has covered my face.

Complaint

¹⁷⁶ NRSV: Lord of hosts

- ⁸ I have become a stranger to my household,
an outsider¹⁷⁷ to my mother's children.
- ⁹ It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.
- ¹⁰ When I humbled my soul with fasting,
they insulted me for doing so.
- ¹¹ When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.
- ¹² I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate,
and the drunkards make songs about me.

Petition

- ¹³ But as for me, my prayer is to you, Yahweh.
At an acceptable time, my divine patron,
in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.
With your faithful help ¹⁴rescue me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
- ¹⁵ Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or *Sheol* close its mouth over me.
- ¹⁶ Answer me, O Yahweh, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
- ¹⁷ Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.
- ¹⁸ Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.

Complaint

- ¹⁹ You know the insults I receive,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.
- ²⁰ Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
- ²¹ They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Petition

¹⁷⁷ NRSV: alien

- 22 Let their table be a trap for them,
a snare for their allies.
- 23 Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.
- 24 Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.
- 25 May their campsite be a desolation;
let no one live in their tents.
- 26 For they persecute those whom you have struck down,
and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more.
- 27 Add guilt to their guilt;
may they have no acquittal from you.
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.
- 29 But I am lowly and in pain;
let your salvation, my divine patron, protect me.

Vow

- 30 I will praise the name of my divine patron with a song;
I will magnify Yahweh with thanksgiving.
- 31 This will please Yahweh more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
- 32 Let the oppressed see it and be glad;
you who seek my divine patron, let your hearts revive.
- 33 For Yahweh hears the needy,
and does not despise his own that are in bonds.
- 34 Let heaven and earth praise Yahweh,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
- 35 For my divine patron will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and the people of Yahweh shall live there and possess it;
- 36 their descendants shall inherit it,
and those who are faithful¹⁷⁸ the name of Yahweh shall live in it.

(Matt 26:14-25)

¹⁷⁸ NRSV: love

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas, a man from Kerioth,¹⁷⁹ went to the chief priests and said: *What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?*

The priests paid him 30 pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said: *Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?*

Jesus said: *Go into the city to a certain man and tell him: Our teacher says: My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.*

The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, Jesus reclined at table with the Twelve. While they were eating, he said: *Without a doubt,¹⁸⁰ I say to you, one of you will betray me.*

Deeply distressed at this,
they began to say to him one after another,
“Surely it is not I, Yahweh?”
He said in reply,
“He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me
is the one who will betray me.
The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him,
but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.
It would be better for that man if he had never been born.”
Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply,
“Surely it is not I, Teacher?”
He answered, “You have said so.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

¹⁷⁹ NRSV: Iscariot

¹⁸⁰ NRSV: Amen

Monday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 261

(Acts 2:14-33)

¹⁴ Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:

People of Judea, and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.¹⁸¹ ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ In the last days it will be, our divine patron declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the great and glorious Day of YHWH.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved.

²² You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say:

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by our Godparent with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that our Godparent did through him among you, as you yourselves know -- ²³this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of our Godparent, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴But our Godparent raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.¹⁸²

²⁵For David says concerning him:

¹⁸¹ The motif of misunderstanding possession by a divine spirit as intoxication also appears in an *Annunciation to Hannah* (1 Sam 1:1—2:1) where the priest Eli accuses Hannah of entering the sanctuary drunk, when in fact she is in a trance.

¹⁸² *Instruction on Magic* (Deut 18:9-22), a *Trial of Saul* (1 Sam 28:3-25) and a *Trial of Rulers who Channel the Dead* (Isa 8:19-22) all forbid humans to call the dead back from Sheol to assist the living. Here, however, YHWH calls Jesus back to instruct his disciples how to follow the new covenant. In a sense, Jesus is a living Deuteronomy. Only those who have left the human plane through death or dying can profitably instruct the living.

I saw YHWH always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.
²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one experience corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.

²⁹ Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Since he was a prophet, he knew that our divine patron had sworn an oath to put one of his descendants on his throne.

³¹Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the messiah:

He was not abandoned to Sheol,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.

³²This Jesus our Godparent raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of our Godparent, and having received from our Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

A Lament

(Ps 16:1-11)

A Miktam of David.

Petition

¹ Protect me, my divine patron,
for in you I take refuge.
² I say to YHWH: *You are my divine patron;*
I have no good apart from you.

Profession of faith

³ Your people in the land are set apart and noble,
in whom is all my delight.
⁴ Those who choose another divine patron multiply their sorrows;
their drink-offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
⁵ YHWH is my chosen portion and my cup;

- you hold my lot.
- ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- ⁷ I bless YHWH who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I keep YHWH always before me;
because YHWH is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- ¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- ¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

(Matt 28:8-15)

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful, yet overjoyed, and ran to announce the news to his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.

They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.

Then Jesus said to them: *Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.*

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened.

The chief priests assembled with the elders and took counsel; then they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them: *You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep. And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.*

The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed.

The story has circulated among the people of Judea to the present day.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Christians in mainstream traditions of spirituality are often embarrassed by the repeated testimony of Evangelical Christians. Yet, what Evangelical Christians better understand about the Christian vocation is that we can only call ourselves people of faith if we are telling the story – preaching the gospel, announcing the good news, giving witness of testimony.

Today's gospel commissions the disciples to tell the story. Mary Magdalene tells the story to the male disciples. The male disciples tell the story to the people of the Galilee. In contrast the chief priests tell the soldiers not to tell their story, or to tell a story which is not true, but which the people of Judea repeat.

The readings from Acts and Psalms are models of what stories need to be told. People of faith tell stories about the dead coming to life. The point is not to entertain with magic, but to inspire with hope. Death is not simply a physical body at rest. Death comes in any experience of despair – looking into the future and seeing nothing. The soldiers tell a story that there is no hope; Mary Magdalene and the disciples tell stories that there is hope. We should follow their example.

Tuesday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 262

(Acts 2:36-41)

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the people of Judea:¹⁸³

*Let the whole household of Israel know for certain that our Godparent has lifted up this Jesus whom you crucified to be both your teacher and messiah.*¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ NRSV: the Jews

¹⁸⁴ Jews celebrate the end of the wheat harvest on Pentecost or the *Feast of Weeks* (Deut 16:10; 2 Chr 8:13) some 50 days – seven weeks (Lev 23: 16) after the beginning of the barley harvest during Passover (Tobit 2:1; 2 Macc 12:32; 1 Cor 16:8). Men celebrate Pentecost by dancing before the sanctuary altar (Exod 34:18-26, 23:10-17) with loaves of bread fresh baked from the newly harvested grain which are then shared with the entire community including outsiders, orphans and widows (Deut 16:9-12; Lev 23:15-22).

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other Apostles:

What are we to do, my brothers?

Peter said to them:

Turn your lives around and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children -- and to all those far off, whomever the Father of Jesus, our Godparent, will call.

Peter testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them:

Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

That Pentecost, about 3000 people of Judea accepted Peter's message and were baptized.

A Hymn (Ps 33:1-12)

Call to worship

¹ *Rejoice in YHWH, you righteous.*

Praise befits the upright.

² *Praise YHWH with the lyre;*

Make melodies to your divine patron with the ten-stringed harp.

³ *Sing to your divine patron a new song;*

Play skillfully on the strings,

Shout loudly.¹⁸⁵

Creation story

⁴ *For the word of YHWH is upright,*

All the work of your divine patron is done faithfully.

⁵ *Your divine patron loves righteousness and justice;*

The earth is full of the steadfast love of YHWH.

⁶ *By the word of YHWH the heavens were made,*

¹⁸⁵ Seven calls to worship here

- All the stars by the breath of the mouth of your divine patron.
7 YHWH gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;¹⁸⁶
Your divine patron put the oceans in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth live morally;
Let all the peoples of the world stand in awe of their divine patron.
9 For their divine patron spoke, and it came to be;
Their divine patron commanded, and it stood firm.
10 YHWH brings the plans of the peoples to nothing;
Their divine patron frustrates the plans of the peoples.
11 The plans of YHWH stand for ever,
The thoughts of heart of YHWH for all generations.
12 Happy is the people, whose divine patron is YHWH,
The people whom YHWH has chosen as a heritage.

A Lament

(Ps 33:13-22)

Profession of faith

- 13 YHWH looks down from heaven;
YHWH sees all humans.
14 From where YHWH sits enthroned,
YHWH watches all the inhabitants of the earth —
15 YHWH fashions the hearts of all;
Observes all their deeds.
16 A ruler is not saved by a great army;
A warrior is not delivered by great strength.
17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
By its great might it cannot save.
18 Truly the eye of YHWH is on those who live morally,
On those who hope in the steadfast love of YHWH,
19 to deliver their souls from death,
To keep them alive in famine.

Petition

- 20 Our soul waits for YHWH;
YHWH is our help and shield.
21 Our heart is glad in our divine patron,
We trust in the holy name of YHWH.
22 Let your steadfast love, O YHWH, be upon us,
Even as we hope in you.

¹⁸⁶ waters above the *raqia firmament*

Inauguration of Mary of Magdala (John 20:11-18)

Mary of Magdala stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two divine messengers dressed in white robes sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been.

The messengers asked: *Woman, why are you weeping?*

Mary answered: *They have taken the body of my messiah away, and I don't know where they laid it.*

When Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus, but did not recognize him.

Jesus said to Mary: *Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?*

Mary thought Jesus was a gardener and so asked: *Sir,¹⁸⁷ if you took his body away, tell me where you laid it, and I will take it.*

Then Jesus called her by name: *Mary!*

Mary turned and said to Jesus in Aramaic:¹⁸⁸ *You are my dear, sweet Teacher!*¹⁸⁹

Jesus said to her: *Stop holding on to me,¹⁹⁰ for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them: I am going to my Father and your Father -- to my parent¹⁹¹ and your godparent.¹⁹²*

Mary went and testified to the disciples: *I have seen our messiah¹⁹³ and then taught them¹⁹⁴ what he had taught¹⁹⁵ her.*

¹⁸⁷ NRSV: Sir

¹⁸⁸ NRSV: Hebrew

¹⁸⁹ NRSV: Rabbouni

¹⁹⁰ VULG: noli me tangere

¹⁹¹ NRSV: God

¹⁹² NRSV: God

¹⁹³ NRSV: the Lord

¹⁹⁴ NRSV: reported to them. Mary is not a messenger. She is a teacher.

¹⁹⁵ NRSV: told

Homily

“Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...”

For Peter, Jesus is like the Pentecost wheat. He has been cut down in the field, only to be lifted up as bread in the sanctuary. God rescues the harm which humans do, and offers them the opportunity to repent. We are saved by those we savage. The irony is profound, and characteristically divine. The sins we commit can only be forgiven if we change our lives because we have learned from our sins how to repent.

In the Bible *inauguration stories* open with theophanies. *Theophanies* allow candidates to encounter their divine patrons. Images of YHWH were forbidden in ancient Israel (Deut 5:8–10). Theophanies reveal the presence of YHWH without technically violating the prohibition. Candidates sense more than they actually see. When they do see something it is either the fire or lightning that is YHWH’s weapon, or the cloud of dust churned up by the divine war chariot, or an angel or messenger (Exod 3:2; Judg 13:6). Here a two messengers appear to Mary (Exod 3:2) before Jesus speaks (Exod 3:6).

Candidates respond to theophanies by investigating them. The burning bush attracts the attention of Moses, who then turns aside to look at the great sight (Exod 3:3*). Mary investigates the divine messengers at the tomb of Jesus. This first episode in the inauguration records YHWH’s successful contact with the candidate.

The relationship between divine patrons and candidates is like a game of tag. Divine patrons are *it*, and candidates do not want to be caught. Therefore, divine patrons ambush their candidates with lure such as the burning bush or an empty tomb, which seems harmless enough and attracts curiosity.

Once candidates get close enough, divine patrons tag them with a greeting. YHWH usually addresses candidates formally by calling their names twice. As Moses approaches the burning bush, YHWH greets him: *Moses! Moses!* Once Mary approaches the gardener, Jesus greets her by name.

Once he hears his name, Moses realizes he is in the presence of YHWH, and responds to the greeting with the formula: *Here I am* (Exod 3:4). Mary answers: *You are my dear, sweet Teacher!* Like soldiers or students answering to their names in a roll call, candidates answer: *Present!* Their words are sometimes accompanied by a gesture of humiliation. Those who see YHWH must remain forever in the presence of YHWH by dying. Death here is not a punishment, but a passage from the human plane to the divine plane. Humans pass from one plane to the other only in birth and death. Through the womb from which they are born, and the tomb where they are buried, humans leave

and return to the divine plane. The position in which both the fetus and the cadaver begin their journeys is fetal. In its mother's womb, a fetus tucks its knees against its chest, and in the graves of many Neolithic period cultures the bodies of the dead are arranged in the same position. Therefore, candidates often prostrate themselves on the earth with their chests tight against their knees, ready to leave the human plane for the divine. The fetal position is an ancient human gesture of humiliation or *kenosis*, and it is a prayer posture for Muslims today. The term *kenosis* is Greek for *emptying*. Whether coming into the world or going out of the world, the proper posture for the journey is the fetal position. The *kenosis* demonstrates candidates' complete lack of ambition, and argues that the exercise of power by prophets in their communities is not the result of a selfish quest for power, but a response to a call from YHWH.

With the formula *Fear not!* YHWH postpones candidates' deaths, so that they can carry out a divine mission. When candidates prostrate, their human lives come to an end. When they stand and return to the human community to carry out a divine mission, they do so not simply as members of that community, but as prophets sent by the divine assembly. The inauguration of a prophet is a rite of passage. Sometimes, instead of using the fear-not formula, YHWH simply teaches candidates how to act in the presence of the divine assembly. Here YHWH instructs Moses to remove his sandals (Exod 3:5).

Members of the divine assembly were holy. Holiness in the world of the Bible is like radioactivity. Both physically alter humans unless they take proper precautions, therefore, the community quarantines, ostracizes, or executes those whom, like Moses, the presence of YHWH transforms. If candidates follow the protocol in which YHWH instructs them, then they can return safely to the human community without threatening it with holiness.

When fathers of households entered a sanctuary, they covered their genitals (Exod 28:42) and they removed their sandals (Exod 3:5). Sandals were not only footwear, but also the uniform of landowners (1 Kgs 21:16–17). Buyers walked off their land in sandals, which then became the movable title to that land. Sandals were a symbol of power over land. Genitals were a symbol of power over children. No symbols of reproduction or land ownership were displayed before YHWH, who alone blessed the Hebrews with land and children. Human parenthood and land ownership were only by proxy. Wearing sandals onto the holy ground of a sanctuary would be tantamount to challenging YHWH.

Having greeted and briefed candidates, YHWH then commissions them to carry out a divine mission. A command (Exod 3:8–10), a decalogue (Deut 5:6–21), or a covenant is the standard commission. Candidates respond to the commission by demurring. It would be arrogant for candidates to accept their

commissions without first declining on the basis that they are not worthy to fulfill a divine task.

YHWH responds to candidates' demurrals with a talisman. Talismans are offensive weapons. Amulets are defensive weapons that protect candidates from their enemies. This talisman serves as a passport certifying the validity of their mission, and as a weapon against their enemies. The talisman that YHWH gives Moses is the promise: *I will be with you* (Exod 3:12). The mission is a divine mission, and it will be accomplished not by means of the talents and skills of Moses, but only by YHWH.

Almost ignoring the talisman offered, Moses asks for a name. YHWH refuses (Exod 3:13–14). Although the response *I am, who am* has been an incentive for generations of reflections, it was not originally meant to be a key to the nature of God as the source of being or the cause of all being. The response tells Moses nothing. *I am, who am* is a riddle like *name-smame*.

Outside the Bible, the name *YHWH* appears on ostraca from Arad after 700–600 b.c.e. The place-name *Bet YHWH* appears in Egyptian lists dated to Amenophis III (1417–1379 B.C.E.) and Ramses II (1304–1237 B.C.E.). Archaeologists have identified Bet YHWH with Qurayyah, a Late Bronze site in Midian, today 45 miles northwest of Tabuk (Saudi Arabia); 15 miles west-southwest of Bir Ibn Hirmas; and forty miles from Mudawwara (Jordan).

A name is power. Those who give names or call names have power over those who answer to their names. Owners name their animals. Parents name their children. Many husbands still name their wives. Moses' request is inappropriate because if he knows the divine name, then he can call or control YHWH. Thus, YHWH's response simply continues Moses' protocol lesson. No human, not even a prophet, should ask for power over YHWH.

The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene

Lance S. Owens

<http://gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm>

The *Gospel of Mary* is preserved in the *Berlin Gnostic Codex*, copied after 350, recovered near Akhmim (Egypt) and purchased in 1896 by Carl Reinhardt. It contains Coptic translations of the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. These texts developed among Greek speaking Christians in Egypt after 100. Nonetheless, they were not published until 1955.

By then the large Nag Hammadi collection of ancient Gnostic writings had also been recovered. The *Gospel of Mary*, *Apocryphon of John* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* were also preserved in the Nag Hammadi library. The

manuscript of the *Gospel of Mary* is missing pages 1-6+11-14 and portions of chapter 5 to 8. Two other fragments of the gospel were later unearthed at Oxyrhynchus (Egypt).

FURTHER READING: Karen King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the first Woman Apostle; The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, international edition 2007; Ann Brock, *Mary Magdalene, First Apostle*; Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: legends apocrypha, and the Christian Testament*; Susan Haskin, *Mary Magdalen, Myth and Metaphor*.

Wednesday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 263

A Miracle Story

(Acts 3:1-10)

Peter and John were going up to the courtyard of the temple for the three o'clock hour of prayer. A man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called the *Beautiful Gate* every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms.

But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said: *Look at us*.

He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them.

Peter said: *I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus who is the Christ from Nazareth.*¹⁹⁶ *Rise and Walk*.

Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and dancing¹⁹⁷ and praising YHWH. When all the people saw him walking and praising YHWH, they recognized him as the one who used to sit begging at the *Beautiful Gate* of the temple, and they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him.

A Hymn

(Ps 105: 1-45)

Call to worship

¹⁹⁶ NRSV: *Nazorean*

¹⁹⁷ BRSV: *jumping*

- ¹ Give thanks to YHWH,
 Call on the name¹⁹⁸ of YHWH,
 Make known the deeds of YHWH among the peoples.
- ² Sing to YHWH,
 sing praises to YHWH;
 tell of all the wonderful works of YHWH.
- ³ Glory in the holy name of YHWH;
 let the hearts of those who seek YHWH rejoice.
- ⁴ Seek YHWH
 Seek the strength of YHWH;
 seek the presence of YHWH continually.
- ⁵ Remember the wonderful works YHWH has done,
 the miracles of YHWH,
 the judgments YHWH has uttered,
- ⁶ O offspring of Abraham, slave of YHWH,¹⁹⁹
 the household of Jacob, the chosen people of YHWH.

Creation story

- ⁷YHWH is our divine patron;
 the judgments are in all the earth.
- ⁸YHWH is mindful of the covenant forever,
 of the word that YHWH commanded, for a thousand generations,
- ⁹ the covenant that YHWH made with Abraham,
 the promise of YHWH sworn to Isaac,
- ¹⁰ which YHWH confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
 to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
- ¹¹ saying: *To you I will give the land of Canaan
 as your portion for an inheritance.*
- ¹² When they were few in number,
 of little account, and outsiders in it,
- ¹³ wandering from one people to another,
 from one state to another,
- ¹⁴YHWH allowed no one to oppress them;
 YHWH rebuked rulers on their account,
- ¹⁵ saying: *Do not touch my anointed ones;*

¹⁹⁸ Students call their teachers by name; slaves call their owners by name. Only those clients who have patrons can use their patron's name.

¹⁹⁹ Curiously, English translations use both *servant* and *slave* to translate 'ebed. Typically, the Hebrews have *servants* or are *servants*; none Hebrews have *slaves* or are *slaves*. The issue, however, is not whether or not humans are servants or slaves, but rather whose slaves they are. The Hebrews are not slaves of the Egyptians, they are the slaves of YHWH. Therefore, *slave of YHWH* is a title of honor for Moses, not a title of shame.

do my prophets no harm.
16 When YHWH summoned famine against the land,
broke every staff of bread,
17YHWH had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what YHWH had said came to pass,
the word of YHWH kept training him.²⁰⁰
20 Pharaoh sent and released him;
Pharaoh set him free.
21YHWH made him lord of Pharaoh's household,
steward of all Pharaoh's possessions,
22 to instruct his officials at his pleasure,
to teach his elders wisdom.
23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an outsider in the land of Ham.
24 YHWH made the people very fruitful,
made them stronger than the Egyptians,
25 whose hearts YHWH then turned to hate the people,
to deal craftily with the slaves of YHWH.
26YHWH sent his slave Moses,
and Aaron whom YHWH had chosen.
27 They performed signs of YHWH among them,
miracles in the land of Ham.
28YHWH sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled against the words of YHWH.
29YHWH turned their waters blood-red,²⁰¹
caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the bedrooms of their rulers.
31YHWH spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
Mosquitoes²⁰² throughout their land.
32YHWH gave them hail for rain,

²⁰⁰ The Hebrews seldom, if ever, portrayed YHWH as testing human beings, even in the book of Job. When the word "test" does appear it carries the connotations of "coaching" or "training." YHWH trains the Hebrews so that they can meet and survive the challenges they will face. YHWH trains the Hebrews to protect them from harm, not to torment them to see how they will react. This Bible does not celebrate Abraham and Sarah for blind obedience to a divine patron who toys with their feelings by giving them a child and then pretends to take that child away. The Bible remembers them as ancestors who struggled for land and children of their own in a world where slavery seemed inevitable. YHWH is not their enemy, but their covenant partner who helps them resolve the conflict as to who should be their heir.

²⁰¹ NRSV: into blood

²⁰² NRSV: gnats

lightning that flashed through their land.
³³YHWH struck their vines and fig trees,
shattered the trees of their land.
³⁴YHWH spoke, and the locusts came,
young locusts without number;
³⁵ they devoured all the vegetation in their land,
ate up the fruit of their ground.
³⁶YHWH struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the first issue of all their strength. ²⁰³

³⁷ Then YHWH brought Israel out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
³⁹YHWH spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and YHWH brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.

²⁰³ The Plagues Stories demonstrate the sterility of the old world that the pharaohs built. They are a parody or satire that ridicules Egypt and its traditions by treating them flippantly and by telling the creation stories of Egypt in an inappropriate and trivial manner. They contrast the Egypt of the pharaohs with the world of YHWH. In the Stories of the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1–2:3*) the world of YHWH is orderly and its creatures are noble. The firstborn of this world plant the land and populate it with children. In the Plagues Stories the world of the pharaohs is disorderly and polluted with ignoble creatures. In the Stories of the Heavens and the Earth YHWH hangs a light and then creates a world. In the Plagues Stories YHWH decommissions the world of Egypt and then turns out the light. Pharaoh's firstborn are stillborn.

In the Egypt that the pharaohs create, fertility is a curse. In the Israel that YHWH creates, fertility is a blessing. The plagues do not destroy Egypt, but simply dramatize that its fertility is superficial. They demonstrate that the fertility of Egypt only plagues the cosmos with creatures that are out of place. They portray Egypt as destroying life rather than supporting it. Egypt is a house of slaves and a land of death. The Nile River brings not only the life-giving organisms and minerals to the plants and animals of Egypt, but deadly red clay from landslides upriver as well. Swamp frogs not only control the populations of insects like gnats and flies, but attract these germ-bearers to animals and humans as well. Livestock not only enriches the diet of humans and lightens their work, but infects them with hoof-and-mouth disease. Rain not only causes the crops to grow, but the locusts to migrate. The same principle of fertility that creates the world of the pharaohs also destroys it.

To understand the Plagues Stories it is necessary to understand something of both the technology and the traditions of Egypt. The creatures in the plagues are caricatures of the great households of Egypt and their totems. Totems are the animal ancestors who give birth to humans and then protect and befriend them. The Nile is the totem of the household of Hapy. The sun is the totem of the household of Ra. The bull is the totem of the household of Apis. Plagues shame these great households. The Nile and its canals, which were the pride of Egypt, are satirized as a sewer that pollutes the fields and infects the villages. The cattle bred by temple ranchers and the great Apis bull are scorned as carriers of the hoof-and-mouth disease that decimates Egypt's population.

⁴¹YHWH opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.

⁴² For YHWH remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, the slave of YHWH.

⁴³ So YHWH brought the people out with joy,
the chosen people with singing.

⁴⁴YHWH gave them the lands of all the peoples of Syria-Palestine,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,

⁴⁵ that they might keep the statutes of YHWH
and observe the laws of YHWH.

Call to worship

Praise YHWH!

(Luke 24:13-35)

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
He asked them,
"What are you discussing as you walk along?"
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"
They said to him,
"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his Body;

they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see.”
And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?”
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, “Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”
So he went in to stay with them.
And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.
With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.
Then they said to each other,
“Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”
So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together
the Eleven and those with them who were saying,
“The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”
Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way
and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Homily

‘Abba. Thank you for waking me up this morning...

The Temple of Solomon was a rectangular building some 140 feet long and 85 feet wide. It was divided into three parts. The entrance was a courtyard about 35 feet long. The great room was about 70 feet long. The holy of holies was 35 feet long. After the death of Jesus, Peter and John continue to do what Jesus did. They fulfill their obligations as Jews by praying at the Temple in Jerusalem, and by healing the sick. They do not reject the city which rejected Jesus, and they do not condemn the sick for their sins.

Peter and John do not compensate for the disabled with money, but recognize his desire to be able to do what the abled bodied do. The miracle is not so much in the healing as it is in the compassion with which they respond.

Peter and John heal the man at the gate, but he does not praise them. Instead he thanks YHWH. There is a God, but ironically that God comes into our lives only through other humans, who can heal us or hurt us. We all wait like the man at the gate for those special people to come into our lives and open our way to God. We cannot find our way to God alone.

Proposals for the location of the Beautiful Gate include the Nicanor Gate, the Huldah Gates and the Golden (Hebrew: *Shusan*) Gates.

The Nicanor Gate on the east side of the Temple was an inner gate used by few. People with disabilities and beggars were both prohibited from entering the temple, which the man does only after he is healed.

The Golden Gates on the east side of the Temple were in the outer wall, but were mostly ceremonial during the first century of the common era, and therefore not a place where a beggar could collect many alms.

The Huldah Gates on the south side of the Temple in the outer wall, where the faithful entered and left the Temple would be a more profitable source of alms for beggars.

Tradition explains the Hebrew name for the gates – *The Gates of Susa*, the capital city of Persia, as an expression of gratitude to Cyrus, the Great King of Persia, who freed the hostages from Judah in Babylon and repatriated them. An image of the city may have been carved on the gates.

When YHWH tours Ezekiel through the *City of Emmanuel* (Ezek 40:1—48:35), he sees a sealed gate (Ezek 44:2). Tradition identified this gate with the Golden Gates, and explained that only the messiah would unseal the gates and enter the Temple. This miracle story may place the beggar at the Golden Gates as a profession of faith that Jesus is, in fact, the messiah, which are exactly the words Peter uses – *Jesus, the Christ* – to heal the man.

The Nicanor Gate no longer exists; the Huldah Gates and the Golden Gates are blocked

Thursday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 264

Reading 1 [ACTS 3:11-26](#)

As the crippled man who had been cured clung to Peter and John, all the people hurried in amazement toward them in the portico called "Solomon's Portico."

When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, "You children of Israel, why are you amazed at this, and why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence, when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, this man, whom you see and know, his name has made strong, and the faith that comes through it has given him this perfect health, in the presence of all of you. Now I know, brothers and sisters, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Christ already appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of universal restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. For Moses said:

A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen in all that he may say to you. Everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be cut off from the people.

"Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel and those afterwards, also announced these days.

You are the children of the prophets
and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors
when he said to Abraham,
In your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
For you first, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you
by turning each of you from your evil ways.”

A Hymn

(Ps 8:1-9)

To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.

⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,

⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Gospel [LK 24:35-48](#)

The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way,
and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this,
he stood in their midst and said to them,
“Peace be with you.”

But they were startled and terrified

and thought that they were seeing a ghost.
Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled?
And why do questions arise in your hearts?
Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.
Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones
as you can see I have."
And as he said this,
he showed them his hands and his feet.
While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed,
he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?"
They gave him a piece of baked fish;
he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them,
"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you,
that everything written about me in the law of Moses
and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled."
Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
And he said to them,
"Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day
and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
would be preached in his name
to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
You are witnesses of these things."

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning....

Unsteady Halo: The Canonization of Pope John Paul II

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-j-reid-jr/unsteady-halo_b_5188642.html?utm_hp_ref=religion

Santo subito! -- "Sainthood now!" That was the urgent plea of the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square in April, 2005, as Pope John Paul II lay dying. If the crowd had had its way, he would have been proclaimed a saint the very moment he died. And in truth, the canonization process has been extremely brisk. John Paul II has been dead only nine years and the Church stands ready to canonize him on April 27.

The passage of years, however, has allowed for a more sober assessment of his pontificate. For sure, John Paul II did things that make him worthy of canonization. There is no question that he was a deeply prayerful man who authored profound reflections on the meaning of Jesus and his mission. He provided a great witness to courage, first when he was shot in May, 1981, and then, two decades later, as an elderly victim of Parkinson's. He rallied Poland and Eastern Europe in the Cold War. Where others might have been intemperate, his messages always encouraged resolute, peaceful, non-violent resistance.

Still, the perspective of time allows us to realize that his pontificate had the effect not of strengthening but rather of weakening the Church in a number of crucial respects. And we would be a friend to history -- and to the Church -- if we acknowledged these flaws, for they are not insignificant.

First, there was the priestly pedophilia crisis. It was in the middle 1980s when the public first began to get a sense of its enormity. In 1983, the national media highlighted the serial abuse committed by a priest of the [Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, Fr. Gilbert Gauthé](#). And two years later, in a report to the American Bishops' Conference, Fr. Thomas Doyle detailed the depth of the problem and predicted that the pedophilia crisis might be the largest disaster to confront the Church "in centuries."

Fr. Doyle was right of course. And a healthy Church would have responded with shock, yes, but then with a thorough house cleaning. Regrettably, it has been three decades and the house cleaning is still less than adequate. Why? There are many reasons, but one contributing factor was the culture of clericalism that came to dominate the Catholic hierarchy in the 1980s and 1990s.

Priests and bishops were said to be special, set apart for leadership in the Church. Bishops, in particular, came to see themselves not as men dedicated to service and compassion but as defenders of the Church against her enemies, including, to the Church's great shame, the victims of abuse. [John Paul II set the tone](#) for his bishops.

And the crisis worsened as he aged. Pontificating excuse-makers duly explained that he lacked the capacity to grasp its scale. In the Poland of his youth, his apologists recited, many priests faced trumped-up charges of child abuse and now the aged Pope could not accept that these charges were genuine. Both for the clericalism he promoted and the cognitive dissonance he could not overcome, John Paul II bears at least some of the responsibility for the crisis.

And among the worst cases of child abuse was that of Fr. Marcial Maciel. The Founder of the religious order, The Legion of Christ, Fr. Maciel enjoyed extraordinary favor all the while he [preyed on his seminarians, victimizing dozens over his long reign of terror. He fathered children with various women on at least two continents, and even plagiarized his spiritual autobiography.](#) A group of former seminarians attempted to inform the Vatican [of their mistreatment in the 1990s, but were never given a hearing.](#) All the while, John Paul II feted Fr. Maciel in Rome and praised him for his devotion to orthodoxy. The cleansing of this sordid mess fell to his successor, Pope Benedict XVI.

On a very different note, John Paul II was celebrated in his day for the ways in which he defined doctrine. The post-Vatican-II Church of the 1970s, it was said, had been too experimental. Scholars wrote about liberation theology. Church historians examined tradition in path-breaking ways. Priests explored a variety of ways of doing liturgy. Yes, there were excesses. Yes, there was naiveté, enough to go around, but there was also genuine excitement and real life to the Church.

John Paul II sought to curb this enthusiasm, mistaking exuberance for heterodoxy. He craved certainty even while despising intellectual diversity. The Catholic Church was one and should speak with a single voice. A generation of Catholic scholars, the best and brightest minds the Church had, were investigated and silenced by John Paul II's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A trained theologian, he attempted to write into Catholic dogma many of his own propositions, thinking them to be universal truths.

Going forward, these efforts to create a comprehensive uniformity of doctrine may prove to be among the most unfortunate aspects of John Paul II's pontificate. Take, for example, his theology of the body, which he developed in a series of sermons in the early 1980s and which forms the basis of the sexual teachings found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992.

Assuming what he wished to prove, John Paul II used the creation account -- "male and female he created them" -- as justification for a sexual ethic that now urgently requires rethinking. In the Catechism, he described same-sex attraction as "objectively disordered" (para. 2358). Same-sex relationships, he said were incapable of "proceed[ing] from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity" and so "[u]nder no circumstances can they be approved" (para. 2357).

We know, of course, that same-sex attraction is part of the natural variability of human sexuality. We recognize from simply observing love-in-action that genuinely self-giving, life-promoting relationships are not only possible but common among gay people. Gay people love and live, hurt and heal in exactly the same ways as heterosexuals.

Catholic moral theology must come to understand these elementary human facts. I am confident that it will, since the [Church's teaching is always finally dependent upon a proper anthropology of the human person. Doctrine does develop.](#) But John Paul II's work has made that development a far more arduous task.

Beginning in the middle 1990s, John Paul enlisted as a full-fledged combatant in the culture war. And this long twilight struggle of his papacy led to a generation of Catholics coming of age who can only conceive of the Church as the guardian of orthodoxy in a hostile world. Their websites are prolific. They are hasty to denounce their foes, fast to pronounce anathema, and quick to read people out of the Church. They rush to defend the Church, but in their misguided zeal, they only weaken it.

John Paul II, in brief, inherited a Church that was intellectually supple and mentally vigorous. It was a Church that was open to new questions and new experiences. It understood its mission as the implementation of the Gospel in all its richness -- embracing the poor, welcoming the marginal. John Paul bequeathed a Church that is inward-looking, defensive and brittle -- a Church that is altogether too quick to abandon whole dimensions of the Gospel message in order to wage a losing culture war.

In retrospect, had John Paul II chosen to do what his immediate successor did -- retire at an appropriate time -- he would have stepped down around 1995. Our assessment would be different. But we must assess his legacy in its totality. And when we do, we realize that recovery from it will be a years-long process.

Friday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 265

A Trial of Peter and John

(Acts 4:11-12)

Indictment

After the crippled man had been cured, while Peter and John were still speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees confronted them, disturbed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They laid hands on Peter and John and put them in custody until the next day, since it was

already evening. But many of those who heard the word came to believe and the number of men grew to about 5000.

On the next day, their leaders, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly class. They arraigned Peter and John and questioned them: *By what power or by what name have you done this?*

Then Peter, filled with the spirit of the Holy One, answered them: *Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus, our messiah from Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom our divine patron raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. He is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the corner stone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.*

A Hymn

(Ps 118:1-29)

Call to worship

- 1 Give thanks to YHWH, for our divine patron is good;
YHWH's steadfast love endures forever!
- 2 Let all Israel say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*
- 3 Let Aaron's household say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*
- 4 Let those who live morally say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*

Creation story

- 5 Out of my distress I called on YHWH;
YHWH answered me and set me in a broad place.
- 6 With YHWH on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?
- 7 YHWH is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
- 8 It is better to take refuge in YHWH
than to put confidence in mortals.
- 9 It is better to take refuge in YHWH
than to put confidence in princes.
- 10 The peoples have surrounded me;
in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
- 11 They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
- 12 They surrounded me like bees;

they blazed like a fire of thorns;
 in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
 13 I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
 but YHWH helped me.
 14 YHWH is my strength and my might;
 My divine patron has become my salvation.
 15 There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
 The right hand of YHWH does valiantly;
 16 the right hand of YHWH is exalted;
 the right hand of YHWH does valiantly.
 17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
 and recount the deeds of YHWH.
 18 YHWH has punished me severely,
 but my divine patron did not give me over to death.
 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
 that I may enter through them
 and give thanks to YHWH.
 20 This is the gate of YHWH;
 the righteous shall enter through it.
 21 I thank you that you have answered me
 and have become my salvation.
 22 The stone that the builders rejected
 has become the chief cornerstone.
 23 This is YHWH's doing;
 it is marvelous in our eyes.
 24 This is the day that YHWH has made;
 let us rejoice and be glad in it.
 25 Save us, we beseech you, YHWH!
 YHWH, we beseech you, give us success!
 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of YHWH.
 We bless you from the house of YHWH.
 27 YHWH is our divine patron,
 and YHWH has given us light.
 Bind the festal procession with branches,
 up to the horns of the altar.
 28 You are my divine patron, and I will give thanks to you;
 you are my our divine patron, I will extol you.

Call to worship

29 O give thanks to YHWH, for he is good,
 for the steadfast love of YHWH endures forever.

Easter Breakfast: a miracle story

(John 21:1-14)

Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples.

Simon Peter said to them: *I am going fishing.*

They said to him: *We also will come with you.*

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them: *Children, have you caught anything to eat?*

They answered him: *No.*

So he said to them: *Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.*

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.

So the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved said to Peter: *It is the Teacher.*

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Teacher, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about 100 yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.

Jesus said to them: *Bring some of the fish you just caught.*

So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of 153 large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them: *Come, have breakfast.*

And none of the disciples dared to ask him: *Who are you?* They realized it was their Teacher. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for getting me up this morning:
Thank you for greeting me: *Young man, I say to you: Arise!*
Let me rise early to start to work, like the wise;
Let me not rise early like fools to worry about all there is to do.
Let me wake with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach.
Let me face the day with open hands, not a closed fist.
Let me not be afraid – *lo tira* -- because you are *Emmanuel* – with me.

Saturday in the Octave of Easter

Lectionary: 266

A Trial of Peter and John

(Acts 4:13-21)

sentence

Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, the leaders, elders, and scribes were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus.

Then, when they saw the man who had been cured standing there with them, they could say nothing in reply.

So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, and conferred with one another, saying: *What are we to do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem knows that a remarkable sign was done through them, and we cannot deny it. But so that it may not be spread any further among the people, let us give them a stern warning never again to speak to anyone in this name.* So they called them back and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Peter and John, however, said to them in reply: *Whether it is right in the sight of YHWH for us to obey you, rather than YHWH, you be the judges. It is impossible for us **not** to speak about what we have seen and heard.*

After threatening them further, they released them, finding no way to punish them, on account of the people who were all praising YHWH for what had happened.

A Hymn and A Lament

(Ps 118:1-29)

Call to worship

- ¹ Give thanks to YHWH, our divine patron who is good;
YHWH's steadfast love endures forever!
- ² Let all Israel say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ³ Let Aaron's household say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁴ Let all those who live morally say: *YHWH's steadfast love endures forever.*

Profession of faith

- ⁵ Out of my distress I called on YHWH;
YHWH answered me and set me in a broad place.
- ⁶ With YHWH on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?
- ⁷ YHWH is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
- ⁸ It is better to take refuge in YHWH
than to put confidence in mortals.
- ⁹ It is better to take refuge in YHWH
than to put confidence in princes.

Complaint

- ¹⁰ The peoples have surrounded me;
in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
- ¹¹ They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
- ¹² They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed like a fire of thorns;
in the name of YHWH I cut them off!
- ¹³ I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but YHWH helped me.
- ¹⁴ YHWH is my strength and my might;
My divine patron has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
The right hand of YHWH does valiantly;
- ¹⁶ the right hand of YHWH is exalted;
the right hand of YHWH does valiantly.
- ¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of YHWH.
- ¹⁸ YHWH has punished me severely,
but my divine patron did not give me over to death.

- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to YHWH.
- 20 This is the gate of YHWH;
the righteous shall enter through it.
- 21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
- 22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
- 23 This is YHWH's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24 This is the day that YHWH has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Petition

- 25 Save us, we beseech you, YHWH!
YHWH, we beseech you, give us success!

Call to worship

- 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of YHWH.
We bless you from the house of YHWH.
- 27 YHWH is our divine patron,
and YHWH has given us light.
- Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.
- 28 You are my divine patron, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my our divine patron, I will extol you.
- 29 O give thanks to YHWH, for he is good,
for the steadfast love of YHWH endures forever.

Inauguration of the Eleven (Mark 16:9-15)

Lure

When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary of Magdala, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping.

When the companions of Jesus heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

Later, Jesus appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either.

Commission

Even later, as the Eleven were at table, Jesus appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. Jesus commissioned them: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.*

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning....
--

Silencing continues in the Church today, only it is Curia instead of the Sanhedrin which is the oppressor.

Leonardo Boff: Theologian for All Christians

Robert McAfee Brown
Christian Century (July 2-9, 1986: 615)
www.christiancentury.org

Robert McAfee Brown, whose name is symbolic for engaged theologian and ethicist, is perhaps best known for being able to write clearly, for example, in *Theology in a New Key: Responding to Liberation Theology and Saying Yes and Saying No: On Rendering to God and Caesar*.

The Vatican's recent lifting of the *silencing* of Brazilian Franciscan theologian Leonardo Boff for writings deemed injurious to the faith means that his voice and pen once more have their full power. This happy outcome provides an occasion to examine the broad sweep of Boff's writings -- not only those that got him in trouble. Whatever Boff's ongoing difficulties with Rome may be, he is an important theologian for all Christians, both Protestants and Catholics.

A review of Boff's writings does not make him seem like a *dangerous* theologian. Christology . . . grace . . . stations of the cross . . . the Lord's Prayer ... St. Francis -- what could be more appropriate subjects for a Catholic theologian? But Boff's unyielding insistence on a theology with two eyes -- relating the gospel to the contemporary scene -- finally overstepped the presumably appropriate boundaries.

In 1981, not caring to quit while he was ahead, Boff published a collection of essays, *Church: Charism and Power* (Crossroad, 1985), which, in the original Portuguese, carried the exquisitely descriptive subtitle: *Essays in Militant Ecclesiology*. There is a message here for theologians who want to stay out of trouble: if you must write, don't write about ecclesiology; and if you must write about ecclesiology, don't write militantly. Boff did. And he got into trouble.

Boff's troubles actually have their roots in his doctoral dissertation, which he wrote in Germany under a fellow Franciscan, Bonaventura Kloppenburg. Interestingly enough, his other *Doktorvater* was Joseph Ratzinger, present prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. When a summary of Boff's dissertation appeared some years later as a chapter in *Church: Charism and Power*, Kloppenburg -- who, in the interval, had become an ardent foe of liberation theology -- wrote a long review charging Boff with heresy.

Understandably startled by this about-face on the part of his former teacher, Boff sent a copy of the review and the book to Ratzinger -- his other former teacher -- asking for advice. Ratzinger suggested that he reply to Kloppenburg's charges, which Boff did.

That, one might have presumed, would have been the end of the matter -- save, perhaps, a series of exchanges in some learned theological journal. It wasn't.

In May 1984, Boff received a six-page letter from Ratzinger, detailing charges against him and summoning him to Rome for an accounting. Ratzinger charged Boff with distorting old doctrines by reinterpreting them in new contexts. Boff's language lacked *serenity* and *moderation*, and, more substantively, he employed *ideological* perspectives from history, philosophy, sociology and politics that were not fully enough informed by theology. Thus, Ratzinger asked, is Boff guided by faith or by *principles of an ideological nature?*

Ratzinger was deeply disturbed by three areas of Boff's book. He first accused Boff of suggesting that Jesus did not determine the *specific* form and structure of the church, thus implying that other models besides the Roman Catholic one might be consistent with the gospel. A second charge was that he is cavalier about dogma and revelation. Boff responded by acknowledging that dogma is needed to protect against heresy, but not in the same way in all times and places. It is ultimately the life of the Spirit in the church that protects faith against encrustation in *timeless truths* that can only negate spiritual

progress. Ratzinger feared that such a doctrine of the Spirit would legitimate the theological whim of the moment.

Finally, Boff is charged with being unnecessarily polemical and disrespectful in his comments on the church's use and abuse of power. Boff certainly does not mince words, and in one place even offers a kind of Marxist analysis of institutional church life, citing *the expropriation of the religious means of production* (forgiveness, sacraments and so forth) as means by which the clergy deny power to the people. Such excessive concentration of power, Boff believes, leads to domination, centralization, marginalization of the faithful, triumphalism and institutional *hubris* -- an extensive laundry list of aberrations from which not even the Sacred Congregation itself is exempted. In the notorious Chapter 12 -- the précis of his dissertation -- Boff offers an alternate model of power for the church -- a model based on the *service* of a living, changing church in which theological privileges are not concentrated in the few, but shared among the many.

It is clear that the congregation's main fear with Boff is not Marxism (as it is with many other liberation theologians) but his central emphasis on the Holy Spirit, which could challenge the validity of present ecclesial structures. (One is reminded of a comment by Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini during a debate at Vatican II, when, after a number of speeches about the Holy Spirit, he responded: *We don't need the guardianship of the Holy Spirit; we have the hierarchy.*)

Boff met with the Sacred Congregation in Rome in September 1984. Though the curtain of secrecy is drawn over such meetings (one of the abuses that Boff had criticized in his writings), Boff emerged from the encounter smiling, believing that he had made the point that, when dealing with liberation theology, the church ought to consult people directly involved in the struggle, rather than relying solely on European theologians who, as he told reporters: *look on poverty from the outside, from a position of security, in a paternalistic way.*

One reason that Boff may have escaped censure on this occasion is that (in a move indicating that Franciscans know how to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove) he had chosen as the theologian to defend him at the closed-door proceedings His Eminence Cardinal Alois Lorscheider, head of the Brazilian hierarchy -- neither a person nor an office that the Sacred Congregation would instinctively care to challenge.

Boff seemed to be home free. He wasn't. Some months later the unexpected order came, consigning him to *silence* for *an opportune period*.

It would be difficult to overstress the richness of *Charism and Power* -- a powerful and clearly written book. *Through this analysis we hope to nourish faith in the strength of the Spirit that is capable of awakening the dormant heart of the institutional Church, encouraging the living presence and the dangerous yet powerful memory of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ Church (Charism and Power: 48).*

Even a look at the table of contents will make the point. The initial essays (1-3) are clear, positive statements about pastoral practices in the church. The next three (4-6) are critiques of current Roman Catholic institutional practices, which, with the change of a word here and there, describe Protestant ecclesiastical sins with devastating accuracy. After a transitional essay *In Favor of Syncretism* (7) , there are three informative and challenging essays on the *base communities* (8-10), and then three concluding essays (11-13) that profoundly explore an alternative way to view the church as *A Sacrament of the Holy Spirit with Charism as the Organizing Principle.*

Church: Charism and Power is only the most recent of many books. For more than 15 years, Boff has been among the most important -- and prolific -- contributors to the developing theology of liberation in Latin America.

In 1972 he provided the first substantial Christology from the new perspective, *Jesus Christ Liberator* (Orbis, 1978), just one year after Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* brought Third World theology to the attention of the rest of the world. That year was a bad one for freedom of expression in Brazil, and Boff worked with certain external constraints in saying what he wanted to say about the liberating work of Christ. This caution was overcome in an epilogue, added to the English translation in 1978 when the Brazilian political climate had become less repressive. This exciting 31-page essay situates the mission and message of Jesus in a socioeconomic setting that illumines the earlier pages.

Another large book, *Liberating Grace* (Orbis, 1979) , appeared in 1976, exploring many facets of the traditional doctrine of grace in both social and individual terms. Hoff sees grace at work in the midst of a situation of dependency and exploitation, and his whole approach gives special meaning to the first word of the title: *Liberating.*" (The combination of *liberation* and *grace* is considered to be so dangerous that one North American writer subsequently cited the book as *among the most significant Socialist or Marxist titles* to come out of Latin America.)

One of Boff's most powerful books is *Way of the Cross -- Way of Justice* (Orbis, 1980) Written in blank verse, it is a series of meditations on the stations of the cross, a traditional exercise of individualistic Catholic piety that Boff transforms into a communal exercise as well. He effects this transformation by offering meditations on each of the *stations of Jesus* original journey along the Via Dolorosa, all of which are followed by second meditations reflecting on the meaning of the station for Jesus followers in today's world. The practice exemplifies Boff's conviction that theology must have *two eyes*, one looking to the past *where salvation broke in* and the other looking toward the present *where salvation becomes a reality here and now*. The *way of the cross* focuses on the historical Jesus, but the *way of justice* focuses on the *Christ of faith who continues his passion today in his brothers and sisters who are being condemned, tortured and killed for the cause of justice"* (*Way of the Cross -- Way of Justice* 1980: viii) The parallels between what Jesus suffered then and what his followers suffer today are acute and heartrending. The book has intense power, and will surely become one of the spiritual classics of our time.

Another book dramatizing Boff's contention that *devotional* literature and the world of the nitty-gritty cannot be separated, is *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation* (Orbis 1983) The word *integral* is the key. *Integral* means *whole, entire, complete*, and Hoff insists that the Lord's Prayer gives no support to a merely *spiritual* liberation divorced from the world of poverty and hunger. The book attacks *reductionism*, whether as *theologism* or *secularism*. Praying must be done in context: *Prayer is not the first thing a person does. Before praying, one experiences an existential shock*. Each phrase of the Lord's Prayer is then examined in terms of theology's two eyes. Prayer is always *toward God* and *toward us*; we are not allowed the luxury of separating them.

Boff has also written an engaging and challenging book about the founder of his religious order, *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation* (Crossroad 1982) He is not so naïve as to suggest that we can transplant Francis -- in all of his breathtaking simplicity -- to the complications of the 20th century. But he does believe that important connections can be made. The methodology in each chapter is a clue: after a brief vignette from Francis's life, Boff carefully analyzes some characteristic of our modern world, and then suggests how St. Francis's perspective might illuminate that situation. After describing St. Francis as *a model of gentleness and care* (qualities desperately lacking in our culture), Boff jumps into the fray by dealing with the contribution St. Francis could make to our understanding of *the preferential option for*

the poor. Another chapter, *Creation of a Popular and Poor Church*, indicates what St. Francis could offer to the formation of contemporary *base communities*. Throughout, St. Francis contributes to an *integral liberation* -- liberation that is not exclusively *spiritual* or *economic*, but both tied together.

The recent lifting of the ban (a month ahead of schedule) may be an olive branch from the Curia, and its timing, coincident with the release of Cardinal Ratzinger's temperate second *Instruction* on liberation theology (see my article: *The Roman Curia and Liberation Theology: The Second (and Final?) Round, June 4-11 Century*), suggests that the aggressive warlock-hunt (as we must call it in this case) against liberation theologians is being placed on a Vatican back burner, if not on hold. There is no doubt that the Vatican's image suffered as a consequence of a punitive action, suited (if at all) to other centuries than our own, while Boff became an instant folk hero throughout the Third World.

We can be sure, furthermore, that during the time he was forbidden to publish, it crossed his mind that he had not been forbidden to write. The curtailment of outside speaking engagements may even have provided more time than usual to put pen to paper. (When this possibility was mentioned to Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of Boff's *compañeros* in the liberation struggle, he replied: *Yes! After one year, four books!*)

Even if that estimate should prove excessive (and it may not), we can now look forward to more writings by Boff than might have resulted if Rome had left him alone. For this, at least, we can render oblique thanks to the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

Leonardo Boff (1938-) is recognized as one of the most outspoken, controversial, and articulate proponents of Roman Catholic liberation theology. A staunch supporter of the ordination of women priests, Boff's controversial writings put him at odds with the Vatican. Originally ordained a Franciscan priest, he resigned his priesthood in 1992 to become a member of the Franciscan lay clergy. Protesting the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church as it existed in his native Brazil, Boff has advocated the ordination of women as priests and promoted social justice for the poor. The Vatican officially silenced Boff for eleven months in the mid-eighties as the result of his publishing several controversial works in the 1970s and 1980s because his books had an ideological alignment with liberation theology.

Liberation theology evolved in South and Central America following the 1968 Second Latin American Bishops Conference and gained popularity in the 1970s. The theology calls for the Church to engage itself in the political and economic struggles of poor people. The Vatican, however, views liberation theology as a justification for violent revolution and Marxist economic policies. Roman Catholic theologians dismiss the socio-economic concentration of liberation theology because they believe it places too much emphasis on earthly, temporal matters rather than on spiritual matters. The church believes that the Word of Jesus is not concerned as much with political freedom as it is with freedom, or liberation, from sin.

While accepting Marx's views opposing capitalism, Boff told interviewers that he considered himself more anti-capitalist than pro-Marxist, and more a Franciscan Catholic than a Roman Catholic. He told *Time* reporter Richard N. Ostling: *The Vatican wants to centralize the church around the Pope and Rome. Liberation theology challenges that view, opting for a more decentralized church.* He has also commented on his dissatisfaction with Catholic bishops living in relative luxury and controlling how parish monies are spent while Catholics with no say in church matters live in poverty. Addressing the politicized nature of Boff's beliefs, Richard Ouebedeaux in the *Catholic Century* wrote: *In giving such priority to the political dimension, one is led to deny the radical newness of the New Testament and above all to misunderstand the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and thus the specific character of the salvation he gave us, that is above all liberation from sin, which is the source of all evils.* Ouebedeaux balances the statement by adding: *Boff does not link his activist Jesus unequivocally with Marxist programs for social reconstruction in the manner of some liberation theologians. Also, despite the fact that the humanity of Jesus is stressed, his divinity - deity, really - is affirmed too.* When the Vatican attempted to silence him again in the early 1990s, Boff resigned as priest. He told Mac Margolis of *Newsweek*: *The first time [of official discipline] was an act of humility and I accepted. The second time was humiliation, and I couldn't accept it.* In works published since his resignation as priest, Boff expanded his liberation theology views to include ecological and feminist issues.

Boff was born December 14, 1938, in Concordia, Santa Catarina, Brazil. His father was a teacher, and his mother was raised in a farming family. He was ordained a priest in 1964 and continued his education at the University of Munich, where he earned a doctorate in 1972. Bonaventura Kloppenburg, who was to become an opponent of liberation theology, oversaw his doctoral dissertation. Another of Boff's doctoral instructors, Joseph Ratzinger, eventually became a Cardinal who served as the Vatican's chief spokes-person against liberation theology. Boff was notably a member of the Franciscan order of Roman Catholics. Boff has likened himself to the order's founder, St. Francis of Assisi, because rather than subjugating himself to the Catholic Church's hierarchal structure, St. Francis established his own order. Boff told Margolis: *I*

define myself more as a Franciscan Catholic than Roman Catholic. Never forget, St. Francis was a layman, he wasn't a priest or part of the hierarchy. After returning to Brazil, Boff taught theology at the Instituto Teológico Franciscano in Petropolis and assumed editorial responsibilities for the Brazilian theological review *Revista Eclesiastica Brasileira*. He attracted widespread attention in 1978 with the translation of his 1972 work *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Times*. In this work, Boff applied liberation theology to the study of the life and works of Jesus Christ, characterizing Jesus as a revolutionary working on behalf of the economically oppressed against the corrupt Roman occupation of the Holy Lands as well as the hierarchal structure of the Jewish faith.

In his most controversial work, *Church: Charism and Power*, Boff employed Marxist theory to attack not only the economic oppression of the poor, but also the entire structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Equating the Church with industrialists who controlled the means of production, Boff asserted that the Church believed that it held a monopoly on God's grace. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, Marianne Sawicki refuted Boff's assessment: *A thoughtful reader would object that this comparison limps because grace is not a material thing. Grace is more like love, which increases as it is shared, than like the proverbial cake that you cannot both have and eat.* However, Sawicki, stated: *One can fault Boff for this poor analogy, and his publisher for neglecting to inform the uninformed reader of the culture-specific character of the work. But such faults make the a book dangerous only to an authority that has lost faith in the good sense and good will of its people.*

Boff's assertions caused Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, by now head of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation, to demand an audience with Boff in 1984. One of the Vatican's primary concerns was Boff's interpretation of the Second Vatican Council's assertion that the *sole church of Christ ... subsists in the Catholic Church*. Ratzinger stated that Boff supported a thesis that refuted the Roman Catholic church as the one church of Christ by allowing that Christ *also may subsist in other Christian churches*, which the cardinal stated, *could be characterized as ecclesiological relativism* and that, following such a belief, *no institutional church could affirm being that one church of Jesus Christ willed by God himself*.

Ratzinger officially silenced Boff for one year, prohibiting him from publishing, public speaking, or otherwise promulgating his liberation theology beliefs. Eleven months later, the silence was lifted, and the Sacred Congregation issued an extensive refutation of liberation theology.

In 1987, Boff published the English-language version of *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and Its Religious Expressions*, in which he advocated

the ordination of women as priests. Because the Roman Catholic Church believes that *the ordination of women is not possible* due to being bound by Christ's choice of men as apostles, Boff was again at the center of controversy. He furthered the Vatican's displeasure by publishing a series of articles in 1991 that favored married priests. When the Vatican denied publication approval for his next work, Boff resigned from the priesthood. He told Margolis in 1999: *Strangely, to this day the Vatican has not recognized my renunciation. Officially, legally, I am still a priest and a friar. This is very rare. Usually Rome accepts your resignation or expels you.*

Despite the collapse of the communist bloc countries in the late 1980s, Boff believed that the political ideas of Karl Marx concerning what he perceived to be inherent flaws in capitalism were still valid. Following his resignation from the priesthood, he continued to administer to the poor and publish works that are more ecumenical and reveal his readings from other faiths and religious practices, including Buddhism and Yoga, as well as his continued support of liberation theology.

For example, in *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation*, Boff explains that humankind cannot separate prayer from worldly concerns.

In *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation*, Boff writes that the life of St. Francis serves as an example of how the economically disadvantaged should receive preferential treatment.

Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm prompted Catherine Keller to note in *The Journal of Religion*: *"The great contribution of this book is the integration of ecology into the liberation model. ... [Boff] is not content to embed class analysis within the ecological crisis and vice versa but also to infuse his now cosmologically widened liberation model with religious feeling.* Writing in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Stephen B. Scharper added: *He masterfully refutes triumphalistic paeans to global capitalism, noting how under its sweeping mantle the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, more and more species are driven to extinction, more toxins are released into our water and air and our overall quality of life is eroded.*

Leonardo Boff: major Pope Francis supporter

Thomas C. Fox

| NCR Today (Mar. 16, 2013)

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/leonardo-boff-major-pope-francis-supporter>

One of Pope Francis' most vocal supporters since his election three days ago has been Leonardo Boff, one of the founders of liberation theology, a man silenced by the Vatican in 1985 because of criticism of the church in his book [*The Church, Charisma and Power.*](#)

Since 1993 he has been a Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro where he is now Emeritus Professor of Ethics, Philosophy of Religion and Ecology.

His more recent writings have sought to integrate ecology into liberation theology. His book, [*Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,*](#) is seen as a synthesis of deep ecology thinking with a radical social critique. One chapter celebrates [St. Francis of Assisi](#) as the paradigm of *the new covenant of the heart with all things*, which is Boff's answer to the world's twin crises of poverty and ecological destruction.

Here's some of what Boff [has written](#) about Pope Francis.

Francis isn't a name; it's a plan for a Church that is poor, simple, gospel-centered, and devoid of all power. It's a Church that walks the way together with the least and last, that creates the first communities of brothers and sisters who recite the breviary under the trees with the birds. It's an ecological Church that calls all beings those sweet words *brothers and sisters*. Francis was obedient to the Church and the popes and at the same time he followed his own path with the gospel of poverty in hand....

It's worth mentioning that he's a pope who comes from the Great South, where the poorest of humankind are and where 60 percent of Catholics live. With his experience as pastor, with a new view of things, from below, he will be able to reform the Curia, decentralize the administration, and give the Church a new and credible face.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter

Lectionary: 268

(Acts 4:32-37)

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in

common. With great power the Apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Teacher, Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the Apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

Thus Joseph, also named by the Apostles *Barnabas* (which is translated *Ason* of encouragement), a Levite, born in Cyprus, sold a piece of property that he owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the Apostles.

A Hymn

(Ps 93:1-5)

creation story

- ¹ YHWH is king,
 robed in majesty;
YHWH is robed,
 girded with strength.
YHWH has established the world;
 it shall never be moved;
² your throne is established from of old;
 you are from everlasting.
- ³ The oceans have lifted up, YHWH,
 the oceans have lifted up their voice;
 the oceans lift up their roaring.
- ⁴ More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
 more majestic than the waves of the sea,
 majestic on high is YHWH!
- ⁵ Your decrees are very sure;
 holiness befits your house, YHWH, for evermore.

(John 3:7-15)

Jesus said to Nicodemus: *You must be born again. The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

Nicodemus asked Jesus: *How can anyone be reborn?*

Jesus answered Nicodemus: *You are a teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Without a doubt, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of Man be raised up on the cross and from the tomb, so that everyone who believes in him may never die.*

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

‘Abba has raised Jesus from the death. Now the question is: *How does that change our lives?*

Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem committed themselves to pooling their resources. No one owned anything. Everyone owned everything. The ritual created a profound sense of interdependence. They prompted themselves by sharing to remember how much they needed one another to survive.

The followers of Jesus realized that ‘Abba had the power to overcome death, and consequently they became profoundly aware of divine power in nature as well – especially in the oceans. ‘Abba could life up the dead, and the waves as well. Not only was death obedient, but the oceans were also obedient.

Jesus teaches Nicodemus that his followers much do what he did – die in order to live forever. Nicodemus finds such a teaching as difficult as expected human beings to re-enter the wombs of their mothers and be born again. Nonetheless, Jesus insists that like the Son of Man in both Ezekiel and Daniel, only those who have laid down their lives can be raised from the dead and live forever.

Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter

Lectionary: 269

A Miracle Story

(Acts 5:17-26)

The high priest and the Sadducees rose up, and, filled with jealousy, laid hands upon the Apostles and put them in the public jail.

During the night, Yahweh's messenger opened the doors of the prison, led them out, and said: *Go and take your place in the Temple Portico, and tell the people everything about this life.*

When they heard this, the Apostles went to the Temple early in the morning and taught.

When the high priest and the Sadducees arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin, the full senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the jail to have the Apostles brought in.

The court officers who went did not find the Apostles in the prison, so they came back and reported: *We found the jail securely locked and the guards stationed outside the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.*

When the captain of the Temple guard and the chief priests heard this report, they were at a loss about them, as to what this would come to. Then someone came in and reported to them: *The men whom you put in prison are in the Temple Portico and are teaching the people.*

Then the captain and the court officers went and brought them, but without force, because they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

A Hymn (Ps 34:1-22)

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Call to Worship

- ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times;
Praise for Yahweh shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² My soul makes its boast in Yahweh;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify Yahweh with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

Creation Story

- ⁴ I sought Yahweh, and Yahweh answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to Yahweh, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.

- ⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by Yahweh,
and was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ The messenger of Yahweh encamps
around those who fear Yahweh, and delivers them.
- ⁸ O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
happy are those who take refuge in Yahweh.
- ⁹ Act morally, you holy ones,
for those who fear Yahweh have no want.
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, my people, listen to me;
I will teach you how to act morally.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous,
and the ears of Yahweh are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of Yahweh is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh rescues them from them all.
- ²⁰ Yahweh keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- ²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² Yahweh redeems the life of Yahweh's servants;
none of those who take refuge in Yahweh will be condemned.

A Trial

(John 3:16-21)

Indictment

‘Abba loved the world enough to send the divine heir into the world, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. ‘Abba did not send the heir into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the heir of ‘Abba.

Verdict

The Light came into the world, but people preferred Darkness to Light, because their works were evil. Everyone who does wicked things hates the Light and does not come toward the Light, so that his works might not be exposed. Whoever lives the truth comes to the Light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in ‘Abba.

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Commitment takes courage to endure persecution. Persecution seldom comes from outside. More often persecution comes from those who ostensibly are committed to the same values. Persecution from outsiders like the Romans is tolerable. Persecution from insiders like the High Priest and the Sadducees is excruciating.

The key to surviving persecution is not to defend ourselves, but to let God do it. Here the messenger of Yahweh frees the Apostles from jail, just as a messenger of

Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

Lectionary: 270

(Acts 5:27-33 DCB)

When the court officers had brought the Apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them: *We gave you strict orders did we not, to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.*

But Peter and the Apostles answered: *We must obey ‘Abba rather than men. The divine patron of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed*

by hanging him on a tree. Our godparent exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

When the Sanhedrin heard this, they became infuriated and wanted to put them to death.

A Hymn (Ps 34:1-22 DCB)

Dedicated to David

In memory of when he feigned insanity before Abimelech, who subsequently sent him into exile.

Call to Worship

- ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times;
I will sing praise Yahweh continually.
- ² My soul boasts in Yahweh;
Let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify Yahweh with me,
Let us exalt the name of Yahweh together.

Creation story

- ⁴ I sought Yahweh,
Yahweh answered me,
Yahweh delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to Yahweh
Be radiant;
So your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor soul cried,
was heard by Yahweh,
was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ The messenger of Yahweh encamps around those who live morally Yahweh,
and delivers them.

Call to worship

- ⁸ O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
Wise²⁰⁴ are those who take refuge in Yahweh.
- ⁹ Live morally,²⁰⁵ holy ones of Yahweh,
for those who live morally have no want.
- ¹⁰ Young lions suffer want and hunger,

²⁰⁴ NRSV: Happy

²⁰⁵ Comparable to ...fear Yahweh

- but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing.
- 11 Come, my students,²⁰⁶ listen to me;
I will teach you how to live morally.
- 12 Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil,
your lips from speaking deceit.
- 14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

Creation story

- 15 The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous,
The ears of Yahweh are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of Yahweh is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- 18 Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh rescues them from them all.
- 20 Yahweh keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- 21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- 22 Yahweh redeems the life of the people of Yahweh;
none of those who take refuge in Yahweh will be condemned.

(John 3:31-36 DCB)

The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept his testimony certifies that our godparent²⁰⁷ is trustworthy. For the one whom our godparent sent speaks for our godparent.²⁰⁸ He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of our godparent remains upon him.

²⁰⁶ NRSV: children

²⁰⁷ NRSV: God

²⁰⁸ NRSV: the words of God.

Homily

The Brief Origins of May Day

Eric Chase – 1993

http://www.iww.org/history/library/misc/origins_of_mayday

Most people living in the United States know little about the International Workers' Day of May Day. For many others there is an assumption that it is a holiday celebrated in state communist countries like Cuba or the former Soviet Union. Most Americans don't realize that May Day has its origins here in this country and is as "American" as baseball and apple pie, and stemmed from the pre-Christian holiday of Beltane, a celebration of rebirth and fertility.

In the late nineteenth century, the working class was in constant struggle to gain the 8-hour work day. Working conditions were severe and it was quite common to work 10 to 16 hour days in unsafe conditions. Death and injury were commonplace at many work places and inspired such books as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*. As early as the 1860's, working people agitated to shorten the workday without a cut in pay, but it wasn't until the late 1880's that organized labor was able to garner enough strength to declare the 8-hour workday. This proclamation was without consent of employers, yet demanded by many of the working class.

At this time, socialism was a new and attractive idea to working people, many of whom were drawn to its ideology of working class control over the production and distribution of all goods and services. Workers had seen first-hand that Capitalism benefited only their bosses, trading workers' lives for profit. Thousands of men, women and children were dying needlessly every year in the workplace, with life expectancy as low as their early twenties in some industries, and little hope but death of rising out of their destitution. Socialism offered another option.

A variety of socialist organizations sprung up throughout the latter half of the 19th century, ranging from political parties to choir groups. In fact, many socialists were elected into governmental office by their constituency. But again, many of these socialists were ham-strung by the political process which was so evidently controlled by big business and the bi-partisan political machine. Tens of thousands of socialists broke ranks from their parties, rebuffed the entire political process, which was seen as nothing more than protection for the wealthy, and created anarchist groups throughout the country. Literally thousands of working people embraced the ideals of

anarchism, which sought to put an end to all hierarchical structures (including government), emphasized worker controlled industry, and valued direct action over the bureaucratic political process. It is inaccurate to say that labor unions were "taken over" by anarchists and socialists, but rather anarchists and socialist made up the labor unions.

At its national convention in Chicago, held in 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (which later became the American Federation of Labor), proclaimed that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886." The following year, the FOTLU, backed by many Knights of Labor locals, reiterated their proclamation stating that it would be supported by strikes and demonstrations. At first, most radicals and anarchists regarded this demand as too reformist, failing to strike "at the root of the evil." A year before the Haymarket Massacre, Samuel Fielden pointed out in the anarchist newspaper, *The Alarm*, that *...whether a man works eight hours a day or ten hours a day, he is still a slave.*

Despite the misgivings of many of the anarchists, an estimated quarter million workers in the Chicago area became directly involved in the crusade to implement the eight hour work day, including the Trades and Labor Assembly, the Socialistic Labor Party and local Knights of Labor. As more and more of the workforce mobilized against the employers, these radicals conceded to fight for the 8-hour day, realizing that *...the tide of opinion and determination of most wage-workers was set in this direction.* With the involvement of the anarchists, there seemed to be an infusion of greater issues than the 8-hour day. There grew a sense of a greater social revolution beyond the more immediate gains of shortened hours, but a drastic change in the economic structure of capitalism.

In a proclamation printed just before May 1, 1886, one publisher appealed to working people with this plea:

- Workingmen to Arms!
- War to the Palace, Peace to the Cottage, and Death to LUXURIOUS IDLENESS.
- The wage system is the only cause of the World's misery. It is supported by the rich classes, and to destroy it, they must be either made to work or DIE.
- One pound of DYNAMITE is better than a bushel of BALLOTS!
- MAKE YOUR DEMAND FOR EIGHT HOURS with weapons in your hands to meet the capitalistic bloodhounds, police, and militia in proper manner.

Not surprisingly the entire city was prepared for mass bloodshed, reminiscent of the railroad strike a decade earlier when police and soldiers gunned down hundreds of striking workers. On May 1, 1886, more than 300,000 workers in 13,000 businesses across the United States walked off their jobs in the first May Day celebration in history. In Chicago, the epicenter for the 8-hour day agitators, 40,000 went out on strike with the anarchists in the forefront of the public's eye. With their fiery speeches and revolutionary ideology of direct action, anarchists and anarchism became respected and embraced by the working people and despised by the capitalists.

The names of many - Albert Parsons, Johann Most, August Spies and Louis Lingg - became household words in Chicago and throughout the country. Parades, bands and tens of thousands of demonstrators in the streets exemplified the workers' strength and unity, yet didn't become violent as the newspapers and authorities predicted.

More and more workers continued to walk off their jobs until the numbers swelled to nearly 100,000, yet peace prevailed. It was not until two days later, May 3, 1886, that violence broke out at the McCormick Reaper Works between police and strikers.

For six months, armed Pinkerton agents and the police harassed and beat locked-out steelworkers as they picketed. Most of these workers belonged to the *anarchist-dominated* Metal Workers' Union. During a speech near the McCormick plant, some two hundred demonstrators joined the steelworkers on the picket line. Beatings with police clubs escalated into rock throwing by the strikers which the police responded to with gunfire. At least two strikers were killed and an unknown number were wounded.

Full of rage, a public meeting was called by some of the anarchists for the following day in Haymarket Square to discuss the police brutality. Due to bad weather and short notice, only about 3000 of the tens of thousands of people showed up from the day before. This affair included families with children and the mayor of Chicago himself. Later, the mayor would testify that the crowd remained calm and orderly and that speaker August Spies made *no suggestion... for immediate use of force or violence toward any person...*

As the speech wound down, two detectives rushed to the main body of police, reporting that a speaker was using inflammatory language, inciting the police to march on the speakers' wagon. As the police began to disperse the already thinning crowd, a bomb was thrown into the police ranks. No one knows who threw the bomb, but speculations varied from blaming any one of the anarchists, to an agent provocateur working for the police.

Enraged, the police fired into the crowd. The exact number of civilians killed or wounded was never determined, but an estimated seven or eight civilians died, and up to forty were wounded. One officer died immediately and another seven died in the following weeks. Later evidence indicated that only one of the police deaths could be attributed to the bomb and that all the other police fatalities had or could have had been due to their own indiscriminate gun fire. Aside from the bomb thrower, who was never identified, it was the police, not the anarchists, who perpetrated the violence.

Eight anarchists - Albert Parsons, August Spies, Samuel Fielden, Oscar Neebe, Michael Schwab, George Engel, Adolph Fischer and Louis Lingg - were arrested and convicted of murder, though only three were even present at Haymarket and those three were in full view of all when the bombing occurred. The jury in their trial was comprised of business leaders in a gross mockery of justice similar to the Sacco-Vanzetti case thirty years later, or the trials of AIM and Black Panther members in the seventies. The entire world watched as these eight organizers were convicted, not for their actions, of which all of were innocent, but for their political and social beliefs. On November 11, 1887, after many failed appeals, Parsons, Spies, Engel and Fisher were hung to death. Louis Lingg, in his final protest of the state's claim of authority and punishment, took his own life the night before with an explosive device in his mouth.

The remaining organizers, Fielden, Neebe and Schwab, were pardoned six years later by Governor Altgeld, who publicly lambasted the judge on a travesty of justice. Immediately after the Haymarket Massacre, big business and government conducted what some say was the very first *Red Scare* in this country. Spun by mainstream media, anarchism became synonymous with bomb throwing and socialism became un-American. The common image of an anarchist became a bearded, eastern European immigrant with a bomb in one hand and a dagger in the other.

Today we see tens of thousands of activists embracing the ideals of the Haymarket Martyrs and those who established May Day as an International Workers' Day. Ironically, May Day is an official holiday in 66 countries and unofficially celebrated in many more, but rarely is it recognized in this country where it began.

Over one hundred years have passed since that first May Day. In the earlier part of the 20th century, the US government tried to curb the celebration and further wipe it from the public's memory by establishing "Law and Order Day" on May 1. We can draw many parallels between the events of 1886 and today. We still have locked out steelworkers struggling for justice. We still have voices of freedom behind bars as in the cases of Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier. We still had the ability to mobilize tens of thousands of

people in the streets of a major city to proclaim *THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE!* at the WTO and FTAA demonstrations.

Words stronger than any I could write are engraved on the Haymarket Monument:

THE DAY WILL COME WHEN OUR SILENCE WILL BE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE VOICES YOU ARE THROTTLING TODAY.

Truly, history has a lot to teach us about the roots of our radicalism. When we remember that people were shot so we could have the 8-hour day; if we acknowledge that homes with families in them were burned to the ground so we could have Saturday as part of the weekend; when we recall 8-year old victims of industrial accidents who marched in the streets protesting working conditions and child labor only to be beat down by the police and company thugs, we understand that our current condition cannot be taken for granted - people fought for the rights and dignities we enjoy today, and there is still a lot more to fight for. The sacrifices of so many people cannot be forgotten or we'll end up fighting for those same gains all over again. This is why we celebrate May Day.

Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

Lectionary: 272

(Acts 6:1-7 DCB)

As the number of disciples continued to grow, converts from Hellenism complained against converts from Judaism because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said: *It is not right for us to take time away from preaching the word of Yahweh to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus,

Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the Apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.

The word of Yahweh continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

A Hymn (Ps 33:1-22 DCB)

Call to worship

- ¹ Rejoice in Yahweh, O you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
- ² Praise Yahweh with the lyre;
make melody to Yahweh with the harp of ten strings.
- ³ Sing to Yahweh a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

Creation story

- ⁴ For the word of Yahweh is upright,
and all Yahweh's work is done in faithfulness.
- ⁵ Yahweh loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of Yahweh.
- ⁶ By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of Yahweh's mouth.
- ⁷ Yahweh gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
Yahweh put the deeps in storehouses.
- ⁸ Let all the earth fear Yahweh;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Yahweh.
- ⁹ For Yahweh spoke, and it came to be;
Yahweh commanded, and it stood firm.
- ¹⁰ Yahweh brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
Yahweh frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- ¹¹ The counsel of Yahweh stands for ever,
the thoughts of Yahweh's heart to all generations.
- ¹² Happy is the nation whose God is Yahweh,
the people whom Yahweh has chosen as a heritage.
- ¹³ Yahweh looks down from heaven;
Yahweh sees all humans.

- 14 From where Yahweh sits enthroned Yahweh watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
- 15 Yahweh who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
- 16 A king is not saved by a great army;
a warrior is not delivered by great strength.
- 17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.
- 18 Truly the eye of Yahweh is on those who act morally,
on those who hope in Yahweh's steadfast love,
- 19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our soul waits for Yahweh;
Yahweh is our help and shield.
- 21 Our heart is glad in Yahweh,
because we trust in Yahweh's holy name.
- 22 Let your steadfast love, O Yahweh, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

(John 6:16-21 DCB)

When it was evening, the disciples of Jesus went down to the sea, embarked in a boat, and went across the sea to Capernaum. It had already grown dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea was stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they began to be afraid.

Jesus said to them: *It is I. Do not be afraid.*

They wanted to take him into the boat, but the boat immediately arrived at the shore to which they were heading.

Homily

In death Jesus was an enigma to those who followed him in life (Acts 6:1-7). The generosity of the Jerusalem community turned into competition. Yet from conflict came growth. In a community where equality was the rule, there were now clearly defined social roles: some fed, some preached. Idealism is fragile.

The overriding cause for confidence, however, is not in the ability of humans to problem solving, but in the presence of a divine patron who coordinates the world where we live (Ps 33: 1-22). Yahweh watches over those who fulfill their covenant commitments.

Faced with the challenges of the new world into which Jesus had led them, the disciples return to the old world where Jesus found them – fishing. They fled like Jonah from his presence. Yet just as Yahweh pursued Jonah out into the Mediterranean Sea, Jesus pursues the disciples into the Sea of Galilee. They are afraid of him, and of what their new vocations will ask of them. Jesus reassures them with the divine promise Yahweh made to the prophets: *I am with you. Do not be afraid.*

Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 273

A Trial of Stephen

(Acts 6:8-15 DCB)

Indictment

Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people. Jews from the so-called *Synagogue of Freed Slaves*, from Cyprus, from Alexandria, from Cilicia and from Asia, came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

They instigated some to say: *We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against Yahweh.*

They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes who attacked him, arrested him, and arraigned him before the Sanhedrin. They presented false witnesses who testified: *This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law. For we have heard him claim that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.*

All those who sat in the Sanhedrin watched Stephen closely and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

A Lament

(Ps 119:1-176 DCB)

- ¹ Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of Yahweh.
² Happy are those who keep the decrees of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh with their whole heart,
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.
⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your statutes.
¹³ With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
¹⁴ I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.

- 18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.
- 19 I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
- 20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
- 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
- 22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
- 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- 24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
- 25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
- 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
- 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- 28 My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,

for your ordinances are good.

⁴⁰ See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.

⁴¹ Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.

⁴² Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.

⁴³ Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.

⁴⁴ I will keep your law continually,
for ever and ever.

⁴⁵ I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.

⁴⁶ I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;

⁴⁷ I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.

⁴⁸ I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.

Petition

⁴⁹ Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.

⁵¹ The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.

⁵² When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.

⁵³ Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.

⁵⁴ Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.

⁵⁵ I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.

⁵⁶ This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.

Declaration of innocence

⁵⁷ Yahweh is my portion;

I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who act morally,
of those who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

65 You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.

- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask, 'When will you comfort me?'
- 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
- 84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
- 85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
- 86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
- 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
- 88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- 91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
- 92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
- 94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
- 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
100 I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

108 Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage for ever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
for ever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.

115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.

117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.

118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.

119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.

120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.

122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.

123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.

124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.

125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.

126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.

128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.

129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.

130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.
138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.
144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfil your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;
give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

- 171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.
175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out your servant,
for I do not forget your commandments.

(John 6:22-29 DCB)

After Jesus had fed the 5000 men, his disciples saw him walking on the sea.

The next day, the crowd that remained across the Sea of Tiberias saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the boat, but only his disciples had left. Other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread when the Teacher gave thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him across the Sea of Tiberias they said to him: *Rabbi, how did you get here?*

Jesus answered: *Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the 'Abba, our divine patron, has set his seal.*

So they said: *How can we do the will of our divine patron?*

Jesus answered: *This is the will of your divine patron: Believe in the one Yahweh sent.*

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

We profess our faith to become part of a community which will support us in living the values we share. Predictably, the choice to join a community provokes hostility not only from outsiders, but from insiders. Persecution by outsiders is tolerable because it is expected. Persecution by insiders is insufferable because we are victims of the very people who promised to support us.

So how should we respond to persecution either by outsiders or by insiders?

Jesus teaches: Do not just *follow the money*. Do not allow either insiders or outsiders to buy your loyalty – your faith – with bread, or with clothing, or with shelter. Faith in Jesus promises only suffering from within, and without. The only sure sign of faith is suffering.

Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 274

A Trial of Stephen

(Acts 7:51—8:1 DCB)

Indictment

Stephen said to the people, the elders, and the scribes: *You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the Holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of a Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law as transmitted by divine messengers, but you did not pay any attention to it.*

Sentence

When they heard this, they were infuriated, and they ground their teeth at him.

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of 'Abba and Jesus standing at the right hand of 'Abba, and Stephen said: *Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of 'Abba.*

The people, the elders and the scribes cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul.

As they were stoning Stephen, he called out: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

Then Stephen fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice: *'Abba, do not hold this sin against them.* After he said this, he fell asleep.

Now Saul was consenting to his execution.

A Lament

(Ps 31:1-24 DCB)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Petition

¹ In you, Yahweh, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

² Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
⁴ take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

Profession of faith

⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, Yahweh, faithful God.

⁶ You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the Yahweh.

Vow

⁷ I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;

you have taken heed of my adversities,
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

Complaint

9 Be gracious to me, Yahweh, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.

12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.

13 For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

Profession of faith

14 But I trust in you, Yahweh;
I say, 'You are my divine patron.'

15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

Petition

16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

17 Do not let me be put to shame, Yahweh,
for I call on you;

let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.

18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

Profession of faith

¹⁹ O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!

²⁰ In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

²¹ Blessed be the Yahweh,
for Yahweh has wondrously shown steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.

²² I had said in my alarm,
'I am driven far from your sight.'
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.

²³ Love the Yahweh, all you his saints.
The Yahweh preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Yahweh.

(John 6:30-35 DCB)

The crowd said to Jesus: *What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna bread in the desert, as it is written: Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

So Jesus said to them: *Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven. 'Abba gives you the true bread from heaven. Divine bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

So they said to Jesus: *Teacher, give us this bread everyday.*

Jesus said to them: *I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger. Whoever believes in me will never thirst.*

Homily

The common temptation when we are suffering is to seek vengeance. Acts stresses that the greatest revenge on our enemies is forgiveness. Offering

forgiveness, however, is easier than internalizing forgiveness. Twelve step programs invite those in recovery to make amends to seek out those whom their addictions have harmed, and ask their forgiveness. An even more demanding task would be to seek out those who have harmed us and forgive them sincerely. Perhaps seeking them would only tempt us to be patronizing. Perhaps the greater task is simply to know those who have harmed us, and to forgive them with all our hearts.

Psalm 30 stresses the importance of placing our lives in God's hands. Often those who persecute us try to convince us that our lives are in their hands, and they can bless or curse us. The defense against such suffering is to remember that, at the end of the day, no matter how painful the suffering, our lives are not in the hands of others, but in the hands of God, who will deliver us.

Like the phrase: *Word of Yahweh* in prophetic traditions, the phrase: *Amen, Amen* highlights a teaching as essential.

Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 275

(Acts 8:1-8 DCB)

There broke out a severe persecution of the Church in Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made a loud lament over him. Saul, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the Church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment.

Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Thus Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city.

A Hymn

(Ps 66:1-12 DCB)

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

Call to worship

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to our divine patron, all the earth;
² sing the glory of the name of Yahweh;
give to Yahweh glorious praise.
³ Say to our divine patron: *How awesome are your deeds!*
Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.
⁴ All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name.'

Selah

Creation story

- ⁵ Come and see what our divine patron has done:
Yahweh is awesome in deeds among humans.
⁶ Yahweh turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in Yahweh,
⁷ who rules by might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves.

Selah

Call to worship

- ⁸ Bless our divine patron, O peoples,
let the sound of praise for Yahweh be heard.

Creation story

- ⁹ Yahweh has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
¹⁰ For you, our divine patron, have trained us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
¹¹ You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;

12 you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

A Lament

(Ps 66:13-20 DCB)

Vow

13 I will come into your house with burnt-offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
14 those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Selah

16 Come and hear, all you who live morally,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
17 I cried aloud to Yahweh,
and Yahweh was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
Yahweh would not have listened.
19 But truly our divine patron has listened;
Yahweh has given heed to the words of my prayer.

Call to worship

20 Bless our divine patron, because Yahweh has not rejected my prayer
or failed to be faithful to me.

(John 6:35-40 DCB)

Jesus said to the crowds,
“I am the bread of life;
whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst.
But I told you that although you have seen me,
you do not believe.
Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and I will not reject anyone who comes to me,

because I came down from heaven not to do my own will
but the will of the one who sent me.
And this is the will of the one who sent me,
that I should not lose anything of what he gave me,
but that I should raise it on the last day.
For this is the will of my Father,
that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him
may have eternal life,
and I shall raise him on the last day.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

In some laments, households vow to tell the story of how Yahweh delivered them from slavery, if their losses are restored (Ps 22:22–31; 50:14; 61:4–8; 66:13–17; 116:14–18). Vows reflect the efforts of households to bargain with Yahweh to relieve suffering. Vows are the *let’s make a deal* component of a lament.

Complaints, petitions, and bargaining with Yahweh by making a vow all reflect the respect that traditional cultures have for the responsibility of humans in determining the course of events. Admittedly, bargaining is an anthropomorphic way to describe Yahweh. Nonetheless, it does not intend to reduce Yahweh to a merchant haggling over the price of a sale. The Hebrews considered what happened to have been the result, not simply of divine action, but also of human reaction. Yahweh did not act unilaterally, but interacted with humans. Bargaining reflects the understanding that different human reactions to divine initiatives produce different results.

Some laments lack a complaint or a petition, and have only a vow. These laments have been labeled *Songs of Thanksgiving*. One psalm with such a vow actually combines two psalms: a hymn (Ps 66:1–12) and a lament (Ps 66:13–20).

The hymn alternates three calls to worship with three creation stories. The initial call to worship and the final creation story are long; the calls to worship and creation stories in the middle of the hymn are short. The initial call to worship summons the community ten times to acknowledge Yahweh as its divine patron (Ps 66:1–5).

Make a joyful noise!

Sing!

Praise!

Say!
Prostrate!
Worship!
Praise!
Praise!
Come!
See!

The first creation story reminds the households that Yahweh delivered them from slavery in Egypt. *Yahweh turned the sea into dry land* (Ps 66:6).

The second creation story reminds them that Yahweh delivered them from slavery in Syria-Palestine. Yahweh ...*watches over the peoples* (Ps 66:7). The third creation story reminds them that Yahweh delivered them from slavery in Babylon. Yahweh “tested us . . . tried us as silver is tried” (Ps 66:10*).

The lament is made up of a vow (Ps 66:13–17*), a declaration of innocence (Ps 66:18–19*), and a confession of faith (Ps 66:20*). In the vow, mourners promise that the shamed household will do something, and will say something. It will offer sacrifice to Yahweh: “I will come into your house with burnt offerings” (Ps 66:13*). And it will tell all those from the clan who are eating the sacrifice how Yahweh delivered it from its enemies: “I will tell what he has done for me” (Ps 66:16*).

The vows that appear in laments are not promises made by unbelievers to become converts. Vows are the promises of believers to assemble the community, to eat a sacrifice, and to tell the story. Those whom Yahweh delivers will not forget to celebrate their salvation from their enemies.

Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 276

(Acts 8:26-40 DCB)

A messenger of Yahweh spoke to Philip: *Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route.*

So Philip got up and set out.

Now there was an Ethiopian court official of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. He was her royal treasurer and was on his way home from Jerusalem where he had gone to worship Yahweh. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit of Yahweh said to Philip: *Catch up to that chariot.*

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said:
“Do you understand what you are reading?”
He replied,
“How can I, unless someone instructs me?”
So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.
This was the Scripture passage he was reading:

*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.
In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who will tell of his posterity?
For his life is taken from the earth.*

Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply,
“I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this?
About himself, or about someone else?”
Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this Scripture passage,
he proclaimed Jesus to him.
As they traveled along the road
they came to some water,
and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water.
What is to prevent my being baptized?”
Then he ordered the chariot to stop,
and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water,
and he baptized him.
When they came out of the water,
the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away,
and the eunuch saw him no more,
but continued on his way rejoicing.
Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news
to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

A Hymn (Ps 66:1-12 DCB)

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

Call to worship

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to our divine patron, all the earth;
- ² sing the glory of the name of Yahweh;

give to Yahweh glorious praise.

³ Say to our divine patron: *How awesome are your deeds!*
Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.

⁴ *All the earth worships you;*
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name.

⁵ Come and see what our divine patron has done:
See how awesome Yahweh's deeds among humans are.

Selah

Creation story

⁶ Yahweh turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in Yahweh,
⁷ who rules by might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the peoples —
let the rebellious not exalt themselves.

Selah

Call to worship

⁸ Bless our divine patron, O peoples,
let the sound of praise for Yahweh be heard.

Creation story

⁹ Yahweh has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
¹⁰ For you, our divine patron, have trained us;
you have refined us as silver is refined.
¹¹ You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
¹² you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

A Lament

(Ps 66:13-20 DCB)

Vow

¹³ I will offer sacrifice in your house;

I will pay you my vows,
14 those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Selah

16 Come and hear, all you who live morally,
and I will tell you what Yahweh has done for me.
17 I cried aloud to Yahweh,
and Yahweh was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
Yahweh would not have listened.
19 But truly our divine patron has listened;
Yahweh has given heed to the words of my prayer.
20 Bless our divine patron,
Because Yahweh has not rejected my prayer;
Because Yahweh has been faithful to me.

(John 6:44-51 DCB)

Jesus said to the crowds:
“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him,
and I will raise him on the last day.
It is written in the prophets:

They shall all be taught by God.

Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me.
Not that anyone has seen the Father
except the one who is from God;
he has seen the Father.
Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever believes has eternal life.
I am the bread of life.
Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died;
this is the bread that comes down from heaven
so that one may eat it and not die.
I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
whoever eats this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give
is my Flesh for the life of the world.”

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Friday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 277

Inauguration of Saul at Damascus

(Acts 9:1-9 DCB)

Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Teacher, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains.

Lure

On his journey, as Saul was nearing Damascus, he was hit by a bolt of lightning.

Kenosis

Saul dropped to the ground

Greeting

and heard a voice saying: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*

Saul answered: *Who are you?*

Talisman

The voice said: *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

Commission

Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.

Demurer

The men who were traveling with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one.

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

Inauguration of Ananias

(Acts 9:10-

Lure

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Teacher said appeared to him in a vision...

Greeting

...and said: *Ananias*.

Kenosis

Ananias answered: *Here I am, Lord*.

Commission

The Teacher said: *Get up and go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, that he may regain his sight.*

Demurer

Ananias demurred: *Teacher, I have heard from many about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. He has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name.*

But the Teacher said: *Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, rulers, and people of Israel, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.*

So Ananias went and entered the house, laying his hands on him, he said: *Saul, my brother, the Teacher has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Immediately scales fell from his eyes and Saul regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength. He

stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the *Son of God*.

A Hymn (Ps 117:1-2 DCB)

Call to worship

¹ Praise Yahweh, all you peoples!
Extol Yahweh, all you peoples!

Creation story

² For great is Yahweh's steadfast faithfulness towards us,
and the faithfulness of Yahweh endures forever.

Call to worship

Praise Yahweh!

(John 6: 52-59 DCB)

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,
“How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?”
Jesus said to them,
“Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood,
you do not have life within you.
Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.
For my Flesh is true food,
and my Blood is true drink.
Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood
remains in me and I in him.
Just as the living Father sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.
This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever.”
These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

Lectionary: 278

A Miracle Story

(Acts 9:31-42 DCB)

The community throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. The followers of Jesus were encouraged to live as Jesus had taught them to live, and inspired by the Holy Spirit grew in numbers.

As Peter was passing through every region, he went down to the holy ones living in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been confined to bed for eight years, for he was paralyzed.

Peter said: *Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed.*

Aeneas got up at once.

All the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and became followers of the Teacher.

A Miracle Story

Now in Joppa there was a follower of Jesus whose Hebrew name was *Tabitha*, and whose Greek name was *Dorcas*.

She was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving.

Now during those days she fell sick and died, so after washing her, they laid her out in a room upstairs.

Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request,

“Please come to us without delay.”

So Peter got up and went with them.

When he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs
where all the widows came to him weeping
and showing him the tunics and cloaks
that Dorcas had made while she was with them.
Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed.
Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up."
She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.
He gave her his hand and raised her up,
and when he had called the holy ones and the widows,
he presented her alive.
This became known all over Joppa,
and many came to believe in the Lord.

A Hymn (Ps 122:1-9 DCB)

A Pilgrimage Hymn dedicated to David²⁰⁹

Call to worship

¹ I was glad when they said to me:
Let us go to the House of YHWH!

Creation story

² Now, our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
³ Jerusalem — built as a city
Firmly bound together.
⁴ To it the tribes go up,
The tribes of YHWH go up,
As was decreed for the people of Israel,
To give thanks to the name of YHWH.
⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
The thrones of the household of David were set up.

Call to worship

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

²⁰⁹ When in doubt, go up to Jerusalem

*May they prosper who love you.
7 Peace be within your walls,
Security within your towers.*

⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends,
I will say: *Peace be within you.*
⁹ For the sake of the House of YHWH, our divine patron,
I will seek your good.

(John 6: 60-69 DCB)

Many of the disciples of Jesus who were listening said,
“This saying is hard; who can accept it?”
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, “Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?
It is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.
The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not believe.”
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father.”

As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer walked with him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”
Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his
glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

The word here is not simply abstract. It is the word spoken by Yahweh
at creation dividing the waters. It is the word spoken on the mountain with a

thunderclap. The divine patron, who for all those years had remained formless, now took shape. The prohibition of images had been breached, and Jesus appeared. The scandal of Jesus was not that he said he was divine, but that his followers considered him the image of Yahweh – something prohibited among the Hebrews. Other people carved statues, and deified their rulers. What made the Hebrews unique was that they let their divine patron remain imageless, so that Yahweh could not be manipulated. Now these Jews were abandoning this long heritage of imageless worship and putting a human face on Yahweh. What for these Christians was a calming and reassuring and nurturing experience – to see Yahweh – was for most Jews a sacrilege. Not only was this face a human face, it was a suffering face. It was their face as Jews. For all these years the Jews were the chosen people – they were the face of Yahweh to all the peoples among whom they lived. They were the suffering servant – the slave beaten and tortured. Now they looked into the bleeding face of Jesus and saw themselves, and were horrified. The Jews who did not follow Jesus were not Jews who did not understand him and his teaching; they understood him completely. They simply did not agree with him; they could not tolerate looking into their own face and seeing Yahweh. Best to leave Yahweh without an image, that to give their divine patron a suffering human face.

Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 279

(Acts 11:1-18 DCB)

The Apostles and the followers of Jesus in Judea heard that Gentiles had also accepted the word of Yahweh. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers confronted him, saying: *You entered the house of uncircumcised people and ate with them.*

Peter explained: *I was at prayer in the city of Joppa when in a trance I had a vision, something resembling a large sheet lowered from the sky by its four corners, and it came to me. Looking intently into it, I saw four-legged animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the sky. I also heard a voice say to me: Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat.*

I said: *Certainly not! Nothing out of place has ever entered my mouth.*

A second time a voice from heaven answered: *What your Creator has made, you are not to call out of place!*

The vision repeated a third time, and then everything was drawn up again into the sky.

Just then three men appeared at the house where we were. They had been sent to me from Caesarea. The Spirit told me to accompany them without discriminating.

Six members of the community also went with me, and we entered the man's house. He related to us how he had seen a divine messenger standing in his house, saying: *Send someone to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, who will speak words to you by which you and your household will be saved.*

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them as it had upon us at the beginning, and I remembered the word of our Teacher, how he had said: *John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

If then the Creator gave the Gentiles the same gift Yahweh gave to us when we came to believe in our Teacher, Jesus, who was I to be able to hinder the Creator?

When the circumcised members of the community heard Peter, they stopped objecting and glorified their divine patron, saying: *Our divine patron has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too.*

A Lament

(Ps 42:1-11 DCB)

To the leader. A Maskil of the Household of Korah²¹⁰

Petition

¹ As deer long for a flowing stream,
 So my soul longs for you, YHWH.
² My soul thirsts for my divine patron,
 For my life-giving divine patron.
When shall I come and behold
 The face of my divine patron?

Complaint

³ My tears have been my food day and night,
 People say to me continually: *Where is your divine patron?*

Profession of faith

⁴ These things I remember,
 As I pour out my soul:
How I went with the throng,
 How I led them in procession to the sanctuary of my divine patron,
With glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
 A multitude keeping festival.
⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
 Why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in my divine patron; for I shall again praise YHWH,
 My help⁶ and my divine patron.

Declaration of innocence

My soul is cast down within me;
 Therefore, I remember you
From the valley of the Jordan River,

²¹⁰ Little, if anything, is known about the household of Korah in ancient Israel. Anan ben David (715-795), however, founded a tradition of Jewish spirituality whose followers adopted the name *Karaites*. Their spirituality was based on the Bible alone; they rejected all subsequent rabbinic teachings both oral and written in Mishnah and Talmud (<http://www.karaite-korner.org/>). They considered the Psalms to have been written under divine inspiration by David and Moses. William P. Brown, "The Psalms: An Overview," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)9.

From Mt. Hermon and Mt. Mizar.

- ⁷ Deep calls to deep
At the thunder of your rapids;²¹¹
All your waves and your billows
Have gone over me.
- ⁸ By day Yahweh commands steadfast love,
At night the song of YHWH is with me,
-- a prayer to the divine patron of my life.

Complaint

- ⁹ I say to my divine patron, my rock -- my midwife:
Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about lamenting
Because the enemy oppresses me?
- ¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my body,
My adversaries taunt me;
They say to me continually:
Where is your divine patron?

Profession of faith

- ¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
Why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in our divine patron;
Because I shall again praise YHWH, my help and my divine patron.

(John 10:1-10 DCB)

Jesus taught: Trust me. Whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate, but climbs in over its wall is a thief and a robber. Whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

²¹¹ NRSV: *cataracts*

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Today’s readings teach us that the key to surviving hard times is to find good teachers. The *discernment of spirits* is essential to leading an authentic life of faith.

A long-standing traditions of interpretation among preachers considers the intention of apocalypse traditions like those in Daniel (Dan 7:1–12:13) to be threatening -- warning the powerful of an impending end-of-the-world battle between God and Satan, after which an elite will govern a 1000-year empire in God’s name.

In the world of the Bible, the intention of apocalypse traditions is to console the powerless by promising that their suffering will end soon, and that in the end good, not evil, will prevail.

The apocalypse that threatens describes works like *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1979), by Hal Lindsey. The apocalypse that consoles describes works like *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1929–45), written by a Jewish teenager during the years she and her family spent in hiding from the Gestapo in Amsterdam during World War II, or the writings of Elie Wiesel (1928–), a Jewish survivor of the Nazi death camps whose works chronicle the suffering and the survival of those years.

François Mauriac encouraged Wiesel to write about his experiences in the camps. Eventually, Wiesel published: *And the World Would Remain Silent* (1956). The book was then shortened and published in French and English as: *Night* (1960). The memoir is a seminal work on the terrors of the Holocaust. *Night* was followed by two novels, *Dawn* (1961) and *Day* (1962), to form a trilogy that looked closely at humankind’s destructive treatment of one another.

Like the writings of Frank and Weisel, the book of Daniel is a consoling apocalypse. It does not call upon the people of Judah to take up arms and attack their enemies, but to renew their faith in YHWH as the divine patron who delivered them from the Babylonians, from the Medes, and from the Persians, and who, in due time, would deliver them from the Greeks as well. They are not to take up arms and wage war against the Hellenists, but to wait patiently for YHWH to deliver them.

The apocalypse stories in Daniel are the legacy of seers or *watchers*, who call themselves *the holy ones of the Most High* (Dan 7:15–27). These seers have much in common with the shamans in Siberian cultures, in Native American cultures, and in the cultures along the Amazon River in South America. Their stories are not simply exotic coded messages for tracking the events leading to the destruction of the old world. Seers prepare their followers to pass safely through the crisis of dismantling the old world and entering into the new world. The most important skill that seers teach their followers is the ability to recognize authentic leaders. Apocalypse stories give their audiences a crash course in the discernment of spirits.

In a *Teaching on Wise Teachers* in Proverbs (Prov 3:13–18), each line of the adage begins with the word “blessed,” which is a synonym for “wise” rather than “happy.” The teaching is framed with beatitudes. It opens with the adage: “Blessed are those who find a wise teacher. Blessed are those who discover a discerning wife” (Prov 3:13). It closes with the adage: “A wise teacher is a tree of life to those who find her. Blessed are those who follow her faithfully” (Prov 3:18).

The tradition compares a wise teacher with a tree. The date palm, the grapevine, and the olive are the most common trees in the world of the Bible. Each requires years of care before it bears edible fruit. Likewise, students require years of discipline before they become wise. Nonetheless, once trees and students mature they provide fruit year after year.

The Bible also portrays the wise as eating from a tree or sleeping under a tree. Adam and Eve eat from a tree. Elijah (2 Kgs 19:5) and Jonah (Jonah 4:6–7) sleep beneath trees. For the Hebrews and other cultures, the branches of a tree were like the uterus of the Godmother, and its trunk her birth canal through which creatures left the divine plane and entered the human plane. The spot at which the trunk entered the earth created a sacred center or navel. Here the creator, like the mother of a household, taught humans how to have a child and have a harvest. A sacred tree marked the spot where humans became wise and truly understood the cosmos and its creator.

Similarly, a *Teaching on Foolish Teachers* (Prov 5:1–23) tells students that a foolish teacher is an adulterer who promises students something for nothing. A wise teacher is a wife who stays with her students for a lifetime to help them

learn that there is no gain without pain. A wise teacher is faithful and demands discipline from students. A foolish teacher is unreliable and allows students to run wild.

The words of a foolish teacher are smooth or easy (Prov 5:3). Like honey, they intoxicate students into believing that all things are simply there for the taking. Consequently, her students lack discipline and wander thoughtlessly from their household and village into the households and villages of others. “She does not stay on the path of life. She wanders around lost” (Prov 5:6). The students of a foolish teacher do not know their place, and they do not stay in place.

¹ One of the shortest of the great rules is the one originating with St. Albert of Jerusalem (d. 1214), who gave the Carmelites a *Way of Life*. His legislation has come down to the Carmelite Order with some modifications sanctioned by Innocent IV in *Quem honorem* (1247), which scholars today see as constituting it as a rule. This Rule inspires the whole worldwide Carmelite family. There are several English translations each with their own features. Some problems face the translator. Many of the terms used by Albert can have a technical or juridical sense in medieval times. For these one can turn to C. Ciconetti, *The Rule of Carmel* (Darien, Ill.: Carmelite Centre, 1984), an abridgment of *La Regola del Carmelo: origine, natura, signiificato* (Rome: Carmelite Institute, 1973; K. Waaijman, *The Mystical Space of Carmel: A Commentary on the Carmelite Rule* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999).

¹ Throughout its history it has been divided into chapters, articles or sections varying from ten to twenty. The traditional O.Carm. numbers go back to 1586 when John Baptist Caffardi was Prior General. But there are other divisions, for example the translation of B. Edwards or in the English version of the O.Carm Constitutions (1995). The Constitutions of the OCD nuns have a different set of divisions. In 1999 the General Councils of the two branches (O.Carm. and OCD) came up with a new agreed enumeration. In this revised translation the new numeration is given prominence. But for those who may encounter other numeration in their reading, the traditional O.Carm chapters are given as Roman uppercase capitals (I, II, III...) with the OCD nuns' articles in lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii...).

¹ There are many biblical citations and echoes; most can be easily identified; some are not so sure. One can then either translate Albert's Latin version, or more dubiously look to modern bible translations from the Hebrew or Greek originals. A revised translation is offered here, which is somewhat more literal than existing translations so that people may be helped to catch the nuances and occasional ambiguities of the original. The translation offered reflects the fact that the Rule was written for male hermits on Mount Carmel. Women of the Carmelite Family will perhaps wish to make their own adaptations.

<http://www.carmelstream.org/2012/11/14/the-carmelite-rule-reading-the-bible-in-the-quest-for-holiness/>

¹ Later manuscripts added *ad* to the Latin word *nutrimentum* giving the meaning “for nourishment.” The more difficult reading is preferred, omitting the *ad* so what is involved is the provision of animals and poultry.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 281

(Acts 12:24—13:5)

The word of Yahweh continued to spread and grow.

After Barnabas and Saul completed their relief mission, they returned to Jerusalem, taking with them John, who is called *Mark*.

Now there were in the Church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who was called the *Nigerian*; Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

While they were worshiping Yahweh and fasting, the Spirit of Yahweh said: *Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*

Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

So they, sent forth by the Spirit of Yahweh, went down to Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of Yahweh in the synagogues of the people of Judea.

A Hymn

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

Petition

¹ May our divine patron be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,

Selah

² that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all peoples.

Call to worship

³ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁴ Let all peoples be glad and sing for joy,

Creation story

for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide all peoples upon earth.

Selah

⁵ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
let all peoples praise you.

Creation story

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
Our divine patron, our divine patron, has blessed us.

Petition

⁷ May our divine patron continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere Yahweh.

(John 12:44-50)

Jesus proclaimed: *Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. Anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me.*

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning...

To judge, or not to judge -- to paraphrase Shakespeare’s Hamlet who says: *To be, or not to be, that is the question* – that is the question. Here Jesus seems to say that he does not judge those who do not learn from him. He leaves that judgment to the Father who sent him. Nonetheless, Christians and especially Christian leaders have been particularly quick to judge, and to punish those who do not listen to them. The persecution of Christians by one another has been more consistent and more barbaric than the persecution of Christians by non-Christians.

Why?

The challenge of believing in the radical teachings of Jesus requires more self-esteem than most have. Selflessness demands greater faith than most have. Confronted by others who consider Jesus' teachings to be foolishness, and especially by those who are happy and successful, throws those who believe off balance. They need to see the disbelievers suffer, and so they inflict that suffering.

Persecution – judgment of others – indicts those Christians who persecute other Christians, and others.

Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 283

(Acts 13:26-33)

When Paul came to Antioch on the border of Pisidia (Turkey), he taught in the synagogue.

My fellow Christians – members of the household of Abraham and other peoples seeking to live morally -- to us this word of salvation has been sent. The citizens of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize Jesus, and by condemning him they fulfilled the traditions of the prophets that are read Sabbath after Sabbath. For even though they found no grounds for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Jesus put to death, and when they had accomplished all that was written about Jesus, they took him down from the tree and placed him in a tomb.

Nonetheless, the godparent of Jesus raised him from the dead, and for many days Jesus appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are now his witnesses before the people.

We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what our divine patron promised our ancestors is now fulfilled for us, their descendants, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the Psalms: You are my heir. Today I have appointed you (Ps 2:7).

A Lament

(Ps 2:1-12)

Complaint

- ¹ Why do the peoples plan to declare their independence?
Why do the peoples set out on such an ill-fated crusade?
² The rulers of the earth set themselves against YHWH and the heir;
The rulers assemble and proclaim:
³*Let us throw of our chains.*
Let us cut the ropes off our hands.

Profession of faith

- ⁴ YHWH, who sits in the heavens, laughs.
Our divine patron considers their plans to be a joke.
⁵ YHWH will speak to them like an angry parent.
Angrily YHWH declares: ⁶ *I have set my heir on Mt. Zion, my holy hill.*
⁷ I will proclaim the decree of YHWH, who said: *You are my heir;*
Today I have begotten you.
⁸ *Ask of me, and I will make the peoples your heritage,*
The ends of the earth your possession.
⁹*You shall flog them with an iron rod,*
Dash them in pieces like a clay pot.

Petition

- ¹⁰ Now therefore, O rulers, be wise;
Be warned, O rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve YHWH by living morally,
With trembling ¹²kiss the feet of YHWH.
Otherwise, YHWH will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
The anger of YHWH is quickly kindled.

Beatitude

Blessed are the wise who take refuge in YHWH.

(John 14:1-6)

Jesus taught his followers: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in your godparent. Have faith also in me. My Father's household has many houses. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a house for you? If I go and prepare a house for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way.*

Thomas questioned Jesus: *Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?*

Jesus explained to Thomas: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father of the divine household except through me.*

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning...

According to today’s psalm, living with God is possible. Living without God is not. For people of faith, God is a reality, a given. Ignoring God is impossible. Therefore, the task is to develop a sense of discernment to learn how to listen to the word of God.

The challenge of learning how to listen to the voice of God is that God speaks through those around us, and through the world around us. Nonetheless, the reception is not good. We often do not hear clearly.

According to Paul in Acts today, the Bible teaches us – among other things – how to listen to the voice of God. An important benefit of regularly listening to the Bible is that it helps us tune our ear to the voice of God. We listen to how God has spoken to others, then it is easier for us to hear God speaking to us.

Paul indicts the religious leaders of Judea for not learning from the prophets read every week on Sabbath how to listen to the voice of God. The sad consequence of their hearing loss was that not only did they not listen to Jesus, they put him to death. They silenced the voice of God.

The gospel identifies Jesus as the Teacher – the Way, the Truth, the Life - - who will show his disciples how to listen to the voice of God. Jesus teaches as much by example, as by words. Jesus listens to the voice of God, and expects his disciples to listen as he listens. *What would Jesus do? Is actually How does Jesus listen?*

As the heir of the household who will become its father, Jesus promises his followers that he will not evict any, but find them all houses of their own.

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 284

(Acts 13:44-52)

On the following sabbath
almost the whole city
gathered to hear the word of the Lord.
When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy
and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.
Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said,
“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first,
but since you reject it
and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life,
we now turn to the Gentiles.
For so the Lord has commanded us,
*I have made you a light to the Gentiles,
that you may be an instrument of salvation
to the ends of the earth.*”

The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this
and glorified the word of the Lord.
All who were destined for eternal life came to believe,
and the word of the Lord continued to spread
through the whole region.
The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers
and the leading men of the city,
stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas,
and expelled them from their territory.
So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them
and went to Iconium.
The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

A Hymn (Ps 98:1-9)

a psalm

Call to worship

¹ O sing to Yahweh a new hymn,

Creation story

for Yahweh has done marvelous things.
The right hand and holy arm of Yahweh
have gained Yahweh victory.

² Yahweh has made known victory;
Yahweh has revealed vindication to all peoples.

³ Yahweh has remembered steadfast love and faithfulness
to the household of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴ Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵ Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before Yahweh, our ruler.

⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.

⁸ Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy

⁹ at the presence of Yahweh, for Yahweh is coming
to judge the earth.

Yahweh will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

(John 14:7-14)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“If you know me, then you will also know my Father.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to Jesus,

“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time
and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own.

The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,
or else, believe because of the works themselves.

Amen, amen, I say to you,

whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,

and will do greater ones than these,

because I am going to the Father.

And whatever you ask in my name, I will do,

so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning...

Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Lectionary 285

Miracle Story

(Acts 14:5-18)

There was an attempt in Iconium
by both the Gentiles and the Jews,
together with their leaders,
to attack and stone Paul and Barnabas.
They realized it,
and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe
and to the surrounding countryside,
where they continued to proclaim the Good News.

At Lystra there was a crippled man, lame from birth,
who had never walked.
He listened to Paul speaking, who looked intently at him,
saw that he had the faith to be healed,
and called out in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet."
He jumped up and began to walk about.
When the crowds saw what Paul had done,
they cried out in Lycaonian,
"Our divine patrons have come down to us in human form."
They called Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes,"
because he was the chief speaker.
And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city,
brought oxen and garlands to the gates,
for he together with the people intended to offer sacrifice.

The Apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their garments when they heard this and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, "People of Lystra, why are you doing this? We are of the same nature as you, human beings. We proclaim to you good news that you should turn from these idols to the living Our Creator,²¹² *who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them.* In past generations he allowed all Gentiles to go their own ways; yet, in bestowing his goodness, he did not leave himself without witness, for he gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filled you with nourishment and gladness for your hearts." Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

A Lament (Ps 115: 1-18)

Petition

¹Not to us, O Yahweh, not to us, but to your name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.
²Why should the peoples say,
Where is their divine patron?

Profession of faith

³Our divine patron is in the heavens;
Yahweh does whatever Yahweh pleases.
⁴Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
⁵They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
⁶They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
⁷They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
they make no sound in their throats.
⁸Those who make them are like them;
so are all who trust in them.

Vow

²¹² What Jonah should have said!

⁹O Israel, trust in Yahweh!

Yahweh is their help and their shield.

¹⁰O house of Aaron, trust in Yahweh!

Yahweh is their help and their shield.

¹¹You who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh!

Yahweh is their help and their shield.

¹²Yahweh has been mindful of us;

Our divine patron will bless us;

Yahweh will bless the household of Israel;

Our divine patron will bless the household of Aaron;

¹³Yahweh will bless those who fear Yahweh,

Our divine patron will bless both small and great.

Petition

¹⁴May Yahweh give you increase,
both you and your children.

¹⁵May you be blessed by Yahweh,
who made heaven and earth.

Profession of faith

¹⁶The heavens are Yahweh's heavens,
but the earth he has given to human beings.

¹⁷The dead do not praise Yahweh,
nor do any that go down into the silence of *Sheol*.

¹⁸But we will bless Yahweh
from this time on and for evermore.

Call to worship

Praise Yahweh!

Teaching

(John 14:21-26)

Jesus taught his disciples:

Basic teaching

"Whoever has my commandments and observes them

is the one who loves me.²¹³
Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

Question

Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him:

"Master, then what happened that you will reveal yourself to us
and not to the world?"

Embolism

Jesus answered and said to him:

"Whoever loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.
Whoever does not love me does not keep my words;
yet the word you hear is not mine
but that of the Father who sent me.

"I have told you this while I am with you.
The Advocate, the Holy Spirit
whom the Father will send in my name
he will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I told you."

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning....

The question and answer dialogue is parallel to the exchange between
the seer and the guide is a *time voyage* or *fantasy* in apocalyptic traditions.

How are sacrifice and faithfulness or obedience parallel? Neither is *killing*
something for God. A sacrifice is a meal that clients prepare for their divine
patron. It is an act of communion.

Obedience is not going against your will or killing yourself for God.
Obedience is sharing a common vision -- seeing things the same way.

²¹³ That is ...*is faithful* to me or fulfills his covenant with me.

Obedience is a non-violent continuation of the same theology: humans standing for a moment in the *shoes* of their divine patron.

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 286

A Miracle Story

(Acts 14:19-28)

In those days, Jewish authorities from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.²¹⁴ But when the disciples gathered around him, he got up and entered the city. On the following day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

After they had proclaimed the good news to that city²¹⁵ and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God."²¹⁶ They appointed presbyters for them in each Church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to Yahweh in whom they had put their faith.

Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the Church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Then they spent no little time with the disciples.

A Hymn

(Ps 145:1-21)

A Hymn Dedicated to David.

²¹⁴ Paul, as must all Christians must suffer and die as Jesus did – in order to be raised from the dead.

²¹⁵ As Isa 40-55 teaches suffering is a witnesses that inspires others.

²¹⁶ Kingdom of God – to live as Jesus lived, no necessarily heaven. Term is unfortunate. Better the term Jesus used: “Abba’s household” much like “Grandmother’s”

Call to worship

- ¹ **Extol** my divine patron and ruler,
 Bless the name of YHWH for ever and ever.²¹⁷
- ² **Bless** YHWH every day,
 Praise the name of YHWH for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is YHWH, therefore, **praise** YHWH greatly;
 the greatness of YHWH is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall tell of your great works to another,
 Shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ I will **meditate out loud** on the glorious splendor of your majesty,
 On your wondrous works.
- ⁶ I will **proclaim** the might of your awesome deeds.
 I will **declare** your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall **celebrate** the fame of your abundant goodness,
 They shall **sing aloud** of your righteousness.

Creation Story

- ⁸ YHWH is gracious and merciful,
 Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ YHWH is good to all,
 The compassion of YHWH is over all creation.

Call to worship

- ¹⁰ All your works -- **give thanks** to YHWH,
 All your faithful -- **bless** you.
- ¹¹ **Speak** of the glory of your cosmos,²¹⁸
 Tell of your power,
- ¹² **Make known** to all people your mighty deeds,
 the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

²¹⁷ Calls to worship challenge their audiences to praise and acknowledge Yahweh as their divine patron who delivered them from slavery and endowed them with land and children. The standard call is "Praise Yahweh!" or "Alleluia." These calls are best translated in the imperative. Therefore, "Bless Yahweh!" captures the sense of a call to worship better than "Blessed be Yahweh!" When it appears in a call to worship the Hebrew word "bless" does not mean something that the Hebrews do for Yahweh, but rather calls on the Hebrews to acknowledge what Yahweh has done for them. Other verbs like "Come!" "Sing!" "Shout!" "Give thanks!" "Extol!" are also calls to worship.

²¹⁸ NRSV: *kingdom*

Creation Story

- YHWH is faithful in every word,
YHWH is gracious in every deed.²¹⁹
- 14 YHWH upholds all who are falling,
YHWH raises up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- 16 You open your hand,
You satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- 17 YHWH is just in every way,
YHWH is kind in everything.
- 18 YHWH is near to all who call out,
To all who call on their divine patron in truth.
- 19 YHWH fulfills the desire of all who live morally;²²⁰
YHWH also hears their cry, and saves them.
- 20 YHWH watches over all who fulfill their covenant responsibilities,²²¹
but all the wicked YHWH will destroy.

Call to worship

- 21 My mouth --- **praise** YHWH,
All flesh -- **bles**s YHWH's holy name for ever and ever.

Teachings

(John 14:27-31)

Jesus taught his disciples:
"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.²²² Not as the world gives peace do I give peace to you.

Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.²²³ You heard me tell you, 'I am going away but I will come back to you.'

If you do what I have taught you to do (i.e. "loved me"), you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I do

²¹⁹ NRSV: *...in all his wordsin all his deeds*

²²⁰ NRSV: *fear him*

²²¹ NRSV: *love him*

²²² Land and children

²²³ Lo tira

not have much more time to teach you, for the ruler of the world is coming.²²⁴ He has no power over me, but the world must know that I am faithful to (i.e. "love")²²⁵ the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me."

Fifth Wednesday after Easter

Lectionary: 287

An Audit of Circumcision

(Acts 15:1-6)²²⁶

Some leaders of the Jews in Judea were teaching the followers of Jesus in Antioch:

Citation

"Unless you are circumcised according to the teachings of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Mandate

Paul and Barnabas forcefully disagreed with this teaching, so the community decided to send them -- and some other members of the community -- up to Jerusalem to seek the opinion of the Apostles and presbyters on the question.

Research report

The delegates were sent on their journey by the community, and passed through Phoenicia (Lebanon) and Samaria²²⁷ telling of the conversion of the

²²⁴ A source for the anti-Christ teachings

²²⁵ Am faithful

²²⁶ Qoheleth

²²⁷ **Samaria** (*watch mountain*) is 30 miles north of Jerusalem and about six miles to the northwest of Shechem, in a wide basin-shaped valley, six miles in diameter, encircled with high hills, almost on the edge of the great plain which borders upon the Mediterranean Sea. In the centre of this basin, which is on a lower level than the valley of Shechem, rises a less elevated hill, with steep yet accessible sides and a long fiat top. This hill was chosen by Omri as the site of the capital of Israel. He "bought the hill of Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of the owner of the hill, Samaria (1Kgs 16:23-24).") From the that of Omri's purchase around 925 BCE, Samaria was a sanctuary center for the ten tribes. Ahab built a temple to YHWH as Ba'al there (1 Kgs 16:32-33.) It was twice besieged by the Syrians -- in 901 BCE (1 Kgs 20:1) and in B.C. 892 BCE (2 Kgs 6:20-27), but on both occasions Samaria survived. For Deuteronomy, whoever ruled Samaria, was also the ruler of Israel (2 Kgs 15:13-14). In B.C. 721 Samaria was taken,

Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the followers of Jesus. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the community, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters, and they reported what divine patron of Jesus had done through them.

Nonetheless, some Pharisees who had become followers of Jesus rendered the opinion: *Non-Jews must be circumcised, and follow the teachings of Moses before they become followers of Jesus.*

Evaluation

The Apostles and the presbyters met together to consider this opinion.

A Hymn (Ps 122:1-9)

A Pilgrimage Hymn dedicated to David²²⁸

Call to worship

¹ I was glad when they said to me:
Let us go to the House of YHWH!

Creation story

² Now, our feet are standing

after a siege of three years laid by Shalmaneser V, great king of Assyria, his successor Sargon II conquered the city in 722-721 BCE (2 Kgs 18:9-10).

Some years afterward Samaria was resettled by Esarhaddon. When Alexander the Great conquered Samaria, he massacred its most of its citizens, and relocated the rest to Shechem, so that he could give the land to his Macedonian soldiers as a reward for their faithful service. After John Hyrcanus conquered Samaria, he virtually reduced it to rubble (109 BCE). Herod the Great rebuilt and enlarged Samaria and renamed it for his Roman patron: *Sebaste* (Latin: Caesar Augustus) The wall around it was 2 1/2 miles long, and in the center of the city was a park 900 feet square containing a magnificent temple dedicated to Caesar. In the New Testament the city itself does not appear to be mentioned; but rather a portion of the district to which, even in older times it had extended its name (Matt 10:5; John 4:4-5).

Today, Samaria is a small village -- *Sebustiyeh*. Some architecture from its past remains like the ruins church of St. John the Baptist in a converted Idumaeen building.

St. Jerome considered Sebaste to be Samaria was the place in which St. John the Baptist was imprisoned and suffered death. He also makes it the burial-place of the prophets Elisha and Obadiah.

²²⁸ When in doubt, go up to Jerusalem

- within your gates, O Jerusalem.
- ³ Jerusalem — built as a city
Firmly bound together.
- ⁴ To it the tribes go up,
The tribes of YHWH go up,
As was decreed for the people of Israel,
To give thanks to the name of YHWH.
- ⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
The thrones of the household of David were set up.

Call to worship

- ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
May they prosper who love you.
- ⁷ *Peace be within your walls,
Security within your towers.*
- ⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends,
I will say: *Peace be within you.*
- ⁹ For the sake of the House of YHWH, our divine patron,
I will seek your good.

Teachings

(John 15:1-8)

Jesus taught his followers:

Basic teaching

I am a true vine, and my godparent is the vine grower, who takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does bear fruit is pruned so that it bears more fruit.

Commentary

You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you

remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

By this is my godparent glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my followers.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. Just as you stayed with the Hebrews for 40 years in the desert, thank you for staying with Patrice and me during our 18 years in this desert. The desert was a different place for us, but here we have now made our home.

Jesus reaches out to us as we are. There is no need for us to become something we are not, or someone else to become followers of Jesus. Non-Jews do not to become Jews, and Jews do not need to become non-Jews to become followers of Jesus. The quality of the Christian community is not that everyone is the same, but that so many different kinds of people find value in one another.

The miracle of Pentecost was not a *Rosetta Stone moment*, when suddenly the followers of Jesus became fluent in the languages of the entire Roman world, but rather that the followers of Jesus speaking to other Jews in Aramaic delivered a message to the hearts of all those pilgrims, no matter where they lived in the diaspora.

The Christian community is not homogenous, it is diverse. That diversity reminds us that the same divine patron who created a world filled with diversity, sent Jesus to create a community filled with diversity.

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 288

(Acts 15: 7-21 DCB)

After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to the Apostles and the presbyters: My brothers, you are well aware that from early days our divine patron made the choice among you that through my mouth non-Jews would hear the word of the Gospel and believe. Our divine patron, who knows the human heart, bore witness by granting non-Jews a Holy Spirit just as our divine patron did us. YHWH made no distinction between us and them, and by faith purified their hearts.

Why, then, are you now putting YHWH to the test by placing on the shoulders of non-Jews, who are followers of Jesus, a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Jesus, our teacher, in the same way as they.”

The whole assembly fell silent, and they listened while Paul and Barnabas described the signs and wonders YHWH had worked among the non-Jews through them.

After they had fallen silent, James responded: *My brothers, listen to me. Symeon has described how our divine patron began to assemble a people of YHWH from among non-Jews.*

The words of the prophets agree: *After this I shall return and rebuild David’s hut which is in ruins. From the ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again, so that the rest of humanity may seek out YHWH, even all the non-Jews on whom my name is invoked.*

A WORD OF YHWH WHO ACCOMPLISHES THESE THINGS, KNOWN FROM OF OLD

It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to stop troubling non-Jews who turn to our divine patron, but tell them by letter to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood. For Moses, for generations now, has had those who proclaim YHWH in every village, as the great works of our divine patron has been read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

A Hymn & A Lament

(Ps 67:1-7 DCB)

To the director: accompany this hymn with stringed instruments

Petition

¹ May our divine patron be gracious to us.
May our divine patron bless us.
May our divine patron smile upon us,

Selah

² So that *Your Way* may be known upon earth;
So that *Your Saving Power* may be known among all peoples.²²⁹

²²⁹ NRSV: nations

Call to worship

³ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all peoples praise you.

⁴ Let every country be glad;
Let every country sing for joy.

Creation story

Because you judge the peoples with equity,
You guide every country upon earth.

Selah

⁵ Let all peoples praise you, our divine patron;
Let all peoples praise you.

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
Our divine patron has blessed us.

Petition

⁷ May our divine patron continue to bless us.

Call to worship

Let all the ends of the earth revere our divine patron.

A Teaching on Faithfulness

(John 15:9-11 DCB)

Jesus taught his followers: *As my godparent is faithful to the covenant with me,²³⁰ so I will also be faithful to my covenant with you. Have confidence that I will remain faithful to you. If you are faithful to the teachings in our covenant,²³¹ I will remain faithful to you, just as I have been faithful to the teachings of my godparent, and my godparent remains faithful to me.*

I have taught you this so that I can be proud of you, and that you may be proud of the life you have embraced.

Homily

²³⁰ NAB: the Father loves me

²³¹ NAB: If you keep my commandments

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning, just as you woke Jesus up in his tomb, and Jesus woke up the young man whose father came to him for help.

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 290

Inauguration of Timothy

(Acts 16:1-10)

*Rata*²³²

Paul reached also Derbe and Lystra (Turkey) where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him, and Paul wanted him to come along with him.

On account of the Jews of that region, Paul had him circumcised²³³, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Consummata

As they traveled from city to city, they handed on to the people for observance the decisions reached by the Apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem. Day after day the churches grew stronger in faith and increased in number.

They traveled through the Phrygian and Galatian territory (Turkey) because they had been warned by a divine voice²³⁴ from preaching the message in the province of Asia (Turkey).

When they came to Mysia (Turkey), they tried to go on into Bithynia (Turkey), but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, so they crossed through Mysia and came down to Troas.

During the night Paul had a vision. A Macedonian stood before him and implored him with these words: *Come over to Macedonia and help us.*

²³² Inauguration proper or *rata*, which will be followed by the execution of the call or *consummata*.

²³³ Like the modification of the lips of Isaiah, circumcision is the scar which Timothy takes from this ritual of initiation

²³⁴ NRSV: Holy Spirit. By hearing the voice or *Spirit* of their divine patron – *God* or *guardian angel*.

When he had seen the vision: *We sought passage to Macedonia (Greece) at once, concluding that our divine patron had called us to proclaim the Good News to them.*

A Hymn

(Ps 116:1-5)

A Psalm of thanksgiving

call to worship

- ¹ **Make a joyful noise** to Yahweh, all the earth.
²**Worship** Yahweh with gladness;
Come into the presence of Yahweh **singing**.

creation story

- ³ Know that Yahweh is our divine patron.
Yahweh made us, and we belong to Yahweh;
We are the people of Yahweh,
We are the sheep of Yahweh's pasture.

call to worship

- ⁴ Enter the gates of Yahweh with **thanksgiving**,
Enter the courts of Yahweh with **praise**.
Give **thanks** to Yahweh,
Bless the name of Yahweh.

creation story

- ⁵ For Yahweh is good;
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures forever,
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures to all generations.

Teachings on Persecution

(John 15:18-21)

Teaching

Jesus taught his disciples: *If the world hates you, realize that it hated²³⁵ me first.*

Commentary

If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.

Teaching

Remember the word I spoke to you: No slave is greater than his master.

Commentary

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. They will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.

²³⁵ Hate = betray, not be faithful to its covenant with you.

Homily

Thank you 'Abba for waking me up this morning.
I will live today for the people of Ukraine, the Nigerian girls, the Turkish miners.
I want to see persecution, not as failure,
But as an opportunity to live as Jesus lived.

Most of us see a life free from suffering, but especially free from suffering caused by others. We can deal with physical suffering better than with the persecution of others. Early Christians were no different.

Nonetheless, there was persecution, and so today's readings ask: *Why?*

One answer is that if Christians want to live as Jesus lived, then they will suffer and die as Jesus suffered and died. Suffering is not a sign of failure, but of success. Only those who are suffering are living the gospel.

Persecution is also the result of ignorance. Persecutors do not understand that our divine patron, who sent Jesus, so they put Jesus to death. Consequently, persecutors who do not understand Jesus, persecute those whom Jesus sends.

The answers do not take away suffering, but they do put it into a context of *no pain, no gain*.

Therefore, our goal in life cannot be to avoid suffering. We will suffer, and we will die. Those are the facts which we cannot change or control. What we can control is what we are suffering for. To suffer because we are living as Jesus lived has merit. To suffer because we want to avoid suffering does not.

JOHN BAKER (APRIL 2016)

Was reading [Salvifici Doloris \(February 11, 1984\) | John Paul II](#) ... what are your thoughts on redemptive suffering? Can we offer or dedicate our suffering for the sake of others in Christ?

Two thoughts.

The first time I climbed the *Jebel Musa* – Mt. Sinai – was the encounter with God you might expect. Rice University had given me a small grant to design a course in archaeology and the Bible. I had joined a travel study from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. The faculty director had brought two Israeli *guides!* On the bus with us from Eilat. I am sure they were Israeli intelligence.

When we reached St. Catherine's Monastery about noon, Egyptian intelligence arrested the Israelis and the director. While they interrogated them, all of use were forced to remain on

the bus in the blazing sun. It was midnight before we got to the hotel, and were scheduled to start up the mountain at moonrise about 2 AM.

I was tired, exhausted and furious. As the group was getting on their camels for the climb, I sat on a sidewalk next to our Egyptian guide, and gave him a piece of my mind. I told him that Egypt had no obligation to let us enter the country, but that once we crossed their border, we were guests, and mistreating us violated their obligations of hospitality. We spoke in Spanish for privacy – not English or Arabic.

When my group left I told the director I was going to walk alone. I needed to cool off.

The trail up the first three-fourths of the mountain is wide, and maintained. Just walking, no technical challenges. I was deep in thought trying to process why the director did what he did. How I could avoid such pressures on my trips. Suddenly, I was surrounded by some 20-30 men and women all dressed in their church going best – suits and ties, long dresses and high heels. I looked like an ad for REI – head lamp, vibram soles. They were all over the mountain – off the trail, down in culverts – not a flashlight in the group.

I do not speak Arabic, and there were no English speakers in the group, but, nonetheless, the mother in me took charge. I rounded them all up, walked in the lead, and three hours later we reached the summit, where they rejoined the group.

As we all huddled in the chill waiting for sunrise, I talked with their lay leader. They were Copts – Egyptian Christians, for whom making pilgrimage to *Jebel Musa* is an important part of their faith practice.

Anwar Sadat was famous for making peace with Israel, but he persecuted Egypt's Christians. Pilgrimage to *Jebel Musa* was forbidden during his administration, and only resumed after his assassination. During our conversation I asked the lay leader if life for Christians in Egypt had improved under Hosni Mubarak.

The lay leader looked at me with confusion. He knew I was Christian, and could not understand why any Christian, even one from the US, would be concerned about living a life without persecution. *But it says in the Book: Without suffering, there is no reward!* Sure, life for Egyptians Christians was better under Mubarak, but that only made matters worse, not better. Persecution by Sadat made this life miserable, but the next life attainable.

Sunrise on top of *Jebel Musa* is not the gentle appearance of light at the horizon. The dust on the desert floor shades the first light. When it appears, the sun pops up like toast higher in the sky. At that moment the pilgrims all stood, formed orderly rows and began morning prayer – in Greek! *Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!* I was immediately familiar, and joining that first, and largest Christian community of antiquity, and not quite as angry about my own persecution on the bus yesterday.

GOOD FRIDAY

I have not read *Salvifici Doloris* (February 11, 1984) by John Paul II. I am selective about reading what bishops and popes write. I have read *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891) by Leo XIII; *Quadragesimo Anno* (May 15, 1931) by Pius XI; *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963) and the documents of Vatican II (October 11, 1962-December 8, 1965) by John XXIII; *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015) and *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013) by Francis.

The *Story of a Soul* and the other writings of Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897), a cloistered Carmelite, are a classic expression of redemptive suffering. Although she lived apart from world, she had such a strong commitment to offering her own suffering from tuberculosis and her persecution by other sisters in her monastery for the church universal that she was designated the patron saint of missionaries.

I anchored my own pastoral application of redemptive suffering in the liturgy for Good Friday using the adoration of the cross and my homily.

As the congregation assembled the ushers gave each a 2 1/2-inch common nail. I had constructed a large rugged cross from two pieces of unfinished 2x12 boards of redwood. I first raised the upright in the sanctuary and chanted: *Behold the wood of the cross!* The congregation sang: *Come, let us adore!* I then held up the cross piece, and chanted in a higher tone. Then assembled the pieces to form the cross and chanted for a third time. We then carried the cross to the rear of the nave and laid it on two saw horses draped in purple cloth.

Each member of the congregation came to cross and drove the nail into the cross, before preceding to up the aisle to the second and third stations. The sounds of the hammering echoed a background to the laments we were singing. The cross was then brought to the sanctuary where it was erected.

We had no money for Easter flowers, but members brought green and blooms from their yards and wove them into the nails of the cross, which by the last Mass was in full bloom.

During my homily I identified the nail as the suffering which the coming year *would* bring, not *might* bring into our lives. Our goal as followers of Jesus was not to avoid suffering, but to embrace it for others. Christians, no matter what their denomination, will all answer the question: *Why is Jesus important?* With words like *Because he suffered for us!* If we are to live like Jesus lived, we need to suffer for others. So each day we need to identify a specific person close to us or far, and when the day brings suffering embrace it for that person's sake.

Suffering, I said, was not only the experience of sinners. Jesus suffered, but did not sin. Suffering was not only for the poor, the ignorant – what all humans have in common is suffering.

As the congregation left, each was given another nail, which I asked them to keep handy. When I made home visits at times of illness or suffering, I would ask: *Where is your nail? Who are you offering your suffering for today?*

Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 292

(Acts 16:22-34)

The crowd in Philippi (Greece) joined in the attack on Paul and Silas, and the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely.

When the jailer received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake.

About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, there was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose.

When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul shouted out in a loud voice: *Do no harm to yourself; we are all here.*

The jailer asked for a lamp and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas.

Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas out and said: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

And Paul and Silas said: *Take Jesus as your savior and you and your household will be saved.*

So Paul and Silas explained the teachings of the savior to him and to everyone in his household.

The jailer took Paul and Silas in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds. Then then he and his household were baptized at once. He brought them up into his house and provided a meal and with his household rejoiced at having come to faith in Yahweh.

A Lament

(Ps 138:1-8)

Of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I give you thanks, O Yahweh, with my whole heart;
before the members of the divine assembly I sing your praise;
- ² I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.
- ³ On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.
- ⁴ All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, O Yahweh,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the Yahweh,
for great is the glory of the Yahweh.
- ⁶ For though the Yahweh is high, Yahweh regards the lowly;
but the haughty Yahweh perceives from far away.

Petition

- ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
- ⁸ Yahweh will fulfill my destiny;
your steadfast love, O Yahweh, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

(John 16:5-11)

Jesus taught his disciples: *Now I am going to the one who sent me, and not one of you asks me: Where are you going? But because I told you this, grief has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send the Advocate to you. The Advocate will come and convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.*

Homily

Jesus promises the disciples -- who play the role of Job here -- an *advocate*, who will argue their innocence before 'Abba (Job 9:33-35; 16:19-22; 19:25-29; 33:23).²³⁶

Some scholars identify Job's *mediator* (Job 9:33), *witness* (Job 16:19), or *legal guardian* (Job 19:25) or *divine messenger* (Job 33:23) as Yahweh, others as another member of the divine assembly.

Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 293

Inauguration of Dionysius and Damaris

(Acts 17:15 --18:1)

¹⁵Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens. After receiving instructions to have Silas and Timothy join him as soon as possible, they left him.

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was scandalized to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he taught Jews and the *God-fearing* Gentiles who observed Torah in the synagogue, and also in the market-place every day with those who came there.

¹⁸Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said: *What is this street preacher trying to say?*

Others said: *He seems to be preaching foreign divinities.* This was because Paul was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹So they took Paul and brought him to Mt. Areopagus, the acropolis of Athens where the city's judicial assembly met. The assembly asked: *May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?* ²⁰*It sounds novel to us, so we would like to know what it means.* ²¹The Athenians and the foreigners living were addicted to learning about anything novel.

²³⁶ Michael D. Oblath, "Job's Advocate: A Tempting Suggestion," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (1999), 189-201. W. A. Irwin, "Job's Redeemer," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962), 219-220.

22 Then Paul stood in front of the judicial assembly and said: *Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way.* ²³*For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription: To an unknown god. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.* ²⁴*The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands,* ²⁵*nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.* ²⁶*From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live,* ²⁷*so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.*

²⁸ *As even some of your own poets have written: In him we live and move and have our being.*²³⁷ *For we too are his offspring.*²³⁸

²⁹*Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that our divine parent is like gold, or silver, or stone -- an image formed by the art and human imagination.* ³⁰*While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent,* ³¹*because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

32 When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed. Others said: *We will talk further with you about this.*

³³At that point Paul left them. ³⁴But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius, a member of Athens' judicial assembly, and a woman named Damaris, and others.

¹⁸Afterwards Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

A Hymn (Ps 148: 1-14)

¹ Praise the LORD!

²³⁷ From Aratus, *Phaenomena*. Aratus (325-245 B.C.E.) served the courts of Antiochus I (319-239 B.C.E.) in Syria and Antigonus II Gonatas (ruled 281-261 B.C.E) in Macedonia (Greece).

²³⁸ From Epimenides, *Cretica*. Epimenides lived in Knossos (Crete) between 600-500 B.C.E

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!

² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!

³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for he commanded and they were created.

⁶ He established them for ever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

⁹ Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!

¹⁰ Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!

¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!

¹² Young men and women alike,
old and young together!

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.

¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the LORD!

A Teaching

(John 16:12-15)

Teaching

Jesus taught his disciples:

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when your divine patron – the Spirit of Truth -- comes, The Spirit will guide you to all truth.

Commentary

The Spirit will not speak on his own, but the Spirit will speak what my Father teaches, and will declare to you the things that are coming. My Father will glorify me, because the Spirit will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that my Father has is mine; for this reason I told you my Father will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning.

Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 294

Inauguration of Apollos

(Acts 18:23-28)

After staying in Antioch some time, Paul left and traveled in orderly sequence through the Galatia (Turkey) and Phrygia (Turkey), bringing strength to all the disciples.

A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria (Egypt), an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus (Turkey). He was a biblical scholar. He had been instructed in the Way of Jesus²³⁹ and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla²⁴⁰ and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the Way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to cross to Achaia (Greece), the disciples encouraged him and

²³⁹ Early Christians called their community "The Way"; "Christians" was a pejorative word that their enemies used for them – comparable to "Messianists" or "jihadists"

²⁴⁰ Note: Priscilla is a leader of the community – a pastor.

wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. After his arrival he gave great assistance to those who had come to believe through grace. He vigorously refuted the Jews in public, establishing from the Bible that Jesus is the Messiah.

A Hymn (Ps 47:1-9)

- ¹Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to our divine patron with loud songs of joy.
- ²For Yahweh, the Most High, is awesome,
a great ruler over all the earth.
- ³Yahweh subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
- ⁴Yahweh chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom Yahweh loves.
- ⁵Our divine patron has gone up with a shout,
Yahweh with the sound of a trumpet.
- ⁶Sing praises to our divine patron, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.
- ⁷For our divine patron is the ruler of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm.
- ⁸Our divine patron rules over the nations;
Our divine patron sits on a holy throne.
- ⁹The leaders of the peoples gather
as the people of the divine patron of Abraham.
- For the shields of the earth belong to our divine patron;
Yahweh is highly exalted.

A Teaching (John 16:23-28)

Teaching

Jesus taught his disciples (Amen, Amen, I say to you²⁴¹):

“Whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

²⁴¹ Parallel to “word of Yahweh” in prophetic traditions.

Commentary

"I have taught you using proverbs (Hebrew: masalim). The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you using proverbs, but I will tell you clearly about our Father.

On that day you will ask in my name, and I do not tell you that I will ask our Father for you.

For our Father is faithful to you, because you are faithful to me and have come to believe that I came from God.

I came from our Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to our Father."

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning

Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Lectionary: 295

(Acts 18:9-18)

One night while Paul was in Corinth (Greece), Jesus said to him in a vision: *Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in this city.*

Paul settled in Corinth for a year and a half and taught the gospel among them.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, however, the Jews rose up together against Paul, brought him to the tribunal, and indicted him: *This man is inducing people to worship Yahweh contrary to the law.*

When Paul was about to reply, Gallio spoke to the Jews: *If it were a matter of some crime or malicious fraud, I should with reason hear the complaint of you Jews; but since it is a question of arguments over doctrine and titles and your own law, see to it yourselves. I do not wish to be a judge of such matters.*

Then Gallio dismissed them the tribunal.

They all seized Sosthenes, the synagogue official, and beat him in full view of the tribunal. But none of this was of concern to Gallio.

Paul remained for quite some time, and after saying farewell to the brothers he sailed for Syria, together with Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had shaved his head because he had taken a vow.

A Hymn

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

Call to worship

¹ Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to our divine patron with loud songs of joy.

Creation story

² For the Yahweh, the Most High, is awesome,
a great ruler over all the earth.
³ Yahweh subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
⁴ Yahweh chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom Yahweh loves.

Selah

⁵ Our divine patron has gone up with a shout,
the Yahweh with the sound of a trumpet.

Call to worship

⁶ Sing praises to our divine patron, sing praises;
sing praises to our ruler, sing praises.
⁷ For our divine patron is the king of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm.

Creation story

⁸ Our divine patron is ruler over the nations;
Our divine patron sits on his holy throne.
⁹ The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the divine patron of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to our divine patron;
Yahweh is highly exalted.

(John 16:20-23)

Jesus taught his disciples:

Trust my words. You will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. On that day you will not question me about anything. Trust my words. Whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Whether memories of waiting during PE to be chosen for a pick-up theme or watching the current season of *The Voice* talent show on television, it is exhilarating to be chosen, and heart breaking not to be chosen. The psalm gushes with the exhilaration of being chosen, and not just chosen, but chosen for a winning team.

We are those who choose us. Fifteen years ago we went to the Humane Society shelter and a wonderful adult Australian shepherd chose us. Denver loved us, groomed us, and people loved him. I often said that if it were not for Denver, we would have no social life at all. People were drawn to him because he had a handsome gait, because he had a strikingly red and gold coat which was soft to the touch, because he was gentle even when confronted by other aggressive dogs – and although he weighed 50 pounds, he loved small dogs. Denver defined us.

We wait for communities of faith to choose us. We really do not join, we are chosen. The emphasis in biblical traditions of spirituality to go out and bear witness to others is a called to choose others. This is the ongoing mission of Paul in the Acts.

Testimony does not threaten others; it finds the good in them and celebrates it. That feeling of exhilaration at being found or chosen is such a delight that most of us yearn to stay around people who celebrate us. When our communities loose interest in whom we are, then we leave. There is nothing attractive about being ignored.

The persecution of Paul and the other disciples is clear evidence that those who testify are seldom welcomed. We see something which unfortunately few others see or share in someone else. In fact, what we see as good is often seen as a threat to the status quo, and incites persecution not acceptance.

Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Lectionary: 297

(Acts 19:1-8)

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and down to Ephesus where he found some disciples.

Paul said to them: *Did you receive the Spirit of Yahweh when you became believers?*

They answered: *We have never even heard that there is a Spirit of Yahweh.*

Paul asked: *How were you baptized?*

They answered: *With the baptism of John.*

Paul then said: *John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.*

When they heard Paul, they were baptized in the name of Jesus, the messiah.

When Paul laid his hands on them the Spirit of Yahweh came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Altogether there were about 12 men.

Paul went to the synagogue, and for three months debated boldly with persuasive arguments about the Kingdom of God.

A Hymn and A Lament

(Ps 68:1-35)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

Petition

- ¹ Let our divine patron rise up,
let the enemies of Yahweh be scattered;
let those who hate Yahweh flee.
- ² As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before our divine patron.

Call to worship

- ³ But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before our divine patron;
let them be jubilant with joy.
- ⁴ Sing to our divine patron,
sing praises to the name of Yahweh;
lift up a song to Yahweh who rides upon the clouds —
the name of our divine patron is *Yahweh* —
Exult before Yahweh.

Profession of faith

- ⁵ Father of orphans
and protector of widows is our divine patron in the Holy House.
- ⁶ Our divine patron gives the desolate a home to live in;
Yahweh leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

Creation story

- ⁷ O our divine patron, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,

Selah

- ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of our divine patron -- the divine patron of Sinai,
at the presence of our divine patron -- the divine patron of Israel.
- ⁹ Rain in abundance, Yahweh, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;
- ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, Yahweh, you provided for the needy.
- ¹¹ Yahweh gives the command;

- great is the company of those who bore the tidings:
12 *The commanders of the armies, they flee, they flee!*
The women at home divide the spoil,
13 though they stay among the sheepfolds —
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
14 When the Almighty scattered rulers there,
snow fell on Mt. Zalmon.
- 15 O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
16 Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount that our divine patron desired for his abode,
where Yahweh will reside forever?
- 17 With mighty chariots, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
Yahweh came from Mt. Sinai into the Holy Place.
18 You ascended the high mount,
leading prisoners in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against Yahweh abiding there.

Call to worship

- 19 Bless Yahweh,
who daily bears us up;
Our divine patron is our salvation.

Selah

Profession of faith

- 20 Our divine patron is the divine patron of salvation,
and to our divine patron, Yahweh, belongs escape from death.
- 21 Our divine patron will shatter the heads of our enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their guilty ways.
22 Yahweh promised: *I will bring them back from Bashan,*
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
23 *so that you may bathe your feet in blood,*
so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.
- 24 Your solemn processions are seen, Yahweh,
the processions of our divine patron, my leader, into the sanctuary —
25 the singers in front, the musicians last,

between them -- women playing tambourines:

Call to worship

²⁶ *Bless our divine patron in the great assembly,
Yahweh, you who are of Israel's fountain!*

²⁷ There is Benjamin, the last of them, in the lead,
the elders of Judah in one group,
the elders of Zebulon,
the elders of Naphtali.

Petition

²⁸ Summon your might, Yahweh;
show your strength, our divine patron, as you have done for us before.

²⁹ Because of your temple at Jerusalem
rulers bear gifts to you.

³⁰ Rebuke the wild animals that live among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples.

Trample under foot those who lust after tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight in war.

³¹ Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to our divine patron.

Call to worship

³² Sing to Our divine patron, O peoples of the earth;
sing praises to Yahweh,

Selah

³³ O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, Yahweh sends out a voice, a mighty voice.

³⁴ Ascribe power to our divine patron,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.

³⁵ Awesome is our divine patron in the sanctuary,
-- the divine patron of Israel --
gives power and strength to the people.

Bless our divine patron!

(John 16:29-33)

The disciples said to Jesus: *Now you are talking plainly, and not in figures of speech. Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from Yahweh.*

Jesus taught them: *Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because 'Abba is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.*

Homily

Courage to face the challenges of present threats is to remember the past (Ps 68). Today we look forward with research to find the solutions to our problems. The Hebrews, in contrast, looked back. For them, Yahweh had provided everything they needed to survive. Crisis was the result of forgetting. Their response to crisis was to *read the directions*. When in danger *Count your blessings*. Those blessing will remind you that you have survived, not because of your own ability, but because of God is with us (John 16:29-33).

For people of faith, life is like re-reading a favorite novel. We know how the plot will end, but we read to enjoy the unfolding episodes of our life filled with confidence that suffering will end, that suffering will end soon, and that when suffering ends, good, not evil, will prevail.

Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Lectionary: 299

Ascension of Paul

(Acts 20:28-38)

Teaching

At Miletus, Paul taught the pastors of the community at Ephesus:

"Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you stewards, in which you pastor the community of Jesus that he acquired with his own blood.

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock.

Commentary

Members of your own community will pervert the truth to draw the disciples away after them.

So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. Now I commend you to our Father and to that grace-filled word that can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are consecrated.

I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of Jesus, our Messiah, who himself taught:

'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

When Paul had finished teaching he knelt down and prayed with them all. They were all weeping loudly as they laid their hands on Paul and gave him the kiss of peace, for they were deeply distressed that he had taught them that they would never see his face again.

Then they escorted him to the ship.

A Hymn

Ps 68:1-35

- ¹Let our divine patron rise up,
let Yahweh's enemies be scattered;
let those who hate Yahweh flee before Yahweh.
- ²As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before fire,²⁴² let the wicked perish before our divine patron.
- ³But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before our divine patron;
let them be jubilant with joy.
- ⁴Sing to our divine patron,
sing praises to Yahweh's name;

²⁴² How was wax used in the world of the Bible; olive oil was the standard light, not bee's wax; clay was the common seal, not bee's wax. There were no candles

lift up a song to Yahweh who rides upon the clouds*—
The name of our divine patron is Yahweh –
Exult before Yahweh.

⁵Father of orphans and protector of widows
is our divine patron in the sanctuary.

⁶Our divine patron gives the desolate a household with whom to live;
Yahweh leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

⁷O divine patron, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,

⁸the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of our divine patron, our divine patron on Sinai,
at the presence of our divine patron, the divine patron of Israel.

⁹Rain in abundance, O divine patron, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;

¹⁰your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O divine patron, you provided for the needy.

¹¹Yahweh gives the command;
great is the company of those who bore the tidings:

¹² ‘The rulers of the armies, they flee, they flee!’

The women at home divide the spoil,

¹³ though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.

¹⁴When the Almighty scattered the rulers there,
snow fell on Zalmon.

¹⁵O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!

¹⁶Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount where our divine patron built his house,
where Yahweh will reside for ever?

¹⁷With divine chariots, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
Yahweh came from Sinai into the sanctuary.

¹⁸You ascended the high mount,
leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against Yahweh, our divine patron’s abiding there.

¹⁹Blessed be Yahweh,

who daily bears us up;
Our divine patron is our salvation.

²⁰Our divine patron delivers us from our enemies;
and Yahweh, our divine patron, delivers us from death.

²¹But our divine patron will smash the heads of his enemies,
the hair of the heads of those who walk in their guilty ways.

²²Yahweh said,

I will bring them back from Bashan,
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,

²³so that you may bathe your feet in blood,
so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.'

²⁴Your solemn processions are seen, O divine patron,
the processions of my our divine patron, my ruler, into the sanctuary—

²⁵the singers in front, the musicians last,
between them girls playing tambourines:

²⁶'Bless our divine patron in the great congregation,
Yahweh, O you who are of Israel's fountain!'

²⁷There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead,
the princes of Judah in a body,
the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

²⁸Summon your might, O divine patron;
show your strength, O divine patron, as you have done for us before.

²⁹Because of your temple at Jerusalem
rulers bear gifts to you.

³⁰Rebuke the wild animals that live among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples.

Trample under foot those who lust after tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight in war.*

³¹Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia* hasten to stretch out its hands to our divine patron.

³²Sing to our divine patron, O states of the earth;
sing praises to Yahweh,

³³O Rider in the Heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.

³⁴Ascribe power to our divine patron,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.

³⁵Awesome is our divine patron in his* sanctuary,

the our divine patron of Israel;
who gives power and strength to our warriors. ²⁴³

Blessed be our divine patron!

Ascension of Jesus (John 17:11-19)

Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying:
"Holy Father, keep them in your name
that you have given me,
so that they may be one just as we are one.
When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me,
and I guarded them, and none of them was lost -- except Judas, the son of
destruction²⁴⁴ --
in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
But now I am coming to you.
I speak this in the world
so that they may share my joy completely.²⁴⁵
I gave them your word, and the world hated them,
because they do not belong to the world
any more than I belong to the world.
I do not ask that you take them out of the world
but that you keep them from the Evil One.
They do not belong to the world
any more than I belong to the world.
Consecrate them in the truth. ²⁴⁶
Your word is truth.
As you sent me into the world,
so I sent them into the world.
And I consecrate myself for them,
so that they also may be consecrated in truth."

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

²⁴³ The word “people” is a synonym for ‘army”

²⁴⁴ = SOB

²⁴⁵ What does share my joy, that your joy may be fulfilled mean?

²⁴⁶ The gospel – Jesus’ teaching??



Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Lectionary: 301

Trial of Paul

(Acts 25:13-21)

Indictment

King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea Maritima on a visit to Festus. Since they spent several days there, Festus referred Paul's case to the king, saying, "There is a man here left in custody by Felix. When I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and demanded his condemnation.

I answered them that it was not Roman practice to hand over an accused person before he has faced his accusers and had the opportunity to defend himself against their charge. So when they came together here, I made no delay; the next day I took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. His accusers stood around him, but did not charge him with any of the crimes I suspected.

Instead they had some issues with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul claimed was alive.

Appeal

Since I was at a loss how to investigate this controversy, I asked if he were willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these charges. And when Paul appealed that he be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."

A Hymn

(Ps 103: 1-22)

- ¹Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless the holy name.
- ²Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
and do not forget Yahweh's blessings—
- ³who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
- ⁴who redeems your life from *Sheol* -- the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵who satisfies you with good as long as you live*
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶Yahweh works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷Yahweh made known the Way to Moses,
Reveal great acts to the people of Israel.

⁸Yahweh is merciful and gracious;
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹He will not always accuse,
nor will Yahweh stay angry for ever.

¹⁰Yahweh does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is Yahweh's steadfast love towards those in awe of Yahweh;

¹²as far as the east is from the west,
so far Yahweh removes our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion for his children,
so Yahweh has compassion for those in awe of Yahweh.

¹⁴For Yahweh knows how we were made;
Yahweh remembers that we are clay.

¹⁵As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;

¹⁶for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

¹⁷But the steadfast love of Yahweh is from everlasting to everlasting
on those in awe of Yahweh,

and his righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸to those who keep their covenant with Yahweh
and remember the commandments of Yahweh.

¹⁹Yahweh has set up a throne in the heavens,
and Yahweh rules over all.

²⁰Bless Yahweh, O you angels,
you mighty ones who serve Yahweh,
obedient to the word Yahweh spoke.

²¹Bless Yahweh, all divine warriors;
slaves who do the will of Yahweh.

²²Bless Yahweh, all creation,
in all places where Yahweh is lord.

Bless Yahweh, O my soul.

A Teaching

(John 21: 15-19)

After Jesus had revealed himself to his disciples and eaten breakfast with them,
he said to Simon Peter,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."
Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."
He then said to Simon Peter a second time,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."
He said to him, "Tend my sheep."
He said to him the third time,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"
Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time,
"Do you love me?" and he said to him,
"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."
Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.
Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger,
you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted;
but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands,
and someone else will dress you
and lead you where you do not want to go."
He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.
And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Lectionary: 302

Trial of Paul

(Acts 28:16-20, 30-31)

Indictment

When he entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered he said to them: *My brothers, although I had done nothing against our people or our ancestral customs, I was handed over to the Romans as a prisoner from Jerusalem. After trying my case the Romans wanted to release me, because they found nothing against me deserving the death penalty. But when the Jews objected, I was obliged to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no accusation to make against my own nation. This is the reason, then, I have requested to see you and to speak with you, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear these chains.*¹

²¹They replied: *We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you.* ²²*But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.*

²³After they had fixed a day to meet him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

²⁴Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. ²⁵So they disagreed with each other.

As they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: *The Spirit of Yahweh was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah:*

²⁶Go to this people and say,
You will indeed listen, but never understand,
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

²⁷For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them.

¹ Edith Stein who was arrested because she was a Jew; and executed because she was a Jew who had become a Catholic.

²⁸ *Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.*

He remained for two full years in his lodgings. He received all who came to him, and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the Kingdom of 'Abba and taught about our teacher,² Jesus our Messiah.

A Hymn

(Ps 114:1-8)

¹When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,³

²Judah became the sanctuary of our divine patron,
Israel the people of Yahweh.

³The Sea of Chaos looked and fled;
The River Jordan turned back.

⁴The Mountains danced like rams,
the Hills like lambs.

⁵Why is it, O Sea that you flee?
O Jordan that you turn back?

⁶O Mountains that you dance like rams?
O Hills like lambs?

⁷*Tremble*, O Earth, at the presence of Yahweh,⁴
at the presence of the divine patron of Jacob,

⁸who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Inauguration of the Disciple whom Jesus Loved

(John 21:20-25)

² NRSV: *God or our Lord*

³ Interesting, the Hebrews and the Egyptians are both Semitic peoples who spoke Semitic languages: Hebrew and Egyptian. What language did they communicate with each other.

⁴ Earthquakes are the earth dancing, just as today children are told that thunder is the sound of the angels bowling.

Peter turned and saw the disciple following whom Jesus loved,⁵ the one who had also reclined upon his chest during the supper and had said: *Master, who is the one who will betray you?*⁶

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus: *Teacher, what about him?*⁷

Jesus said to him: *What if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours? You follow me.*

So the word spread among the brothers that that disciple would not die. But Jesus had not told him that he would not die, just: *What if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours?*

Affidavit

It is this disciple who testifies to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.

Homily

‘Abba, my godparent, You turned back the Red Sea so that the Hebrew slaves could go free (Ps 114). Help me to live this day committed to doing the good I can do, and not in being afraid of the evil which others can do to me. I want to live this day as Jesus lived; so that everything I do says *thank you for all you have done for us*, and not *please do more for us*.

Monday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 305

Annunciation to Hannah

(1 Sam 1:1-8)

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, Elkanah by name, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu,

⁵ Was this John, or was it Mary of Magdala?

⁶ It is not only outsiders who persecute us. More damage is done to us by insiders. Keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer. Too much attention paid to the world the flesh and the devil often distracts from those nearest us who seek to harm us. Just because you are paranoid does not mean that people are not out to get us.

⁷ Use *Teacher*, rather than *Lord* throughout

son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.
He had two wives, one named Hannah, the other Peninnah;
Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless.
This man regularly went on pilgrimage from his city
to worship the LORD of hosts and to sacrifice to him at Shiloh,
where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas,
were ministering as priests of the LORD.
When the day came for Elkanah to offer sacrifice,
he used to give a portion each to his wife Peninnah
and to all her sons and daughters,
but a double portion to Hannah because he loved her,
though the LORD had made her barren.
Her rival, to upset her, turned it into a constant reproach to her
that the LORD had left her barren.
This went on year after year;
each time they made their pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the LORD,
Peninnah would approach her,
and Hannah would weep and refuse to eat.
Her husband Elkanah used to ask her:
“Hannah, why do you weep, and why do you refuse to eat?
Why do you grieve?
Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

A Lament

(Ps 116:1-19)

Profession of faith

- ¹ I fulfill my commitments to Yahweh,
because my divine patron has heard my voice and my supplications.
² Because Yahweh has listened to me,
therefore I will call on Yahweh as long as I live.

Complaint

- ³ The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

Profession of faith

- ⁴ Then I called on the name of Yahweh:
O Yahweh, I pray, save my life!
⁵ Gracious is Yahweh, and righteous;

our divine patron is merciful.
6 Yahweh protects the powerless;⁸
 when I was brought low, Yahweh saved me.
7 Return, O my soul, to your rest,
 for Yahweh has dealt bountifully with you.
8 For you have delivered my soul from death,
 my eyes from tears,
 my feet from stumbling.
9 I walk before Yahweh
 I walk in the land of the living.
10 I kept my faith, even when I said:
 I am greatly afflicted;
11 I said in my consternation:
 Everyone is a liar.

Vow

12 What shall I return to Yahweh
 for all the bounty of my divine patron to me?
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
 and call on the name of Yahweh,
14 I will pay my vows to Yahweh
 in the presence of all the people of Yahweh.

Profession of faith

15 Precious in the sight of Yahweh
 is the death of those faithful to Yahweh.
16 O Yahweh, I am your slave;⁹
 I am your slave, the child of your slave.¹⁰
 You have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
 and call on the name of Yahweh.
18 I will pay my vows to Yahweh
 in the presence of all the people of Yahweh,
19 in the courts of the house of Yahweh,
 in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Call to worship

Praise Yahweh!

⁸ NRSV: simple

⁹ NRSV: servant

¹⁰ NRSV: serving maid

Gospel [MK 1:14-20](#)

After John had been arrested,
Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God:
“This is the time of fulfillment.
The Kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee,
he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea;
they were fishermen.
Jesus said to them,
“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Then they left their nets and followed him.
He walked along a little farther
and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.
They too were in a boat mending their nets.
Then he called them.
So they left their father Zebedee in the boat
along with the hired men and followed him.

Homily

<p>‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. Help me to live this day with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach...</p>
--

I truly do not know what to make of this man. Will he truly be able to reset the Catholic Church, and put it in touch with the vision of *Lumen Gentium*?

...joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit.¹¹

The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to

¹¹ Bergoglio, Jorge M. (Pope Francis), *Evangelii Gaudium: on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (Vatican: Vatican Press, November 24, 2013), #20-30.

be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord's gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing

I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.

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Saturday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 310

Initiation of Saul

(1 Sam 9:1—10:27)

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. ²He had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

³ Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had strayed. So Kish said to his son Saul, 'Take one of the boys with you; go and look for the donkeys.' ⁴He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

⁵ When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to the boy who was with him, 'Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and worry about us.' ⁶But he said to him, 'There is a man of God in this town; he is a man held in honour. Whatever he says always comes true. Let us go there now; perhaps he will tell us about the journey on which we have set out.' ⁷Then Saul replied to the boy, 'But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man

of God. What have we?’⁸The boy answered Saul again, ‘Here, I have with me a quarter-shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God, to tell us our way.’⁹(Formerly in Israel, anyone who went to inquire of God would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer’; for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)¹⁰Saul said to the boy, ‘Good; come, let us go.’ So they went to the town where the man of God was.

11 As they went up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and said to them, ‘Is the seer here?’¹²They answered, ‘Yes, there he is just ahead of you. Hurry; he has come just now to the town, because the people have a sacrifice today at the shrine.’¹³As soon as you enter the town, you will find him, before he goes up to the shrine to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterwards those eat who are invited. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately.’¹⁴So they went up to the town. As they were entering the town, they saw Samuel coming out towards them on his way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel:¹⁶Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me.’¹⁷When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, ‘Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall rule over my people.’¹⁸Then Saul approached Samuel inside the gate, and said, ‘Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?’¹⁹Samuel answered Saul, ‘I am the seer; go up before me to the shrine, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind.’²⁰As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found. And on whom is all Israel’s desire fixed, if not on you and on all your ancestral house?’²¹Saul answered, ‘I am only a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then have you spoken to me in this way?’

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant-boy and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, of whom there were about thirty.²³And Samuel said to the cook, ‘Bring the portion I gave you, the one I asked you to put aside.’²⁴The cook took up the thigh and what went with it and set them before Saul. Samuel said, ‘See, what was kept is set before you. Eat; for it is set before you at the appointed time, so that you might eat with the guests.’

So Saul ate with Samuel that day.²⁵When they came down from the shrine into the town, a bed was spread for Saul on the roof, and he lay down to sleep.²⁶Then at the break of dawn Samuel called to Saul upon the roof, ‘Get

up, so that I may send you on your way.’ Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the town, Samuel said to Saul, ‘Tell the boy to go on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.’ 10¹Samuel took a phial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, ‘The Lord has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. Now this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you ruler over his heritage:

²When you depart from me today you will meet two men by Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; they will say to you, “The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has stopped worrying about them and is worrying about you, saying: What shall I do about my son?” ³Then you shall go on from there further and come to the oak of Tabor; three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. ⁴They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from them. ⁵After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, at the place where the Philistine garrison is; there, as you come to the town, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the shrine with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre playing in front of them; they will be in a prophetic frenzy. ⁶Then the spirit of the Lord will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person. ⁷Now when these signs meet you, do whatever you see fit to do, for God is with you. ⁸And you shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt-offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. For seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.’

A Hymn (Ps 21:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm dedicated to David¹²

Creation story

- ¹ In your strength our rulers rejoice, Yahweh,
and in your help how greatly they exults!
² You have given them their heart’s desire,
and have not withheld the request of their lips.

¹² NRSV: A Psalm of David

Selah

- ³ For you, Yahweh, meet them with rich blessings;
you set a crown of fine gold on their heads.
- ⁴ Our rulers asked you for life; you gave it to them —
length of days for ever and ever.
- ⁵ Their glory is great through your help;
splendor and majesty you bestow on them.
- ⁶ You bestow on them blessings forever;
you make them glad with the joy of your presence.
- ⁷ For our rulers trust in Yahweh,
and through the steadfast love of the Most High they shall not be moved.
- ⁸ Your hand, Yahweh, will find out all your enemies;
your right hand will find out those who hate you.
- ⁹ You will make them like a fiery furnace
when you appear.
You will swallow them up in divine wrath,
and fire will consume them.
- ¹⁰ You will destroy their offspring from the earth,
and their children from among humans.
- ¹¹ If they plan evil against you,
if they devise mischief, they will not succeed.
- ¹² For you will put them to flight;
you will aim at their faces with your bows.

Call to worship

- ¹³ Exalt, Yahweh, in your strength!
Sing and praise the power of Yahweh.

Gospel [MK 2:13-17](#)

Jesus went out along the sea.
All the crowd came to him and he taught them.
As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus,
sitting at the customs post.
Jesus said to him, "Follow me."
And he got up and followed Jesus.
While he was at table in his house,
many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples;
for there were many who followed him.
Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with sinners

and tax collectors and said to his disciples,
“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”
Jesus heard this and said to them,
“Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.
I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up this morning. Let me hear you voice saying to me: *Lo’ Tira* –
Be not afraid, because I am with you.

The Stories of David’s Rise to Power begin with the Stories of Saul (1 Sam 8:4–15:35). Once they celebrated how Saul delivered Israel from its enemies. Now, as part of the Stories of David’s Rise to Power, the Stories of Saul explain that Yahweh *was sorry that he had made Saul to be king over Israel* (1 Sam 15:35).

The Hebrews understood Yahweh as all-powerful. Yahweh caused everything, good and bad. Therefore, as much as they loved Saul, when he ultimately failed to deliver Israel from the Philistines, they assumed that he failed because Yahweh had abandoned him. As little as they loved the state that David founded, they believed Yahweh had helped him to do so. The Stories of Saul show a reverence for Saul, but indict him on a variety of charges in order to explain why it was necessary for David to replace him. The Initiation of Saul at Ramah (1 Sam 8:4–22) portrays Saul as the ruler whom the Hebrews chose to replace Yahweh (1 Sam 8:7) and who taxed the blessings of land and children that Yahweh had bestowed upon their households for himself (1 Sam 8:10–22). Yahweh approved the anointing of Saul, but only with regret.

More than one story in the Bible tells how Saul came to rule Israel. The Initiation of Saul at Zuph (1 Sam 9:1–10:16*) and the Initiation of Saul at Mizpah (1 Sam 8:4–22* + 10:17–27*) are not two different events, but two performances of the same story in which Samuel anoints Saul. The authorization of a chief by a prophet is one episode in the hero stories common in the books of Joshua and Judges. Initiation stories expand this episode into an independent genre with a crisis, climax, and denouement of its own. The episodes of the initiation story are developed much like those in the inauguration stories that celebrate Yahweh’s call of a prophet.

When Samuel initiates Saul at Zuph, there are two episodes in the crisis (1 Sam 9:1–19*). In the first, Yahweh lures Saul away from his village by hiding its livestock. Saul investigates their disappearance by going in search of them. The episode emphasizes the humility of Saul. He is not a man who would be king. Like David, Saul is a good herder who becomes a good ruler. Here asses

are not simply livestock, they are the animals on which rulers ride. Saul sets off in search of an ass and finds a throne.

In the second episode, Saul meets Samuel, a seer who channels from the human to the divine plane. Samuel announces that Yahweh will return the livestock, and that all Israel wants Saul to be its chief. Saul demurs to Samuel's greeting. His household does not merit such divine notice (Judg 6:1–8:35*). The episode certifies Saul as humble enough to exercise authority.

In the climax, Samuel serves Saul a prime portion of the sacrifice and anoints him with oil (1 Sam 9:22–10:1). Both gestures designate him as ruler of Israel.

Finally in the denouement, Saul's initiation is confirmed when the fathers of three households present him with their sacrifices, and the prophets teach Saul how to induce ecstasy with music and dance (1 Sam 10:2–16). Saul leaves Zuph to walk off the boundaries of the land he is to rule. He travels north to Bethel and then to Mt. Tabor. Then he turns southeast to Gibeah. Zuph, Bethel, Gibeah, and Mizpah mark the frontiers of Israel. At each landmark Saul's leadership is officially acknowledged. Two of the three households en route to Bethel recognize Saul as their leader by leaving their sacrifices with him. As he approaches, the prophets of Gibeah become ecstatic. Yahweh takes possession of them and they play music, dance, and sing to greet the new ruler of Israel who joins their celebration.

Monday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 323

Trial of Absalom

(2 Sam 15:13–16:13)

13 A messenger came to David, saying, 'The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom.' 14Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, 'Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword.' 15The king's officials said to the king, 'Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides.' 16So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. 17The king left, followed by all the people; and they stopped at the last house. 18All his officials passed by him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, 'Why are you also coming with us? Go back, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile from your home. ²⁰You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsfolk with you; and may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.' ²¹But Ittai answered the king, 'As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.' ²²David said to Ittai, 'Go then, march on.' So Ittai the Gittite marched on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. ²³The whole country wept aloud as all the people passed by; the king crossed the Wadi Kidron, and all the people moved on towards the wilderness.

24 Abiathar came up, and Zadok also, with all the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, until the people had all passed out of the city. ²⁵Then the king said to Zadok, 'Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and the place where it remains. ²⁶But if he says, "I take no pleasure in you", here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.' ²⁷The king also said to the priest Zadok, 'Look, go back to the city in peace, you and Abiathar, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan son of Abiathar. ²⁸See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.' ²⁹So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went. ³¹David was told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, 'O Lord, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.'

32 When David came to the summit, where God was worshipped, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth on his head. ³³David said to him, 'If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. ³⁴But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, "I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant", then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. ³⁵The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you there. So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to the priests Zadok and Abiathar. ³⁶Their two sons are with them there, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan; and by them you shall report to me everything you hear.' ³⁷So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16 When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, carrying two

hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred of summer fruits, and one skin of wine. ²The king said to Ziba, 'Why have you brought these?' Ziba answered, 'The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine is for those to drink who faint in the wilderness.' ³The king said, 'And where is your master's son?' Ziba said to the king, 'He remains in Jerusalem; for he said, "Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather's kingdom."' ⁴Then the king said to Ziba, 'All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.' Ziba said, 'I do obeisance; let me find favour in your sight, my lord the king.'

⁵ When King David came to Bahurim, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out whose name was Shimei son of Gera; he came out cursing. ⁶He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; now all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left. ⁷Shimei shouted while he cursed, 'Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! ⁸The Lord has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, disaster has overtaken you; for you are a man of blood.'

⁹ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.' ¹⁰But the king said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, "Curse David", who then shall say, "Why have you done so?"' ¹¹David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him. ¹²It may be that the Lord will look on my distress, and the Lord will repay me with good for this cursing of me today.' ¹³So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, throwing stones and flinging dust at him.

A Lament

(Ps 3:1-8)

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

Complaint

- ¹ O Yahweh, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
² many are saying to me,
'There is no help for you in Divine patron.'

Selah

Profession of faith

- ³ But you, O Yahweh, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.
⁴ I cry aloud to the Yahweh,
and my divine patron answers me from the Holy Hill.

Selah

- ⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the Yahweh sustains me.
⁶ I am not afraid of tens of thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.

Petition

- ⁷ Awake from your sleep, Yahweh!
Deliver me, my divine patron!
Land a blow with your fist right on the jaw of my enemies.
Hit them in the mouth and break their teeth.
⁸ Deliverance belongs to the Yahweh;
may your blessing be on your people!

Selah

Gospel [MK 5:1-20](#)

Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the sea,
to the territory of the Gerasenes.
When he got out of the boat,
at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him.
The man had been dwelling among the tombs,
and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain.
In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains,
but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed,
and no one was strong enough to subdue him.
Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides
he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.
Catching sight of Jesus from a distance,
he ran up and prostrated himself before him,
crying out in a loud voice,
“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?
I adjure you by God, do not torment me!”
(He had been saying to him, “Unclean spirit, come out of the man!”)
He asked him, “What is your name?”
He replied, “Legion is my name. There are many of us.”
And he pleaded earnestly with him
not to drive them away from that territory.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside.
And they pleaded with him,
“Send us into the swine. Let us enter them.”
And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine.
The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea,
where they were drowned.
The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town
and throughout the countryside.
And people came out to see what had happened.
As they approached Jesus,
they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion,
sitting there clothed and in his right mind.
And they were seized with fear.
Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened
to the possessed man and to the swine.
Then they began to beg him to leave their district.
As he was getting into the boat,
the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him.
But Jesus would not permit him but told him instead,
“Go home to your family and announce to them
all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.”

Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

Homily

A Trial of Absalom (2 Sam 15:1–20:23) indicts him for failing to honor David his father. To force David to designate him as heir, Absalom takes his campaign to the people. He plans to trick the people of Hebron, where David began his political career, into proclaiming him king of Israel, and to trick David into thinking that the people have acclaimed him as their king. Hebron was the New Hampshire primary or the Iowa state caucus of ancient Israel. Absalom begins his campaign by promising the people that he will expedite courts martial. The court was an important part of domestic policy in resolving disputes between households. Then Absalom attempts a military coup d'état. War was an important part of foreign policy in protecting the land from its enemies. Absalom wants to demonstrate his skills in both domestic and foreign policy. David does not arrest Absalom, because it is important for him to remain as neutral as possible while his sons compete with one another for the right to succeed him.

Like Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*, David regains his vision in the darkest moment of his political career. David is a failure in peace, but a master at war. By provoking David into battle, Absalom foolishly challenges David in the area of his greatest competence. In a masterful strategy, David plans to uncover Absalom's plot by evacuating Jerusalem. Only those loyal to David will follow him into exile, and then the people will recognize that Absalom is a rebel and not an heir.

David began his own rise to power by using mercenaries. Now David has only mercenaries with whom to reestablish his claim to power. The stark contrast between the loyalty of Ittai and his Philistines and the disloyalty of Absalom is striking. It is equally ironic that the same David who delivered the Israelites from the Philistines must be delivered from the Israelites by Philistines.

Although Zadok and Abiathar join the retreat from Jerusalem carrying the Ark of the Covenant, David sends them back (2 Sam 15:24–29*). The ark is David's ensign. He wants to leave it in the city to show that he does not relinquish his claim to Jerusalem to Absalom. He is not surrendering, but preparing to fight.

Shimei from the household of Saul also joins David as he retreats, but to taunt David, not to support him (Fig. 50). Abishai asks David to sentence Shimei to death, but David refuses (2 Sam 16:5–14*). David tells Abishai that Shimei may be the prophet that Yahweh has sent to sentence David. To kill him would be heresy. Furthermore, David continues, even if Shimei is a traitor, for a king to be cursed by a fool is so humiliating that it will convince Yahweh

to enter the conflict on David's side. Yahweh regularly supports the powerless against the powerful.

When David came to Bahurim, a man of the household of Saul attacked him. Shimei, son of Gera threw stones at David and his soldiers, and taunted them: "Who is this traitor you follow? Who is this runaway slave who is your chief? David is nothing but a murderer and a thief. Yahweh is punishing you for betraying the household of Saul, whose land and children you stole. Yahweh is giving your kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. Disaster has overtaken you, because you murder the innocent."

Then Abishai . . . said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my king? Let me cut off his head." But the king said, "If he is cursing me because Yahweh has ordered him to curse David, who can question Yahweh's judgement? My own son seeks my life. This member of the household of Saul is doing nothing more. Let him alone. Let him continue to curse me if Yahweh has ordered him to curse me. Maybe Yahweh will notice my suffering, will repay me with good for this cursing of me today."

David also leaves his ten of his secondary wives in Jerusalem. His marriages to these women ratified the ten major covenants on which David built his state. The Ark of the Covenant is David's legal claim to the land of Israel; the ten wives are his claim to its children. When Absalom enters the city he publicly rapes David's wives to demonstrate that he is now king of Israel, who will fulfill the terms of the covenants that the household of David has with their households.

Finally, David sends Hushai back to Jerusalem to serve as his agent-in-place with the mission of undermining the relationship between Absalom and Ahithopel, who is as capable a strategist as David (2 Sam 16:32-37). Absalom must choose between Hushai and Ahithopel, just as David must choose between Ziba and Merib-baal. Unlike David, Absalom cannot choose wisely. Absalom chooses the fool Hushai, and rejects the wise Ahithopel (2 Sam 17:23*).

The warriors that each household sends to David are assigned to three detachments commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. David attacks Absalom in a forest, a terrain favoring David the chief rather than Absalom the monarch. By having a the branches of a sacred oak (2 Sam 18:9*) capture Absalom, nature is portrayed as David's covenant partner. In the Enuma Elish Stories (Enuma IV:34-104) nature also joins Marduk against Tiamat.

The Obituary of Absalom (2 Sam 18:9-18*) shames Absalom for seeking power illegitimately. Absalom shares the fate of Abimelech (2 Sam 11:21*), Eglon (Judg 3:21-25*), and Sisera (Judg 4:21-22*). Each seeks power, that

belongs to Yahweh alone. Absalom swings by his hair awaiting judgment. Joab orders an ordinary soldier to kill Absalom, but this fails. The soldier reminds Joab that David has ordered Absalom be spared. Absalom is not simply to be killed; he must be formally executed. Therefore, Joab drives three javelins into Absalom's body. The javelin is an officer's weapon. Here they represent the consent of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai to Absalom's execution. After they condemn Absalom, ten soldiers representing David's covenant partners vote to kill him. These ten soldiers represent the same ten covenants as the wives whom David had left in Jerusalem. Absalom's executioners would then have cut his hair, but not just to free his body. Like Samson before Delilah, like Saul before David, and like David's messengers before Hanun, Absalom is powerless. His hair has been cut. He has been castrated.

Ahima'az, hoping for a reward, wants to be the messenger to tell David that the revolt has been put down and that Absalom has been executed. Joab, however, knows that David will be outraged by the news, and will kill this messenger, just as he did to the messenger who informed him of Saul's death. Therefore, Joab orders an Ethiopian, a black African, to carry his own death sentence to David. David's inability to consolidate his victory over Absalom still leaves his household without an heir.¹³

Laments are the traditions of a people in process, not a fully defined theology of suffering. Therefore, petitions for help from Yahweh, which appear in many laments, can represent both healthy and unhealthy reactions in a household to its loss of land and children.

Petitions reflect a healthy human participation in developing divine will when they remind Yahweh to protect and provide for a household whose land and children are threatened.

Petitions are a form of denial when they are prayed without passion or pain or anger. The denial in unhealthy petitions pretends that loss has not occurred at all, or that the loss is only temporary. Denial not only postpones the beginning of recovery, it also prolongs the time during which unchallenged loss continues to drain the resources of a victim.

In contrast, the acceptance in healthy petitions that angrily call upon Yahweh to come to the aid of a household in crisis allows victims of loss to begin recovery.

¹³ Benjamin, D. C. (2004). *The Old Testament Story* (218–220). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

The petition in a lament here (Ps 3:7–8) is a healthy petition that wakes up Yahweh and angrily petitions Yahweh to attack the enemies of the household. Mourners in ancient Israel assumed that in times of peace Yahweh rested or slept. Sleep was the normal state of a divine patron whose people were secure. Sleep was a sign of peace. At a moment of crisis, the people wake up their divine patron.

The petition also asks Yahweh to attack the enemies of Israel like a boxer. The lament pleads: *land a blow with your fist right on the jaw of my enemies. Hit them in the mouth and break their teeth.* The lament wants Yahweh to wake up and come out fighting.

Saturday of the Third Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 322

A Trial of David

(2 Sam 12:1-17)

¹and YHWH sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had very many flocks and herds; ³but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.' ⁵Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, 'As YHWH lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; ⁶he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

⁷ Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! A Word of YHWH, the Divine patron of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; ⁸I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. ⁹Why have you despised the word of YHWH, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now therefore the sword shall never

depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹Thus says YHWH: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. ¹²For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.' ¹³David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against YHWH.' Nathan said to David, 'Now YHWH has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned YHWH, the child that is born to you shall die.' ¹⁵Then Nathan went to his house.

Bathsheba's Child Dies

YHWH struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. ¹⁶David therefore pleaded with Divine patron for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

A Lament

(Psalm 51:1-19)

To the leader

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan confronted him, after he raped Bathsheba.

Petition

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my divine patron,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Complaint

- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.¹⁴

Petition

- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.¹⁵
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart,¹⁶ my divine patron,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

¹⁴ Important tradition supporting theology of original sin.

¹⁵ Christians of color do not want to be *white*, just forgiven.

¹⁶ *Clean heart* is the Hebrew idiom for *sincere*

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Vow

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, my divine patron and my savior,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

Petition

15 Yahweh, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.¹⁷

16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

17 The sacrifice acceptable to my divine patron is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, my divine patron, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

¹⁷ My mantra: *Our Lord open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise; O God come to my assistance, O Lord make haste to help me.*

See: John Main, OSB who teaches a mantra-based style of meditation similar to Centering Prayer that he learned from his Hindu teacher -- Swami Satyananda. Main alleges that this technique was also taught by St. John Cassian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These are the same Catholic sources claimed by the centering prayer folks and which are very much disputed by experts on the Catholic contemplative tradition.

Jesus Creates Cosmos from Chaos (Mark 4:35-41)

On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples:
“Let us cross to the other side.”
Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was.
And other boats were with him.
A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat,
so that it was already filling up.
Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion.
They woke him and said to him,
“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”
He woke up,
rebuked the wind,
and said to the sea, “Quiet! Be still!”
The wind ceased and there was great calm.
Then he asked them, “Why are you terrified?
Do you not yet have faith?”
They were filled with great awe and said to one another,
“Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. Like your servants Moses and Jesus, I want to live this day unafraid. Like them I want to stand with faith on the shores of the Red Sea and in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, and call the name of the storm and have it rest in peace. Help me live today and every day aware that with you at my side, suffering will end, and will end quickly, and when it does your good, not evil will prevail.

Like Moses who calmed the Red Sea, here Jesus calms the Sea of Galilee. The journey of faith continues for Jesus and for us. Knowing our faith past allows us to live courageously in our faith present. Jesus knew that Moses stood fearlessly at the Red Sea and saved the lives of the Hebrew slaves. Therefore, Jesus stood in the boat on the Sea of Galilee and saved the lives of his first followers.¹⁸ We are called to look into the waters of chaos, and to see the potential for cosmos.

Monday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 323

From A Trial of Absalom

(2 Sam 15:13—16:13)

13 A messenger came to David, saying, ‘The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom.’¹⁴ Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, ‘Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword.’¹⁵ The king’s officials said to the king, ‘Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides.’¹⁶ So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. ¹⁷The king left, followed by all the people; and they stopped at the last house. ¹⁸All his officials passed by him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, ‘Why are you also coming with us? Go back, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile from your home. ²⁰You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsfolk with you; and may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to

¹⁸ NRSV: *disciples*

you.’²¹But Ittai answered the king, ‘As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.’²²David said to Ittai, ‘Go then, march on.’ So Ittai the Gittite marched on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.²³The whole country wept aloud as all the people passed by; the king crossed the Wadi Kidron, and all the people moved on towards the wilderness.

24 Abiathar came up, and Zadok also, with all the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, until the people had all passed out of the city.²⁵Then the king said to Zadok, ‘Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and the place where it remains.’²⁶But if he says, “I take no pleasure in you”, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.’²⁷The king also said to the priest Zadok, ‘Look, go back to the city in peace, you and Abiathar, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan son of Abiathar.’²⁸See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.’²⁹So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went.³¹David was told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, ‘O Lord, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.’

32 When David came to the summit, where God was worshipped, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth on his head.³³David said to him, ‘If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me.’³⁴But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, “I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant in time past, so now I will be your servant”, then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel.’³⁵The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you there. So whatever you hear from the king’s house, tell it to the priests Zadok and Abiathar.’³⁶Their two sons are with them there, Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan; and by them you shall report to me everything you hear.’³⁷So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred of summer fruits, and one skin of wine.²The king said to Ziba, ‘Why have you brought these?’ Ziba answered, ‘The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine is for those to drink who faint in the wilderness.’³The king said, ‘And where is your master’s son?’ Ziba said to the king, ‘He remains in Jerusalem; for he said, “Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather’s kingdom.”’⁴Then

the king said to Ziba, 'All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.' Ziba said, 'I do obeisance; let me find favour in your sight, my lord the king.'

5 When King David came to Bahurim, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out whose name was Shimei son of Gera; he came out cursing. ⁶He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; now all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left.⁷Shimei shouted while he cursed, 'Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! ⁸The Lord has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, disaster has overtaken you; for you are a man of blood.'

9 Then Abishai son of Zeruah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.'¹⁰But the king said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, "Curse David", who then shall say, "Why have you done so?"'¹¹David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him. ¹²It may be that the Lord will look on my distress, and the Lord will repay me with good for this cursing of me today.'¹³So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, throwing stones and flinging dust at him.

A Lament

(Ps 3:1-8)

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

Complaint

¹ O YHWH, how many are my enemies!

Many are rising against me;

² Many are saying:

YHWH, your divine patron, will not help you.

Selah

Profession of faith

³ But you, O YHWH, are a shield around me,

My glory, and the one who lifts up my head.

⁴ I cry aloud to YHWH,

And my divine patron answers me from the Holy Hill.¹⁹

¹⁹ Mt. Zion

Selah

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for YHWH sustains me.
⁶ I am not afraid of tens of thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me all around.

Petition

⁷Awake from your sleep, YHWH!
Deliver me, my divine patron!
Land a blow with your fist right on the jaw of my enemies.
Hit them in the mouth and break their teeth.
⁸ Deliverance belongs to YHWH;
May your blessing be on your people!

Selah

A Creation Story

(Mark 5:1-20)

Jesus and his followers sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and landed near the city of Gadara. (Matt 8:28; Luke 8:26).

When Jesus got out of the boat, at once a man from the burial caves who had an unclean spirit met him. The man had been living in a burial cave, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with chains. In fact, he had frequently been bound with hand and leg cuffs and chains, but he broke both the chains, the leg and hand cuffs, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. He cried out night and day among the burial caves and in the hills, and bruised himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated before him, crying out: *What have you to do with me, Jesus, heir of Elohim, our divine patron? In the name of our divine patron, do not curse me!*

Jesus had been exorcising the man with the words: *Unclean spirit, come out of the man!*

Jesus asked the man: *What is your name?*

The man answers: We are more than 2,000 spirits.²⁰ *There is almost a legion of us.* The man continued to he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive the spirits out of him into the desert.

Now a large herd of hogs was grazing the hillside, so the legion of spirits pleaded with Jesus: *Let us take over those hogs.*

So Jesus gave the spirits permission, and the unclean spirits left the man and took over the hogs. The legion of more than 2,000 hogs through themselves over a steep cliff and into the Sea of Galilee, where they drowned.

The herders ran away and reported what had happened in the city and its surrounding villages, and all the people came out to see what had happened.

As the people approached Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by a legion of spirits, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. They were seized with fear as those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the hogs.

Then the people of Gadara pleaded with Jesus to leave their land.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded with Jesus to let him go with him.

But Jesus commissioned him: *Go back to your household and proclaim to them all that YHWH has unconditionally done for you.*

So the man whom Jesus had exorcised left and began to proclaim in the Ten Cities what Jesus had done for him.

All were amazed.

Homily

A TRIAL OF ABSALOM (2 Sam 15:1–20:23)

A *Trial of Absalom* (2 Sam 15:1–20:23) indicts him for failing to honor David his father. To force David to designate him as heir, Absalom takes his campaign to the people. He plans to trick the people of Hebron, where David began his political career, into proclaiming him king of Israel, and to trick David into thinking that the people have acclaimed him as their king. Hebron

²⁰ At full strength a Roman legion was 5,000 soldiers.

was the New Hampshire primary or the Iowa state caucus of ancient Israel. Absalom begins his campaign by promising the people that he will expedite courts martial. The court was an important part of domestic policy in resolving disputes between households. Then Absalom attempts a military coup d'état. War was an important part of foreign policy in protecting the land from its enemies. Absalom wants to demonstrate his skills in both domestic and foreign policy. David does not arrest Absalom, because it is important for him to remain as neutral as possible while his sons compete with one another for the right to succeed him.

Like Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*, David regains his vision in the darkest moment of his political career. David is a failure in peace, but a master at war. By provoking David into battle, Absalom foolishly challenges David in the area of his greatest competence. In a masterful strategy, David plans to uncover Absalom's plot by evacuating Jerusalem. Only those loyal to David will follow him into exile, and then the people will recognize that Absalom is a rebel and not an heir.

David began his own rise to power by using mercenaries. Now David has only mercenaries with whom to reestablish his claim to power. The stark contrast between the loyalty of Ittai and his Philistines and the disloyalty of Absalom is striking. It is equally ironic that the same David who delivered the Israelites from the Philistines must be delivered from the Israelites by Philistines.

Although Zadok and Abiathar join the retreat from Jerusalem carrying the Ark of the Covenant, David sends them back (2 Sam 15:24–29). The ark is David's ensign. He wants to leave it in the city to show that he does not relinquish his claim to Jerusalem to Absalom. He is not surrendering, but preparing to fight.

Shimei from the household of Saul also joins David as he retreats, but to taunt David, not to support him. Abishai asks David to sentence Shimei to death, but David refuses (2 Sam 16:5–14). David tells Abishai that Shimei may be the prophet that Yahweh has sent to sentence David. To kill him would be heresy. Furthermore, David continues, even if Shimei is a traitor, for a king to be cursed by a fool is so humiliating that it will convince Yahweh to enter the conflict on David's side. Yahweh regularly supports the powerless against the powerful.

When David came to Bahurim, a man of the household of Saul attacked him. Shimei, son of Gera threw stones at David and his soldiers, and taunted them: "Who is this traitor you follow? Who is this runaway slave who is your chief? David is nothing but a murderer and a thief. Yahweh is punishing you for betraying the household of Saul, whose land and children you stole.

Yahweh is giving your kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. Disaster has overtaken you, because you murder the innocent.”

Then Abishai . . . said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my king? Let me cut off his head.” But the king said, “If he is cursing me because Yahweh has ordered him to curse David, who can question Yahweh’s judgement? My own son seeks my life. This member of the household of Saul is doing nothing more. Let him alone. Let him continue to curse me if Yahweh has ordered him to curse me. Maybe Yahweh will notice my suffering, will repay me with good for this cursing of me today.”

David also leaves his ten of his secondary wives in Jerusalem. His marriages to these women ratified the ten major covenants on which David built his state. The Ark of the Covenant is David’s legal claim to the land of Israel; the ten wives are his claim to its children. When Absalom enters the city he publicly rapes David’s wives to demonstrate that he is now king of Israel, who will fulfill the terms of the covenants that the household of David has with their households.

Finally, David sends Hushai back to Jerusalem to serve as his an agent-in-place with the mission of undermining the relationship between Absalom and Ahithopel, who is as capable a strategist as David (2 Sam 16:32–37). Absalom must choose between Hushai and Ahithopel, just as David must choose between Ziba and Merib-baal. Unlike David, Absalom cannot choose wisely. Absalom chooses the fool Hushai, and rejects the wise Ahithopel (2 Sam 17:23).

The warriors that each household sends to David are assigned to three detachments commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. David attacks Absalom in a forest, a terrain favoring David the chief rather than Absalom the monarch. By having a the branches of a sacred oak (2 Sam 18:9) capture Absalom, nature is portrayed as David’s covenant partner. In the Enuma Elish Stories (Enuma IV:34–104) nature also joins Marduk against Tiamat.

An *Obituary of Absalom* (2 Sam 18:9–18) shames Absalom for seeking power illegitimately. Absalom shares the fate of Abimelech (2 Sam 11:21), Eglon (Judg 3:21–25), and Sisera (Judg 4:21–22). Each seeks power, that belongs to Yahweh alone. Absalom swings by his hair awaiting judgment. Joab orders an ordinary soldier to kill Absalom, but this fails. The soldier reminds Joab that David has ordered Absalom be spared. Absalom is not simply to be killed; he must be formally executed. Therefore, Joab drives three javelins into Absalom’s body. The javelin is an officer’s weapon. Here they represent the consent of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai to Absalom’s execution. After they condemn Absalom, ten soldiers representing David’s covenant partners vote to kill him. These ten soldiers represent the same ten covenants as the wives whom David had left in Jerusalem. Absalom’s executioners would then have cut his hair, but not just

to free his body. Like Samson before Delilah, like Saul before David, and like David's messengers before Hanun, Absalom is powerless. His hair has been cut. He has been castrated.

Ahima'az, hoping for a reward, wants to be the messenger to tell David that the revolt has been put down and that Absalom has been executed. Joab, however, knows that David will be outraged by the news, and will kill this messenger, just as he did to the messenger who informed him of Saul's death. Therefore, Joab orders an Ethiopian, a black African, to carry his own death sentence to David. David's inability to consolidate his victory over Absalom still leaves his household without an heir.

A LAMENT (Ps 3:1-8)

Laments are the traditions of a people in process, not a fully defined theology of suffering. Therefore, petitions for help from YHWH, which appear in many laments, can represent both healthy and unhealthy reactions in a household to its loss of land and children.

Petitions reflect a healthy human participation in developing divine will when they remind YHWH to protect and provide for a household whose land and children are threatened.

Petitions are a form of denial when they are prayed without passion or pain or anger. The denial in unhealthy petitions pretends that loss has not occurred at all, or that the loss is only temporary. Denial not only postpones the beginning of recovery, it also prolongs the time during which unchallenged loss continues to drain the resources of a victim.

In contrast, the acceptance in healthy petitions that angrily call upon YHWH to come to the aid of a household in crisis allows victims of loss to begin recovery.

Mourners in ancient Israel assumed that in times of peace YHWH rested or slept. Sleep was the normal state of a divine patron whose people were secure. Sleep was a sign of peace. At a moment of crisis, the people wake up their divine patron. The petition in a lament here (Ps 3:7-8) is a healthy petition that wakes up YHWH and angrily petitions YHWH to attack the enemies of the household.

The lament not only wants YHWH to wake up, but also to come out fighting. The petition also asks YHWH to attack the enemies of Israel like a

boxer. The lament pleads: *land a blow with your fist right on the jaw of my enemies. Hit them in the mouth and break their teeth.*

A CREATION STORY (Mark 5:1-20)

Like the Storm on the Lake creation story Jesus in this exorcism of the man possessed confront chaos and prevails. In the storm the Sea of Galilee is cast as chaos; here the part is played by the man possessed.

The tradition is more focused that the storm on the sea. Chaos is not so subtly identified as the Roman empire. First the Ten Cities (Greek: *Decapolis*) were centers of Hellenistic culture in the Semitic world of Syria-Palestine. Even their Semitic citizens – even their Jewish communities – lived as if they were Romans. Jesus lands on the shores of this Graco-Roman enclave to do battle for the values of Semitic culture.

A Roman legion of spirits confronts Jesus and pleads not to be driven from the *Holy Land* given so long ago by YHWH to the Hebrews. Like a new Joshua, Jesus declares unconditional *herem* war against these Roman sympathizers and drives them into the Sea, which was the hope of all those suffering under Roman oppression.

Looks like Revelation took that same tradition:

Revelation 18:21

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will be found no more;

A number of scholars are pointing out the exodus theme in Revelation, e.g. the plagues. So drowning in sea here fits that and also Jesus' exorcism. Maybe it resolves the dilemma of the two communities, a unifying symbol: exodus.

In general Revelation seems to have a number of examples of non-violent transformations of apocalyptic military symbols: sword as word of God, winepress of wrath as cross, the second death as the annihilation of death and hell. Thanks!

Found another reinterpreted image: iron rod becomes measuring staff

The First War between Rome and Judea broke out when Rome, as a core country, according to the World Systems Theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, continued to ruthlessly mine a peripheral country like Judea for its wealth.

Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley (*The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*, 2006: 385-392) reconstruct the event primarily from the New Testaments and the histories of Josephus.

The procurator Gessius Florius (64-66) successfully staged a series of events which portrayed the Jewish population of Judea as disloyal to Rome, which gave him reason

to confiscate the Temple treasury and begin wholesale massacres of Jews in the province. The outrage against the Romans led to this First War with an invasion led originally by Vespasian, and then after his accession as emperor, by his son Titus. The war ended with the fall of Masada in 74. Agrippa II (27-100), the Jewish King of Judea, collaborated with the Romans, and provided his own troops to put down the revolt.

Maybe Jesus is saying

- 1). Judaea will be delivered as you were.
- 2) Return, tell everyone what God did for you
- 3). Be patient. What you saw is a sign of your vindication.

What was it brought the Romans down on Jerusalem in 69?

I use the lectionary readings for meditation each day – my own style of lectio divina.

Yesterday and today were really interesting – when the readings went.; Yesterday was the first time I read this gospel as a creation story with Jesus confronting the Romans. How different from the gospel of the temptation where he rejects her apocalyptic image of being a military messiah who will drive the Romans into the Sea.

Also, I had never made the connection between Candlemas and Groundhog day – nor was I aware of the celebration of the Purification of Mary, and its challenge to the official original sin theology.

Sure enough. I had thought the tradition had harmonized the views of the two kinds of Jesus-people.

Have been wrestling with the lake of fire in Rev, into which the major enemies of God wind up in a horrific triumphalist military image. Perhaps it is a projection of the apocalypticism of this kind of pig-herding community. The victory I understand to be the cross; not armed insurrection. But perhaps the image was retained as a midrashic interpretation of the cross.

Back to Santa Muerte. In the cross of Jesus, God showed himself willing to be made unacceptable and repulsive, grotesque, in order to be acceptable to all who are themselves unacceptable and outcast, victims and predators. Still is doing that, apparently. "...Now and in the hour of our Death."

Actually, these are my homily notes. I always used to write, even though I never read, my homilies.

When I taught how to prepare a homily, I stressed it needed the following parts.

First, a short clear statement of the teaching of the traditions. Here the teaching is: How are we going to react when someone angrily confronts us? With patience or violence? I used to try and persuade the seniors at St Raphael's Parish in South Central Los Angeles not to resist when thugs tried to take their money or their groceries. They are not worth your life! After I buried a few seniors who gave up their money and their groceries, and were murdered anyway, I started teaching them to do whatever they needed to do.

Second, explain those cultural differences reflected in the tradition, especially those most easily misunderstood, like why kill the pigs?

Third, use the reading in the liturgy of the word to call the congregation to the liturgy of the meal. Here Jesus offers himself to us in communion without any guarantees that we will use that divine help to react to violence with patience or more violence. When we take communion today we need to ask: Where do I go from here? Over the cliff with the hogs, or back to my household like the man once possessed to witness that God does care about the suffering?

During the Hellenist occupation of Judah there were both Jews who called for armed revolt reflected in Maccabees, and Jews like those whose traditions are reflected in Dan 7-12 which called for patient expectation of the divine deliverance of Judah from Alexander's empire.

During the Roman occupation there were Jews who called for an armed revolt like the communities where this exorcism developed (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:27-38; Matt 8:30-37), and those who called for patient expectation of divine deliverance from the Romans like those communities where the temptations of Jesus traditions developed (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2).

The intention of apocalyptic traditions like Daniel and Revelation is to teach the suffering three things: 1) your suffering will end; 2) your suffering will end soon; and 3) when your suffering ends, good, not evil, will prevail.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 324

(2 Sam 18:9-19:3)

⁹ Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. ¹⁰A man saw it, and told Joab, 'I saw Absalom hanging in an oak.' ¹¹Joab said to the man who told him, 'What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt.' ¹²But the man said to Joab, 'Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not raise my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying: For my sake protect the young man Absalom! ¹³On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof.' ¹⁴Joab said, 'I will not waste time like this with you.' He took three spears in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak. ¹⁵And ten young men, Joab's armour-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

¹⁶ Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the troops. ¹⁷They took Absalom, threw him into a great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all the Israelites fled to their homes. ¹⁸Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, 'I have no son to keep my name in remembrance'; he called the pillar by his own name. It is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

¹⁹ Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, 'Let me run, and carry tidings to the king that the Lord has delivered him from the power of his enemies.' ²⁰Joab said to him, 'You are not to carry tidings today; you may carry tidings another day, but today you shall not do so, because the king's son is dead.' ²¹Then Joab said to a Cushite, 'Go, tell the king what you have seen.' The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran. ²²Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said again to Joab, 'Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite.' And Joab said, 'Why will you run, my son, seeing that you have no reward for the tidings?' ²³'Come what may,' he said, 'I will run.' So he said to him, 'Run.' Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite.

²⁴ Now David was sitting between the two gates. The sentinel went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he looked up, he saw a man running alone. ²⁵The sentinel shouted and told the king. The king said, 'If he is alone, there are tidings in his mouth.' He kept coming, and drew near. ²⁶Then the sentinel saw another man running; and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, 'See, another man running alone!' The king said, 'He also is bringing tidings.' ²⁷The sentinel said, 'I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz son of Zadok.' The king said, 'He is a good man, and comes with good tidings.'

²⁸ Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, 'All is well!' He prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground, and said, 'Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.' ²⁹The king said, 'Is it well with the young man Absalom?' Ahimaaz answered, 'When Joab sent your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I do not know what it was.' ³⁰The king said, 'Turn aside, and stand here.' So he turned aside, and stood still.

³¹ Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, 'Good tidings for my lord the king! For the Lord has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you.' ³²The king said to the Cushite, 'Is it well with the young man Absalom?' The Cushite answered, 'May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man.'

³³ The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!'

¹It was told Joab, 'The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.'²So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops; for the troops heard that day, 'The king is grieving for his son.'³The troops stole into the city that day as soldiers steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle.

A Lament

(Ps 86:1-17)

A Prayer of David

Petition

¹ Incline your ear, Yahweh, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.

² Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;
save your servant who trusts in you.

You are my divine patron; ³be gracious to me, Yahweh,
for to you do I cry all day long.

- ⁴ Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, Yahweh, I lift up my soul.
- ⁵ For you, Yahweh, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.
- ⁶ Give ear, Yahweh, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.
- ⁷ In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.

Profession of faith

- ⁸ There is none like you among the divine patrons, Yahweh,
nor are there any works like yours.
- ⁹ All the nations you have made shall come
and bow down before you, Yahweh,
and shall glorify your name.
- ¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are divine patron.

Petition

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, Yahweh,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

Vow

- ¹² I give thanks to you, Yahweh my divine patron, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name for ever.
- ¹³ For great is your steadfast love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Complaint

- ¹⁴ My divine patron, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.

Profession of faith

- ¹⁵ But you, Yahweh, are my divine patron merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Petition

- ¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;

give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving-maid.
17 Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Yahweh, have helped me and comforted me.

(Mark 5:21-43)

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat
to the other side,
a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.
One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward.
Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying,
*“My daughter is at the point of death.
Please, come lay your hands on her
that she may get well and live.”*
He went off with him
and a large crowd followed him.

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.
She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors
and had spent all that she had.
Yet she was not helped but only grew worse.
She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd
and touched his cloak.
She said, *“If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.”*
Immediately her flow of blood dried up.
She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.
Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him,
turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who has touched my clothes?”
But his disciples said to him,
*“You see how the crowd is pressing upon you,
and yet you ask, Who touched me?”*
And he looked around to see who had done it.
The woman, realizing what had happened to her,
approached in fear and trembling.
She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.
He said to her, *“Daughter, your faith has saved you.
Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”*

While he was still speaking,
people from the synagogue official’s house arrived and said,
“Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?”
Disregarding the message that was reported,
Jesus said to the synagogue official,

“Do not be afraid; just have faith.”

He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, *“Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.”* And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out.

He took along the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was.

He took the child by the hand and said to her in Aramaic: *Talitha koum -- Little girl, It’s time to wake up.*

The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded.

He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

Homily

Jesus does not impose an agenda on those who come to him. He does not demand: Become my disciple, and then I will help. As Pope Francis counsels, Jesus listens, Jesus prays with the suffering. He shares their suffering. *In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God’s word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp. At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation. If it seems prudent and if the circumstances are right, this fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed. In this way they will have an experience of being listened to and understood; they will know that their*

particular situation has been placed before God, and that God's word really speaks to their lives. ²¹

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Thursday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 326

Last Will and Testament of David

(1 Kgs 2:1-12)

When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: ²I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, ³and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. ⁴Then the LORD will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: "If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel."

⁵ Moreover, you know also what Joab son of Zeruah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. ⁶Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to Sheol in peace. ⁷Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. ⁸There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, "I will not put you to death with the sword." ⁹Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his grey head down with blood to Sheol.'

²¹ Bergoglio, Jorge M. (Pope Francis), *Evangelii Gaudium: on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (Vatican: Vatican Press, November 24, 2013), #128.

10 Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. 11The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned for seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.12So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

A Hymn (1 Chr 29:10-12)

Call to worship

10Bless YHWH,
Bless the divine patron of our ancestor, Israel, for ever and ever.

Creation story

11Yours, YHWH, are greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty;
All in the heavens and on the earth is yours; 22
Yours is the kingdom, O YHWH,
You are exalted as head above all.
12Riches and honor come from you,
You rule over all.
In your hand are power and might;
Your hand makes great and gives strength to all.

Inauguration of the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13)

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

Jesus taught them to take nothing for the journey, but a walking stick. Carry no food sack or money.23 Wear only sandals. Do not carry a change of tunics.

Jesus said: *Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.*

²² A version of the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father in ancient Israel

²³ The confrontation between good and evil is not military. Like David who went out against Goliath without the armor or Saul, the followers of Jesus are to be recognized by their material powerlessness.

So the Twelve went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Homily

The confrontation between good and evil is not military. Like David who went out against Goliath without the armor or Saul, the followers of Jesus are to be recognized by their material powerlessness.

After his enlightenment, the Buddha went to the Deer Park near the holy city of Benares and shared his new understanding with five holy men. They understood immediately and became his disciples. This marked the beginning of the Buddhist community (Sanskrit: *Sangha*).

For the next 45 years, the Buddha and his followers went from place to place in India spreading his teachings (Sanskrit: *dharma*). Their compassion knew no bounds, they helped everyone along the way, beggars, kings and slave girls. At night, they would sleep where they were; when hungry they would ask for a little food.²⁴

Whenever the Buddha went, he won the hearts of the people because he dealt with their true feelings. He advised them not to accept his words on blind faith, but to decide for themselves whether his teachings are right or wrong, then follow them. He encouraged everyone to have compassion for each other and develop their own virtue: *You should do your own work, for I can teach only the way.*

The Buddha never became angry or impatient or spoke harshly to anyone, not even to those who opposed him. He always taught in such a way that everyone could understand. Each person thought the Buddha was speaking especially for him. The Buddha told his followers to help each other on the Way.

Once the Buddha and Ananda visited a monastery where a monk was suffering from a contagious disease. The poor man lay in a mess with no one looking after him. The Buddha himself washed the sick monk and placed him on a new bed. Afterwards, he admonished the other monks. *Monks, you have neither mother nor father to look after you. If you do not look after each other, who will look after you? Whoever serves the sick and suffering, serves me.*

²⁴ <http://online.sfsu.edu/rone/Buddhism/footsteps.htm>

Therefore, Buddhist monks, like the followers of Jesus, are only supposed to focus on the core issue: liberating the mind. Since earning money and preparing food requires a large expenditure of time and money, the community is asked to provide. If they don't provide, they don't eat. If a situation becomes untenable, they simply move on without attachment or judgement.²⁵

A monk should never beg! In the word "beggary" is found "to beg", which means "to ask", "to pass the hat round", "to request something from somebody". Moreover, this pejorative word is inclusive of the idea of devaluing, belittling oneself, even a self-inflicted humiliation. Indeed, the opposite process does precisely occur, the monk does never ask for anything (otherwise he is not a monk!). At the most, he simply makes his needs known among those who have requested him to do so. In case of any request being made, those are the people who, sometimes, ask the monk to possibly accept to get offered such or such thing.²⁶

At time of "making his food collection", the monk should remain perfectly silent and motionless while being in front of houses where he stops. All that he does lies in being present among the people, just to give to those who wish so, the opportunity to provide for his needs.

Thus, expressions like "to go for begging" and "to make his food collection", which are often coped with regarding monks, are completely erroneous translations. It is rather convenient to utilise expressions such as: "making his morning collection", "going to receive his food", "accepting his food" or "making his daily round".

As for begging, the act itself is a meditation on ego. It's hard to get one's practice so concentrated and intense so quickly, which is an advantage considering how ephemeral life truly is. Monks of the Theravada traditions of Buddhist spirituality especially from the Thai Forest are especially strict about keeping this tradition.

Nevertheless, not all monks have to follow the teaching to beg. In some monasteries, novices prepare food for the senior monks. Likewise some Zen priests hold normal jobs as cooks, teachers, engineers, writers and are married and prepare their own food.

²⁵ Emily Breder, <https://www.quora.com/Why-did-Buddha-and-his-followers-beg-for-food-rather-than-spend-time-earning-money>

²⁶ <http://en.dhammadana.org/main/faq.htm#ch4d>

Tuesday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 330

Reading 1 [KGS 8:22-23, 27-30](#)

Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD
in the presence of the whole community of Israel,
and stretching forth his hands toward heaven,
he said, "LORD, God of Israel,
there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below;
you keep your covenant of mercy with your servants
who are faithful to you with their whole heart.

"Can it indeed be that God dwells on earth?
If the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you,
how much less this temple which I have built!
Look kindly on the prayer and petition of your servant, O LORD, my God,
and listen to the cry of supplication which I, your servant,
utter before you this day.
May your eyes watch night and day over this temple,
the place where you have decreed you shall be honored;
may you heed the prayer which I, your servant, offer in this place.
Listen to the petitions of your servant and of your people Israel
which they offer in this place.
Listen from your heavenly dwelling and grant pardon."

Responsorial Psalm [PS 84:3, 4, 5 AND 10, 11](#)

R. (2) **How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!**

My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the LORD.

My heart and my flesh
cry out for the living God.

R. **How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!**

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest
in which she puts her young—

Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my king and my God!

R. **How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!**

Blessed they who dwell in your house!
continually they praise you.

O God, behold our shield,
and look upon the face of your anointed.

R. **How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!**

I had rather one day in your courts

than a thousand elsewhere;
I had rather lie at the threshold of the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

R. How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!

Gospel [MK 7:1-13](#)

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?” He responded, “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
In vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.*

You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.” He went on to say, “How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, *Honor your father and your mother, and Whoever curses father or mother shall die.* Yet you say, ‘If someone says to father or mother, “Any support you might have had from me is *qorban*”’ (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things.”

My major in college was Scholastic philosophy – the giant of which was Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). It was my major, but it was not my passion – nor the passion of some of my classmates. We loved the story that Aquinas himself, at the end of his life, called his work nothing but straw. We added to that anecdote that he asked his fellow Dominican friars to burn his work, and we all wished they had. Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz’ decision to publish the notes of John Paul II, rather than destroy them called that undergraduate cynicism to mind.

The priests who taught us philosophy were members of the Order of Carmelites. Aquinas died on his way to the Council of Lyons. He was prepared to vote for the suppression of the Carmelites. We joked that the death of the Angelic Doctor was not an accident. He was either poisoned by a Carmelite working in an inn where Aquinas stopped, or he was struck down by the Blessed Mother to whom the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel were dedicated.

Entrusted to Burn John Paul II’s Notes Cardinal Publishes Them Instead

Dan Bilefsky
NYTimes (Feb 4, 2014)

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/05/world/europe/entrusted-to-burn-john-paul-iis-notes-cardinal-publishes-them-instead.html?_r=0

PARIS — Defying a pope’s explicit instructions is not a widespread habit among Roman Catholic cardinals, especially when the pope in question is immensely popular, on the verge of sainthood and no longer able to object.

So the decision by [Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz](#) to publish a book of Pope John Paul II’s personal notes, even though the pope’s last will and testament requested that he burn them, has attracted no small helping of controversy and moral indignation.

The book, “I Am Very Much in God’s Hands,” is due to be published Wednesday in Poland, John Paul’s native land. And many in the abidingly Catholic and conservative country are greeting it as an unholy betrayal — not least because Cardinal Dziwisz, now the archbishop of Krakow, was John Paul’s secretary throughout his pontificate, and one of his closest confidants.

Cardinal Dziwisz recently told reporters that he “did not have the courage” to follow John Paul’s orders to destroy the notes, which contain religious meditations written from July 1962, when he was a young bishop on the rise, to March 2003, when he had been pope for more than 24 years and Parkinson’s disease was eroding his health. John Paul, who died in 2005, [will be canonized](#) at the Vatican on April 27.

“In writing his will, the Holy Father knew he was entrusting these notebooks to someone who would treat them responsibly,” Cardinal Dziwisz said at a news conference in Krakow on Jan. 22. “I had no doubt these were such important items, testifying to the spirituality of a great pope, that it would be a crime to destroy them.” He invoked the despair of historians after the burning of Pope Pius XII’s letters.

But the Rev. Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, an expert on the Catholic Church’s role during the Communist era in Poland, implored Poles not to buy the book because its publication violated John Paul’s will.

“In European culture, a final will is always binding, as long as its realization isn’t against the law and morality,” Father Isakowicz-Zaleski told TVN, a Polish television broadcaster. “This is required not just by legal statutes and good manners, but also by respect for the dead. This public act of disobedience is a form of anti-witness, and can’t be justified by any explanation that it’s for the good of the church. Does a clergyman serving as a secretary know better than St. Peter’s successor?”

The book, 640 pages in hardcover, is being published in Polish by Znak, a Krakow publishing house. It may be more bought than read: It is said to include abstruse reflections on biblical citations that scholars will study closely but that ordinary readers may find less accessible. Cardinal Dziwisz said he planned to use royalties from the book toward a museum and sanctuary honoring John Paul, to be called Have No Fear.

The cardinal is hardly the first person to ignore a close associate’s wish that his papers be burned after his death. Most of Franz Kafka’s writings would be unknown to the world if his friend Max Brod had honored his request that all his manuscripts, diaries and letters be destroyed unread.

Not everyone has condemned the cardinal’s choice to publish John Paul’s notes, not even some who were initially skeptical. “I admit that without having read the book, I was sadly surprised with the decision,” the Rev. Adam Boniecki, an influential Catholic intellectual, wrote on Jan. 22 in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a leading Catholic weekly in Poland. “After reading the notebooks, however, I am grateful that in this matter, he didn’t come as scrupulous bureaucrat.”

R. Andrew Chesnut, a professor of religious studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, noted that the book was not covered by the dogma of papal infallibility, which applies to pronouncements of church doctrine but not to a pope’s personal musings. In the end, he said, John Paul would probably have absolved the cardinal for what some consider a moral transgression.

“The pope, though he may have been irritated, would have forgiven him,” he said.

Mateusz Zurawik contributed reporting from Warsaw.

When St. Thomas Aquinas likened his work to straw, was that a retraction of what he wrote?

Answer

In the Thurston and Attwater revision of Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, the episode is described this way:

On the feast of St. Nicholas [in 1273, Aquinas] was celebrating Mass when he received a revelation that so affected him that he wrote and dictated no more, leaving his great work the *Summa Theologiae* unfinished. To Brother Reginald's (his secretary and friend) expostulations he replied, "The end of my labors has come. All that I have written appears to be as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me." When later asked by Reginald to return to writing, Aquinas said, "I can write no more. I have seen things that make my writings like straw." (www.catholic-forum.com/saintS/stt03002.htm)

Aquinas died three months later while on his way to the ecumenical council of Lyons.

Aquinas's vision may have been a vision of heaven, compared to which everything else, no matter how glorious, seems worthless. We can only speculate on that point. Scholars, hagiographers, and Catholics in general have never understood Aquinas's comment to be a retraction or refutation of anything he wrote. If it had been, Pope Leo XIII would not have encouraged a renewed interest in Thomistic theology and philosophy, and Aquinas would not have been named a Doctor of the Church.

It is also reported that Aquinas had another mystical experience in which the voice of Christ said to him, "You have written well of me, Thomas" (www2.nd.edu/Departments//Maritain/etext/thomas1.htm).

Chaff: Thomas Aquinas's Repudiation of His Opera omnia
[Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle](#)

From: [New Literary History](#)

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_literary_history/summary/v028/28.2boyle.html

"I cannot": Thomas Aquinas replied to an anxious inquiry about why he had abruptly ceased writing and dictating his *Summa heologiae*. His companion and confessor, Reginald of Piperno, afraid that overzealous study had induced insanity, insisted that he continue. "I cannot," repeated Aquinas, "because everything that I have written seems to me chaffy." Reginald was stunned. Within the month Aquinas decided to visit a sister but upon arrival remained

withdrawn and taciturn. "Why," asked his sister, "is he stupefied and hardly speaking to me?" Reginald explained the case: "From about the feast of St. Nicholas he has been in this state, and since then he has composed nothing." Reginald importuned Aquinas to tell him why he refused to write and why he was stunned. After many interrogations Aquinas answered, "I adjure you by the living almighty God, and by the faith you have in our order, and by charity that you strictly promise me you will never reveal in my lifetime what I tell you. Everything that I have written seems to me chaffy in respect to those things that I have seen and have been revealed to me."

Aquinas's "everything" was voluminous: 101 works. He interrupted his *Summa theologiae* in the third part at the end of question ninety, "On the parts of penance in general," and his lectures on the psalms with fifty-four, an entreaty for salvation from enemies. A legend that on his deathbed he obliged monks of Fossanova with a commentary on the Song of Songs is apocryphal, for there is no extant manuscript or report of it. Aquinas never wrote another theological word. His resignation has become anecdotal. It recently introduced a review in *The New York Times* of Richard Rorty's philosophical papers: "At the end of his life, St. Thomas Aquinas had a heavenly vision that convinced him that his writings were 'as straw.'"

Since antiquity an orator had ensured an audience attentive and favorable to his pleading by a modest presence. That very presence required establishment and emphasis, so that among the topics proper to an exordium was affected modesty. An author introduced a subject as beyond his wit. Formulas of modesty protesting meager talent and rude speech were commonly diffused from classical oratory through medieval literature. There was the fear even to begin, of failure before completion: literary trepidation. An author feigned to venture a project only at the command of a friend, patron, or superior. Although the inability of Aquinas concerned a work well in progress, his refusal to continue at the persuasion of Reginald signaled such modesty. Incomplete texts, whether really so or contrived to be -- like Petrarch's lamented *Africa* or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *House of Fame*--were a feature of fourteenth-century literature. "Feebleness" (*excusatio propter infirmitatem*) was, since Quintilian's rhetoric, the excuse of inadequacy, and its denotation of intellectual and artistic debility connoted, as in Reginald's inference about Aquinas, physiological or psychological infirmity. Yet the fragment, for which the intact original was lost, forgotten, or vanished, was a bane of medieval literature, whose culture differed from modern notions of the empirical, individual creator whose work is self-expressive. Not originality but imitation was the norm, invention from the commonplaces of tradition, so that textual voices were fundamentally anonymous.

Straw was common enough material for deprecation. The ubiquitous objector whom Aquinas refuted in his *Summa theologiae* might be considered a "straw man." The University of Paris where he lectured and disputed was on Straw Street (*rue du Fouarre*), so that the epithet "straw" might have typified scholasticism. Straw was famously used to discredit at least one book beyond

his *Summa theologiae*. Martin Luther demoted the Epistle of James from the biblical canon because it was a "right strawy epistle." Since the offense of that book was justification by works, his epithet was likely influenced by Augustine's speculation in *De fide et operibus* on the testing by fire of works built on the foundation of Christ: whether the refinement of gold, silver, and jewels as good, or the burning of wood, hay, and straw as evil. It was a lesson Aquinas had learned...

Wednesday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 331

Reading 11 [KGS 10:1-10](#)

The queen of Sheba, having heard of Solomon's fame, came to test him with subtle questions. She arrived in Jerusalem with a very numerous retinue, and with camels bearing spices, a large amount of gold, and precious stones. She came to Solomon and questioned him on every subject in which she was interested. King Solomon explained everything she asked about, and there remained nothing hidden from him that he could not explain to her.

When the queen of Sheba witnessed Solomon's great wisdom, the palace he had built, the food at his table, the seating of his ministers, the attendance and garb of his waiters, his banquet service, and the burnt offerings he offered in the temple of the LORD, she was breathless.

"The report I heard in my country about your deeds and your wisdom is true," she told the king. "Though I did not believe the report until I came and saw with my own eyes, I have discovered that they were not telling me the half. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report I heard. Blessed are your men, blessed these servants of yours, who stand before you always and listen to your wisdom. Blessed be the LORD, your God, whom it has pleased to place you on the throne of Israel. In his enduring love for Israel, the LORD has made you king to carry out judgment and justice." Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty gold talents, a very large quantity of spices, and precious stones. Never again did anyone bring such an abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

A Lament

(Ps 37:1-40)

Dedicated to David

Petition

- ¹ Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
² for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
- ³ Trust in the Yahweh, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
⁴ Take delight in the Yahweh,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- ⁵ Commit your way to the Yahweh;
trust in your divine patron, and Yahweh will act.
⁶ Yahweh will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.
- ⁷ Be still before the Yahweh, and wait patiently for your divine patron;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.
- ⁸ Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
⁹ For the wicked shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the Yahweh shall inherit the land.

Profession of faith

- ¹⁰ Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.
¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the land,
and delight in abundant prosperity.
- ¹² The wicked plot against the righteous,
and gnash their teeth at them;
¹³ but the Yahweh laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that their day is coming.

- 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows
to bring down the poor and needy,
to kill those who walk uprightly;
15 their sword shall enter their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better is a little that the righteous person has
than the abundance of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
but the Yahweh upholds the righteous.
- 18 The Yahweh knows the days of the blameless,
and their heritage will abide forever;
19 they are not put to shame in evil times,
in the days of famine they have abundance.
- 20 But the wicked perish,
and the enemies of the Yahweh are like the glory of the pastures;
they vanish — like smoke they vanish away.
- 21 The wicked borrow, and do not pay back,
but the righteous are generous and keep giving;
22 for those blessed by the Yahweh shall inherit the land,
but those cursed by our divine patron shall be cut off.
- 23 Our steps are made firm by the Yahweh,
when our divine patron delights in our way;
24 though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong,
for the Yahweh holds us by the hand.
- 25 I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or their children begging bread.
26 They are ever giving liberally and lending,
and their children become a blessing.
- 27 Depart from evil, and do good;
so you shall abide forever.
28 For the Yahweh loves justice;
Our divine patron will not forsake the faithful.
- The righteous shall be kept safe forever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

- 29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
and live in it for ever.
- 30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak justice.
- 31 The law of their God is in their hearts;
their steps do not slip.
- 32 The wicked watch for the righteous,
and seek to kill them.
- 33 The Yahweh will not abandon them to their power,
or let them be condemned when they are brought to trial.

Petition

- 34 Wait for the Yahweh, and keep to the Way of Yahweh,
and our divine patron will exalt you to inherit the land;
you will look on the destruction of the wicked.

Profession of faith

- 35 I have seen the wicked oppressing,
and towering like a cedar of Lebanon.
- 36 Again I passed by, and they were no more;
though I sought them, they could not be found.
- 37 Mark the blameless, and behold the upright,
for there is posterity for the peaceable.
- 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed;
the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 39 The salvation of the righteous is from the Yahweh;
our divine patron is their refuge in the time of trouble.
- 40 The Yahweh helps them and rescues them;
our divine patron rescues them from the wicked, and saves them,
because they take refuge in Yahweh.

(Mark 7:14-23)

Jesus summoned the crowd again and taught them: *Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.*

When Jesus got away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable.

Jesus taught them: “Are even you likewise without understanding?
Do you not realize that everything
that goes into a person from outside cannot defile,
since it enters not the heart but the stomach
and passes out into the latrine?”
(Thus he declared all foods clean.)
“But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles him.
From within the man, from his heart,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,
adultery, greed, malice, deceit,
licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.
All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for getting me up this morning.
Thank you for the gift of the sun each day.
Thank you for being with the woman who stroked during Hasia Diner's talk on Monday
I want to listen today for ...*your still, small voice.*

Friday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 345

(Sir 6:5-17)

A kind mouth multiplies friends and appeases enemies,
and gracious lips prompt friendly greetings.
Let your acquaintances be many,
but one in a thousand your confidant.
When you gain a friend, first test him,
and be not too ready to trust him.
For one sort is a friend when it suits him,
but he will not be with you in time of distress.
Another is a friend who becomes an enemy,
and tells of the quarrel to your shame.
Another is a friend, a boon companion,
who will not be with you when sorrow comes.
When things go well, he is your other self,
and lords it over your servants;
But if you are brought low, he turns against you
and avoids meeting you.
Keep away from your enemies;
be on your guard with your friends.
A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;
he who finds one finds a treasure.
A faithful friend is beyond price,
no sum can balance his worth.
A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,
such as he who fears God finds;
For he who fears God behaves accordingly,
and his friend will be like himself.

A Lament

(Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹ Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of Yahweh.
² Happy are those who keep the decrees of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh with their whole heart,
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.

⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your statutes.
¹³ With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
¹⁴ I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.

16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

- 17 Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.
- 18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
what wondrous things your law brings forth.
- 19 I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
- 20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
- 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
- 22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
- 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- 24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
- 25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
- 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
- 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- 28 My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.

- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
- 40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.
- 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.
- 42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
- 43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
- 44 I will keep your law continually,
for ever and ever.
- 45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 46 I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
- 47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
- 48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.
- 49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

Declaration of innocence

- 50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
- 51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
- 52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.
- 53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
- 54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.

55 I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.
57 Yahweh is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who act morally,
of those who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

65 You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.
73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.

- 75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
- 76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
- 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*
- 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
- 84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
- 85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
- 86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
- 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
- 88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- 91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
- 92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.

94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
100 I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

108 Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

- 113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

- 116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.
- 121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

- 127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.
- 129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.

133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.

135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.

138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.

139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.

140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.

141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.

144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.

146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.

147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.

148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.

149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.

150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.

151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfill your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;

give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.
175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

(Mark 10:1-12)

Jesus came into the district of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds gathered around him and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

The Pharisees approached him and asked: *Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?* They were testing him.

Jesus said: *What did Moses teach you?*

They answered: *Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her.*

Because of the hardness of your hearts, Jesus replied, Moses taught you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.

In the house the disciples asked Jesus to explain his teaching.

Jesus said: *Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.*

Homily

'Abba,
You use your power to raise up the powerless
You raised Jesus from the grave
You raised the Hebrews from slavery
Lift me up today; do not let stress keep me down (Ps 119)
Jesus taught us to ask – and we do.

The gospel today portrays Jesus as more idealistic than Moses, who was a realist. The Hebrews in Moses' day were not any less holy than the Jews in Jesus' day. The two teachers simply approach their audiences differently. Moses comforts his students by encouraging them to accept their failures; Jesus inspires his students to strive for perfection. Both teaching methods have assets and liabilities, even when we are using them to teach ourselves.

If we are not realistic about our limitations then we destroy our confidence and self-esteem. Failed marriages are a tragedy, but they should not destroy the lives of those involved. Moses taught: end the marriage and move on. Better to start over than continue to cause one another by committing adultery. Jesus teaches that divorce does not end adultery, but simply replaces one form of adultery with another.

Thursday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 398

(Exod 19:1-20)

At the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ²They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. ³Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: ⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.'

7 So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸The people all answered as one: ‘Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do.’ Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after.’

When Moses had told the words of the people to the LORD, ¹⁰the LORD said to Moses: ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹²You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, “Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows; whether animal or human being, they shall not live.” When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain.’ ¹⁴So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵And he said to the people, ‘Prepare for the third day; do not go near a woman.’

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. ²⁰When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Hymn of Azariah

(Dan 3:52-56 LXX)

“Blessed are you, YHWH, the divine patron of our ancestors,²⁷
Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
Blessed is your holy and glorious name,
Praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.”

“Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory,

²⁷ NRSV: fathers

Praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.”
“Blessed are you on the throne of your Kingdom,
Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.”

“Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim,
Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.”
“Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven,
Praiseworthy and glorious forever.”

Teachings on Parables

(Matt 13:10-17)

The followers of Jesus came to him and asked:
“Why do you speak to the crowd in parables?”
He said to them in reply,

“Because knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven
has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted.

To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich;
from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

This is why I speak to them in parables, because
they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.

Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

You shall indeed hear but not understand,
you shall indeed look but never see.
Gross is the heart of this people,
they will hardly hear with their ears,
they have closed their eyes,
lest they see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their hearts and be converted
and I heal them.

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see,

and your ears, because they hear.

Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Homily

Thank you 'Abba for waking me up today. Help me to enjoy the questions which today raises, as well as the answers which appear. Help me listen to the parables of Jesus with an listening heart, to realize that even though not everything is clear, living the questions is still a blessing.

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Monday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 401

READING 1 EX 32:15-24, 30-34

Moses turned and came down the mountain
with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands,
tablets that were written on both sides, front and back;
tablets that were made by God,
having inscriptions on them that were engraved by God himself.
Now, when Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting,
he said to Moses, "That sounds like a battle in the camp."
But Moses answered, "It does not sound like cries of victory,
nor does it sound like cries of defeat;
the sounds that I hear are cries of revelry."
As he drew near the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing.
With that, Moses' wrath flared up, so that he threw the tablets down
and broke them on the base of the mountain.
Taking the calf they had made, he fused it in the fire
and then ground it down to powder,
which he scattered on the water and made the children of Israel drink.

Moses asked Aaron, "What did this people ever do to you
that you should lead them into so grave a sin?"
Aaron replied, "Let not my lord be angry.
You know well enough how prone the people are to evil.
They said to me, 'Make us a god to be our leader;
as for the man Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt,
we do not know what has happened to him.'
So I told them, 'Let anyone who has gold jewelry take it off.'
They gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out."

On the next day Moses said to the people,
"You have committed a grave sin.
I will go up to the LORD, then;
perhaps I may be able to make atonement for your sin."
So Moses went back to the LORD and said,
"Ah, this people has indeed committed a grave sin
in making a god of gold for themselves!
If you would only forgive their sin!
If you will not, then strike me out of the book that you have written."
The LORD answered, "Him only who has sinned against me

will I strike out of my book.
Now, go and lead the people to the place I have told you.
My angel will go before you.
When it is time for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.”

A Hymn and a Lament

(Ps 106:1-48)

Call to worship

¹ Praise YHWH!

Give thanks to YHWH, who is good;
The steadfast love of YHWH endures forever.

² Who can describe the mighty works of YHWH,
Who can praise YHWH enough?

³ Wise¹ are those who live justly,
Who act morally at all times.

Petition

⁴ Remember me, YHWH, when you show favor to your people;
Help me when you deliver them;

⁵ that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your people,²
that I may glory in your heritage.

Creation story

⁶ Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.

⁷ Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet YHWH saved them for his name's sake,
so that their divine patron might make known divine power.

⁹ YHWH rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry;
Their divine patron led them through the deep as through a desert.

¹⁰ So YHWH saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.

¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.

¹² Then they believed the words of their divine patron;
they sang YHWH's praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot the works of YHWH;
they did not wait for the counsel of their divine patron.

¹ NRSV: Happy

² NRSV: nation

- 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put their divine patron to the test in the desert;
- 15 YHWH gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.
- 16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of YHWH.
- 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the faction of Abiram.
- 18 Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.
- 19 They made a calf at Horeb
and worshipped a cast image.
- 20 They exchanged the glory of God
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
- 21 They forgot their divine patron, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.
- 23 Therefore YHWH promised to destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before YHWH,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.
- 24 Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.
- 25 They grumbled in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of YHWH.
- 26 Therefore their divine patron raised a hand and swore to them
that YHWH would make them fall in the wilderness,
27 and would disperse their descendants among all peoples,
scattering them over the lands.
- 28 Then they attached themselves to the Baal of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
- 29 they provoked YHWH to anger with their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
- 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interceded,
and the plague was stopped.
- 31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness
from generation to generation forever.
- 32 They angered YHWH at the waters of Meribah,
and it went ill with Moses on their account;

³³ for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke words that were rash.

³⁴ They did not destroy the peoples
as YHWH commanded them,
³⁵ but they mingled with them
and learned to do as they did.
³⁶ They served their powerless divine patrons,³
which became a snare to them.
³⁷ They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
³⁸ they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
and the land was polluted with blood.
³⁹ Thus they became unclean by their acts,
and prostituted themselves in their doings.

⁴⁰ Then the anger of YHWH was kindled against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
⁴¹ he gave them into the hand of the nations,
so that those who hated them ruled over them.
⁴² Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into subjection under their power.
⁴³ Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their purposes,
and were brought low through their iniquity.
⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he regarded their distress
when he heard their cry.
⁴⁵ For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
⁴⁶ He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.

Petition

⁴⁷ Save us, YHWH, our divine patron,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

Call to worship

³ NRSV: *idols*

⁴⁸ Bless YHWH, the divine patron of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say: *Amen*.
Praise YHWH!

GOSPEL MT 13:31-35

Jesus proposed a parable to the crowds.
“The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed
that a person took and sowed in a field.
It is the smallest of all the seeds,
yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.
It becomes a large bush,
and the *birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.*”

He spoke to them another parable.
“The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast
that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour
until the whole batch was leavened.”

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables.
He spoke to them only in parables,
to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

*I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.*

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning...
--

18th Thursday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 410

(Exod 20:1-13)

Reading 1 [NM 20:1-13](#)

The whole congregation of the children of Israel arrived in the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people settled at Kadesh. It was here that Miriam died, and here that she was buried.

As the community had no water, they held a council against Moses and Aaron. The people contended with Moses, exclaiming, "Would that we too had perished with our kinsmen in the LORD's presence! Why have you brought the LORD's assembly into this desert where we and our livestock are dying? Why did you lead us out of Egypt, only to bring us to this wretched place which has neither grain nor figs nor vines nor pomegranates? Here there is not even water to drink!" But Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the meeting tent, where they fell prostrate.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them, and the LORD said to Moses, "Take your staff and assemble the community, you and your brother Aaron, and in their presence order the rock to yield its waters. From the rock you shall bring forth water for the congregation and their livestock to drink." So Moses took his staff from its place before the LORD, as he was ordered. He and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock, where he said to them, "Listen to me, you rebels! Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?" Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff, and water gushed out in abundance for the people and their livestock to drink. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you were not faithful to me in showing forth my sanctity before the children of Israel, you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them."

These are the waters of Meribah,

where the children of Israel contended against the LORD,
and where the LORD revealed his sanctity among them.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (8) **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tested me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”

R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Gospel [MT 16:13-23](#)

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi
and he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter said in reply,
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.
And so I say to you, you are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven.
Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
Then he strictly ordered his disciples
to tell no one that he was the Christ.

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

Homily

‘Abba, my Godfather
Thank you for getting me up this morning
Help me to live this day with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach
Let me hear you say: Young man, I say to you Arise
Give me open hands, not closed fists

Tuesday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 414

COVENANT BLESSINGS

(Deut 30:1-10)

When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the peoples where Yahweh, your divine patron, has driven you, ²and return to Yahweh, your divine patron, and you and your descendants obey Yahweh with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, ³then Yahweh, your divine patron, will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom Yahweh, your divine patron, has scattered you. ⁴Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there Yahweh, your divine patron, will gather you, and from there Yahweh will bring you back. ⁵Yahweh, your divine patron, will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

6 Moreover, Yahweh, your divine patron, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will fulfill your covenant responsibilities to Yahweh, your divine patron, with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. ⁷Yahweh, your divine patron, will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. ⁸Then you shall again obey Yahweh, observing all the commandments that I am commanding you today, ⁹and Yahweh, your divine patron, will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For Yahweh will again take delight in prospering you, just as Yahweh delighted in prospering your ancestors, ¹⁰when you obey Yahweh, your divine patron, by observing the commandments and decrees that are written in this book of torah teachings, because you turn to Yahweh, your divine patron, with all your heart and with all your soul.

Trial of the Desert Generation

(Deut 32: 1-44)

INDICTMENT OF THE DESERT GENERATION

(Deut 32:1-18)

CALL TO WORSHIP (Deut 32:1-4)

¹ Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
Let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
² May my teaching fall like rain,
May my speech condense like dew;
Like gentle rain on grass,
Like rain showers on seedlings.
³ I will proclaim the name of Yahweh;
Ascribe greatness to our divine patron --
⁴ To our Rock, our midwife, whose work is perfect,
Whose ways are just.
To a faithful divine patron, without deceit,
Who is just,
Who is upright.

INDICTMENT (Deut 32:5-6)

⁵ Yet the people of Yahweh are unfaithful

They have not listened to Yahweh,⁴
You are stubborn,
You are an obstinate generation.
⁶Is this how you repay Yahweh?
O foolish and senseless people

CREATION STORY (Deut 32:6-15)

Is not Yahweh your godparent?
Who created you?
Who made you?
Who established you?
⁷Remember the days of old,
Consider the years long past;
Ask the father of your household, he will inform you;
Ask the elders of your village, they will tell you.
⁸When Elohim assigned the peoples their divine patrons,
When our Creator separated humans from one another,
When Elohim fixed boundaries between one people and another
When our Creator assigned each a land with its own divine patron;
⁹Yahweh's own portion was this people,
Jacob was Yahweh's allotted share.
¹⁰Yahweh fed Jacob in the desert,
In a wind driven wasteland;
Yahweh protected Jacob from his enemies,
Yahweh cared for him,
Yahweh guarded him as the apple of the eye.

¹¹As a mother eagle flies above its nest,
Hovers over its young;
As she spreads her wings,
Takes them up,
Carries them aloft on her feathered back,

¹²Yahweh alone guided Jacob;
No other divine patron helped Yahweh.
¹³Yahweh settled Jacob in hills,
And fed him with produce of the field;
Yahweh nursed him with honey from date palms on the cliffs,

⁴ NRSV: ⁵ yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him, a perverse and crooked generation.

With oil from olive trees among the rocks;
¹⁴ With yogurt from herds of sheep,
 With milk from the flocks of goats,
With meat from lambs,
 With meat from rams,
With meat from Bashan cattle,
 With meat from goats.
You ate choice grain,
 You drank fine wine from grapes.
¹⁵ Jacob ate his fill;
 Jeshurun grew fat,
 Jeshurun kicked like a yearling.
You matured,
 Filled out like an adult,
 Became full grown!

A Teaching

(Matt 18:1-14)

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked: *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

²Jesus called a child, whom he put among them, ³and said:

Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴*Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* ⁵*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

⁶*If any of you scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.* ⁷*Woe to the world because of scandal! Occasions for scandal are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling-block comes!*

⁸*If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.* ⁹*And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.* ¹⁰*Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.*

¹²What do you think? If a shepherd has 100 sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Homily

Children are always ready to take someone else's hand because they are humble. Children have a profound instinct of community which as we age we lose and become more and more self-reliant, more isolated, more arrogant.

To take the hand of a child is an act of profound commitment to protect that child from harm. To violate that commitment is the unforgivable sin especially to a child, but to anyone who places their trust in us.

Friday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 417

(Josh 24:1-13)

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at the sanctuary of Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges and their officers. When they stood in ranks before their divine patron, Joshua addressed all the people:

Thus says Yahweh, divine patron of Israel:

In times past your ancestors, down to Terah, father of Abraham and Nahor, lived Beyond the Euphrates River and served other divine patrons. But I brought your father Abraham from Beyond the Euphrates River and led him through the entire land of Syria-Palestine. I made his descendants numerous, and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I assigned to settle in the Mountains of Seir, while Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and shamed Egypt with plagues which I sent. Afterward I led you out of Egypt, and when you reached the Sea, the

Egyptians pursued your fathers to the Red Sea with chariots and cavalry. Because they cried out to Yahweh, Yahweh put darkness between your people and the Egyptians, upon whom he brought the Sea so that it drowned them.

After you witnessed what I did to Egypt, and lived a long time in the desert, I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I delivered them into your power. You took possession of their land, and I destroyed them, the two rulers of the Amorites, before you. Then Balak, heir of Zippor, ruler of Moab, declared war on Israel. He summoned Balaam, heir of Beor, to curse you; but I would not listen to Balaam. On the contrary, he had to bless you, and I saved you from him.

*Once you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho, the soldiers of Jericho fought against you, but I delivered them also into your power. And I sent the hornets ahead of you that drove them -- **NOTE:** THE AMORITES, PERIZZITES, CANAANIETES, HITTITES, GIRGASHITES, HIVITES AND JEBUSITES -- out of your way; it was not your sword or your bow.*

I gave you a land that you had not tilled and cities that you had not built, to dwell in; you have eaten of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.

A Hymn

(Ps 136:1-26)

Call to worship

¹ O give thanks to Yahweh, for Yahweh is good,

Creation story

for the unconditional⁵ love of Yahweh endures forever.

Call to worship

² Give thanks to the divine patron of all divine patrons,

Creation story

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever

Call to worship

³ Give thanks to the patron of patrons,

Creation story of cosmos (Genesis)

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁴ Who alone does great wonders,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁵ Who by understanding made the heavens,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁶ Who launched⁶ the earth on the waters,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁷ who made the great lights,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁸ the sun to rule over the day,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁹ the moon and stars to rule over the night,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

Creation story of Israel (Exodus)

¹⁰ who struck Egypt through their firstborn,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

¹¹ and brought Israel out from among them,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

¹² with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

¹³ who divided the Red Sea in two,

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;

⁵ NRSV: steadfast

⁶ NRSV: spread out

14 and made Israel pass through the midst of it,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
16 who led his people through the desert,⁷
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
17 who struck down great rulers,⁸
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
18 and killed famous rulers,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
19 Sihon, ruler of the Amorites,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
20 and Og, ruler of Bashan,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
21 and gave their land as a heritage,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
22 a heritage to Israel, Yahweh's slave
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever
23 Yahweh remembered us in our low status,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
24 and rescued us from our foes,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever;
25 who gives food to all flesh,
for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever

Call to worship

26 O give thanks to the God of heaven,

Creation story

for the unconditional love of Yahweh endures forever.

(Matt 19:3-12)

As a test some Pharisees asked Jesus:

Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?

Jesus answered:

⁷ NRSV: wilderness

⁸ NRSV: kings

Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said: For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Therefore, what 'Abba has joined together, man must not separate.

The Pharisees asked:

Then why did Moses command that husbands give wives a divorce decree and put them out of their houses?

Jesus answered:

Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife -- unless the marriage is unlawful-- and marries another, commits adultery.

The Pharisees said to Jesus:

If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.

Jesus answered:

Not all can accept this word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.

Homily

Although marital metaphors appear in prophetic traditions for the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, love in Deuteronomy is not simply an emotional attachment between men and women or men and men; it is a binding contractual obligation. *Love means to obey the stipulations of a covenant* and *hate means to abrogate a covenant* -- a legal action dispensing both the patron and the client from their responsibilities to one another

Friday of the Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time
Lectionary: 429

Reading 1 [THES 4:1-8](#)

Brothers and sisters,
we earnestly ask and exhort you in our Teacher Jesus that,
as you received from us
how you should conduct yourselves to please 'Abba our godparent–
and as you are conducting yourselves–
you do so even more.
For you know what instructions we gave you through our Teacher Jesus.

This is the will of God, your holiness:
that you refrain from immorality,
that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself
in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion
as do the Gentiles who do not know 'Abba our godparent;
not to take advantage of or exploit a brother or sister in this matter,
for our Teacher is an avenger in all these things,
as we told you before and solemnly affirmed.
For 'Abba our godparent did not call us to impurity but to holiness.
Therefore, whoever disregards this,
disregards not a human being but 'Abba our godparent,
who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

A Hymn
(Ps 97:1-12)

call to worship

¹ Yahweh Rules!⁹ Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!

Creation story

² Clouds and thick darkness are all around Yahweh;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of the throne of Yahweh.
³ Lightning goes before Yahweh,

⁹ *Yahweh is King* is the biblical precedent for the profession of faith: '*Allah Akbar!*' in Islam.

- and consumes Yahweh's adversaries on every side.
- ⁴ Divine lightning illuminates the world;
the earth sees and trembles in awe.
- ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before Yahweh,
before Yahweh who rules all the earth.
- ⁶ The heavens proclaim the righteousness of Yahweh;
and all the peoples behold the glory of Yahweh.
- ⁷ All idol worshippers are put to shame,
those who make their boast in worthless idols;
all the members of the divine assembly bow down before Yahweh.¹⁰

Call to worship

- ⁸ Zion hears and is glad,
the villages of Judah rejoice because of your judgments, Yahweh.

creation story

- ⁹ For you, O Yahweh, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all other divine patrons.
- ¹⁰ Yahweh loves those who hate evil;
Yahweh guards the lives of the faithful;
Yahweh rescues them from the hand of the wicked.
- ¹¹ Light dawns for the righteous,
joy for the upright in heart.

Call to worship

- ¹² Rejoice in Yahweh, O you righteous,
give thanks to the holy name: Yahweh!

Gospel MT 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
"The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.
The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,
brought no oil with them,
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.

¹⁰ As the walls of Jericho did!

Since the bridegroom was long delayed,
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
At midnight, there was a cry,
'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'
Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.
The foolish ones said to the wise,
'Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out.'
But the wise ones replied,
'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'
While they went off to buy it,
the bridegroom came
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.
Then the door was locked.
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,
'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'
But he said in reply,
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'
Therefore, stay awake,
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Saturday of the 21st Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 430

(1 Thess 4:9-11)

My brothers and sisters:

On the subject of sharing you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by 'Abba, our godparent, to love one another.

Indeed, you do this for all Christians throughout Macedonia.

Nevertheless we

urge you, brothers and sisters, to progress even more, and to aspire to live a

tranquil life, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, as we

instructed you.

Saturday, August 31, 2013 Page 2

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh have gained victory.

²Yahweh has made known victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre –

with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn

Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas roar and all that fills it –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans clap their hands;

Let the mountains sing together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,

Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Saturday, August 31, 2013 Page 3

A Parable of Talents

(Matt 25:14-30)

Jesus taught his disciples this parable:

A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave 80 years wages, to another 32 years wages; to a third 16 years wages – to each according to his ability.¹

Then he went away.

Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them,

and made another five.

Likewise, the one who received two made another two.

But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

After a long time
the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them.
The one who had received five talents
came forward bringing the additional five.
He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents.
See, I have made five more.'
His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.
Since you were faithful in small matters,
I will give you great responsibilities.
Come, share your master's joy.'
Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said,
'Master, you gave me two talents.
See, I have made two more.'
His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.
Since you were faithful in small matters,
I will give you great responsibilities.
Come, share your master's joy.'
Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said,
'Master, I knew you were a demanding person,
harvesting where you did not plant
and gathering where you did not scatter;
so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground.¹¹
Here it is back.'
His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant!
So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant
and gather where I did not scatter?

¹
Saturday, August 31, 2013 Page 4

Should you not then have put my money in the bank
so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?
Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.
For to everyone who has,
more will be given and he will grow rich;
but from the one who has not,
even what he has will be taken away.
And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

¹¹ A *talent* is the weight an adult male can carry – like the ox-hide ingot of copper, or about 65 pounds. A talent is 6,000 days or 16 years wages paid in silver. The average daily wage during the first century was a *denarius*. Sixty pounds of silver was worth more than \$20,000 in 2013 - \$1250 a year.

Homily

The single most frequent habit of happy people is gratitude. They notice it, feel it, express it, absorb it, and practice it. Gratitude is a stress reliever, a mood booster, and it gives the immune system a lift. It offers these benefits of exercise plus better sleep without all the sweat.

Still, it's surprisingly easy to lose sight of this simple habit. In fact, it can be very difficult to be grateful when you are faced with a heavy "to do" list, a surly teenager, an annoying spouse, or a stack of bills. You might even think that it's frankly impossible to be grateful with the mountain of troubles in your life.

But here's the thing: Happy people are grateful regardless of their circumstances. If they have cancer, they're grateful for their medical care and family support. If they're single, they're grateful for their friendships. If they're unemployed, they're grateful to have a roof over their heads. You get the idea.

Furthermore, happy people experience gratitude in bite-sized bits all day long. In my book *Shortcuts to Inner Peace*, I explain how gratitude is the foundation for happiness. So let's break gratitude down into the fundamentals.

Happy people are grateful for the little things

They don't take for granted everyday experiences like waking up alive, running water, electricity, vision, or a plate of food. They notice everyday miracles and are grateful for them.

Happy people intentionally take time for gratitude

They have an assortment of gratitude practices that they employ. They may spend time at the end of the day writing down or mentally listing the things from their day for which they're grateful. They may use meals as a time for reflection on their blessings. They make gratitude a daily practice.

Happy people let gratitude sink in

They take a moment to let their experience of gratitude fill them up. They don't just say the words, "I'm grateful", they actually *feel* the experience of

gratitude. They might sigh, breathe, or exclaim as a way of absorbing their feeling.

Happy people are grateful for the people around them

They have the habit of thanking people in their lives for the little things. They dole out frequent compliments, thank you's, and positive feedback.

Happy people talk about their gratitude

They share with others their feelings of bliss and abundance. They are vocal with their gratitude and infect others with their joy.

Happy people are grateful for other people's successes and joys

Happy people enjoy other people's good fortune. They live in a world where there is plenty to go around. They do not see someone else's gain as their personal loss. They see gain as something to be shared and celebrated by all.

Happy people know that life is an obvious miracle.

You too can see life in this way once you train yourself to notice wonder. So open your eyes, practice gratitude habits regardless of your circumstances, and watch the happy moments in your life multiply.¹²

Monday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 431

(1 Thess 4:13-18)

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord,

¹² Hanson, R. & Mendius R. *Buddha's Brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2009: 75.

that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord,
will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.
For the Lord himself, with a word of command,
with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God,
will come down from heaven,
and the dead in Christ will rise first.
Then we who are alive, who are left,
will be caught up together with them in the clouds
to meet the Lord in the air.
Thus we shall always be with the Lord.
Therefore, console one another with these words.

- ¹ O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- ² Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous works among all the peoples.
- ⁴ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honour and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

- ⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship the Lord in holy splendour;
tremble before him, all the earth.

- ¹⁰ Say among the nations, 'The Lord is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity.'
- ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
- ¹² let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
- ¹³ before the Lord; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

Gospel [LK 4:16-30](#)

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,
and went according to his custom
into the synagogue on the sabbath day.
He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll,
he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
He said to them,
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”
And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They also asked, “Is this not the son of Joseph?”
He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb,
‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place
the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”
And he said,
“Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
Indeed, I tell you,
there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”
When the people in the synagogue heard this,

they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong.
But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Thursday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 434

(Col 1:9-14)

Brothers and sisters:
From the day we heard about you, we do not cease praying for you
and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will
through all spiritual wisdom and understanding
to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,
so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit
and growing in the knowledge of God,
strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might,
for all endurance and patience,
with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share
in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.
He delivered us from the power of darkness
and transferred us to the Kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

A Hymn (Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh are victorious.

²Yahweh has demonstrated victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.
³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;
Break forth into joyous song
Sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre –
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn --
Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas roar and all that fills it –
The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans clap their hands;
Let the mountains sing together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Inauguration of Simon

(Luke 5:1-11)

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of our divine patron, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: *Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.*

Simon answered: *Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.*

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said: *Depart from me, Teacher*¹³, *for I am a sinner*. For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon.

Jesus said to Simon: *Do not be afraid*¹⁴; *from now on you will be catching men*.

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for causing the sun to rise, Thank you for getting me up this morning. Thank you for saying to me: Young Man, I say to you: Arise! The challenges I face cannot defeat you – you have proved it, Help me to remember that they cannot defeat me. Help me to live today with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach. Let everything I do say: Thank you, not Please! Let me live today with open hands to receive, Not with closed fists to protect.

Friday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 435

(Col 1:15-20)

Brothers and sisters: Jesus, our savior, is the image of the invisible 'Abba, our godparent -- the heir of all 'Abba has created.

For in Jesus were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him.

¹³ NRSV: Lord

¹⁴ *Lo' tira'* regularly accompanies a divine commission to set out on a dangerous mission

Jesus is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the Body, the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent.

For in Jesus all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

A Hymn (Ps 116:1-5)

A Psalm of thanksgiving

call to worship

¹ Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth.
²Worship Yahweh with gladness;
come into the presence of Yahweh singing.

creation story

³ Know that Yahweh is our divine patron.
Yahweh made us, and we belong to Yahweh;
We are the people of Yahweh,
We are the sheep of Yahweh's pasture.

call to worship

⁴ Enter the gates of Yahweh with thanksgiving,
Enter the courts of Yahweh with praise.
Give thanks to Yahweh,
Bless the name of Yahweh.

creation story

⁵ For Yahweh is good;
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures forever,
The faithfulness of Yahweh endures to all generations.

(Luke 5:33-39)

The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus: *The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink.*

Jesus answered: *Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.*

Then, Jesus quoted three sayings.

No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, she will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak.

No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins.

No one, who has been drinking old wine, desires new, for he says: The old is good.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for causing the sun to rise, Thank you for getting me up this morning. Thank you for saying to me: Young Man, I say to you: Arise! The challenges I face cannot defeat you – you have proved it, Help me to remember that they cannot defeat me. Help me to live today with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach. Let everything I do say: Thank you, not Please! Let me live today with open hands to receive, Not with closed fists to protect.

Sometimes you cannot repair something which is broken. You just need to start over.

Many of the spiritual teachers popular online and in non-denominational pulpits today have looked at organized religion and decided that it cannot be mended. So they start over.

Jesus is not a quick fix, but something entirely new.

Saturday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 436

(Col 1:21-23)

My brothers and sisters:

You once were alienated and hostile in mind to the Good News because of evil deeds; 'Abba, our godparent, has drawn you into the Christian community¹⁵ through his death, to present you holy, without blemish, and irreproachable before him, provided that you persevere in the faith, firmly grounded, stable, and not shifting from the hope of the Good News that you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, am a minister.

A Lament (Ps 54:1-7)

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul: David is in hiding among us.

Petition

- ¹ Save me, my divine patron, by your name,
and vindicate me by your might.
² Hear my prayer, my divine patron;
give ear to the words of my mouth.

Complaint

¹⁵ They have joined the Christian community in Colossae, which calls itself the *Fleshy Body of Christ* NRSV.

³ For the insolent have risen against me,
the ruthless seek my life;
they do not set their divine patron before them.

Selah

Profession of faith

⁴ But surely, my divine patron is my helper;
Yahweh is the upholder of my life.
⁵ Yahweh will repay my enemies for their evil.
In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

Vow

⁶ With a freewill-offering I will sacrifice to you;
I will give thanks to your name, Yahweh, for it is good.
⁷ For Yahweh has delivered me from every trouble,
and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Teaching on Sabbath

(Luke 6:1-4)

While Jesus was going through a field of grain on a Sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them.

Some Pharisees said: *Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?*

Jesus answered:

Have you not read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he went into the house of our divine patron, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions?

Sabbath Saying

(Luke 6:5)

Jesus also taught: *The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.*

Homily

'Abba, thank you for causing the sun to rise, Thank you for getting me up this morning. Thank you for saying to me: Young Man, I say to you: Arise! The challenges I face cannot defeat you – you have proved it, Help me to remember that they cannot defeat me. Help me to live today with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach. Let everything I do say: Thank you, not Please! Let me live today with open hands to receive, Not with closed fists to protect.

Jesus today is a teacher – a wise man. The wise in the world of Greece and Rome taught their students internal or mental virtues. The wise in the Near East taught their students behavior. Every action has consequences. Some consequences are good; some are bad.

Teachers linked sayings and analogies together, creating teachings. Teachings that provide advice on how to avoid pride, get good advice (Prov 2:4), practice table manners (Prov 23:1; Sir 8:1; 31:12), be reliable (Prov 25:13), make friends (Sir 6:7), and deal with women (Prov 6:24; Sir 9:1) are often framed by teachings that encourage students to excel in life.

Jesus' first teaching on the Sabbath here demonstrates that sayings and analogies are only as good as those who use them. They have no value in themselves. Competent or wise students can apply teachings. Incompetent or foolish students cannot apply the sayings and analogies that they have memorized. Only in the hands of the wise, who can locate the proper saying or analogy to apply to the proper challenge, do sayings or analogies become *apples of gold in a setting of silver* (Prov 25:11). In the hands of fools, who can neither adequately recover the appropriate sayings or analogies from a tradition like the book of Proverbs, nor make satisfactory use of them, these sayings and analogies are *like the legs of a cripple* (Prov 26:7) or *a thorn branch that a drunk tries to use for a cane* (Prov 26:9). They are useless.

The patterns that teachers used to group teachings are often no longer clear. A saying on Sabbath is linked to the first teaching because of the link word: *Sabbath*. Its relevance is unclear. Sometimes a catchword is repeated in each saying or analogy. Sometimes there is a common theme. Sometimes it is the word patterns in analogies that draw them together. Ultimately, it is the

wise that must pattern the sayings and analogies by applying them to particular situations.

The book of Proverbs contains all those things that the experience of a particular culture has identified as potentially valuable. It contains information that at some point made a significant difference in the quality of its life. Travelers must expect the unexpected and prepare to respond. Human lifetimes are no more than extended journeys, and human beings are all travelers who carry traditions, like the book of Proverbs, in order to face life's challenges better. Teachers possessed a special sensitivity for the thresholds of human life, and designed the book of Proverbs to send along with their students on life's journey.¹⁶

Friday of the Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 441

Teaching

(1 Tim 1:1-14)

Greeting

1 Paul, a messenger¹⁷ of Jesus, our messiah,¹⁸ by the command of 'Abba, who delivered us,¹⁹ and of Jesus, our messiah and our hope, 2 to Timothy, my faithful student in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from 'Abba, our godparent, and Jesus, our teacher and messiah.

3 I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. ⁵But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. ⁶Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, without

¹⁶ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr, 2004), 289-290.

¹⁷ NRSV: apostle

¹⁸ NRSV: Christ

¹⁹ NRSV: our savior. Normally, Jesus, not his Father, is addressed as savior.

understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. ⁹This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, ¹⁰fornicators, sodomites, slave-traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching ¹¹that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

12 I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

A Lament (Ps 16:1-11)

A Miktam of David

Petition

- ¹ Protect me, my divine patron,
For in you I take refuge.
² I say to YHWH, 'You are my divine patron;
I have no good apart from you.'

Profession of faith

- ³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
In whom is all my delight.
⁴ Those who choose another divine patron multiply their sorrows;
Their drink-offerings of blood I will not pour out,
Or take their names upon my lips.
⁵ YHWH is my chosen portion and my cup;
You hold my lot.
⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
⁷ I bless YHWH who gives me counsel;

In the night also my heart instructs me.
8 I keep YHWH always before me;
Because my divine patron is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
My body also rests secure.
10 For you do not give me up to *Sheol*,
Or let your faithful one see the Pit.²⁰
11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
In your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

(Luke 6:39-42)

Jesus told his disciples a parable:
“Can a blind person guide a blind person?
Will not both fall into a pit?
No disciple is superior to the teacher;
but when fully trained,
every disciple will be like his teacher.
Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye,
but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?
How can you say to your brother,
‘Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,’
when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye?
You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first;
then you will see clearly
to remove the splinter in your brother’s eye.”

Homily

Thank you, ‘Abba, for waking me up this morning....

²⁰ So there is another destination for the dead than Sheol? Or will the just never die?

Tuesday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 462

Reading 1 [JON 3:1-10](#)

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

“Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you.”
So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD’s bidding.
Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;
it took three days to go through it.
Jonah began his journey through the city,
and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing,
“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,”
when the people of Nineveh believed God;
they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small,
put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the king of Nineveh,
he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe,
covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes.
Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh,
by decree of the king and his nobles:
“Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep,
shall taste anything;
they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water.
Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth
and call loudly to God;
every man shall turn from his evil way
and from the violence he has in hand.
Who knows, God may relent and forgive,
and withhold his blazing wrath,
so that we shall not perish.”
When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way,
he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;
he did not carry it out.

A Lament

(Ps 130:1-8)

A PILGRIMAGE PSALM

Petition

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, Yahweh.
² Yahweh, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

Complaint

³ If you, Yahweh, should mark iniquities,
Yahweh, who could stand?
⁴ But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

Profession of faith

⁵ I wait for Yahweh, my soul waits,
and in Yahweh's word I hope;
⁶ my soul waits for Yahweh
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
⁷ O Israel, hope in Yahweh!
For with Yahweh there is steadfast love,
and with Yahweh is great power to redeem.
⁸ It is Yahweh who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

(Luke 10:38-42)

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a co-worker named Mary who sat beside our Teacher²¹ at his feet listening to him teach.

Martha, exhausted from her ministry, came to Jesus and complained:

Teacher, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to minister to the whole community? Tell her to help me.

²¹ NRSV: the Lord

Our Teacher answered:

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the more difficult role and it will not be taken from her.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up today.
Thank you for calling: *Young man, get up!* (Luke 7:14)
Put a song in my heart,
Not a cramp in my stomach.
Say to me: *Be not afraid!*
I am with you.

Let me live this day mindfully
Consistently and gratefully.

Martha and Mary are twin disciples who share a common ministry.²² Mary here assumes a male role as a student; Martha the traditional female role preparing food. Martha objects to Mary crossing the boundary between male and female roles. Jesus supports Mary's choice. Among the disciples of Jesus, there is no status: no male or female, no slave or free, no Jew or Greek.

Mary as a woman in a man's world has chosen a more demanding ministry, and Jesus supports her choice. He does not demean Martha's ministry as a woman, and, in fact, his relationship to Martha in other New Testament traditions indicates the relationship between Jesus and Martha was closer than his relationship with Mary.

²² Toni Craven, Ross S. Kraemer and Carol L. Meyers, *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the apocryphal/deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 119-120.

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Wednesday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 463

A Parable of Jonah (Jonah 4:1-11)

Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry that his divine patron did not carry out the evil prophesized against Nineveh. He prayed: *Yahweh did I not prophesy this, while I was still in my own land? This is why I fled at first to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and merciful divine patron, slow to anger, rich in clemency, loathe to punish. Now, Yahweh, please take my life from me. It is better for me to die than to live.*"²³

Yahweh asked: *Why are you angry?*

Jonah then left the city for a place to the east of it, where he built himself a hut and waited under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city.

Then Yahweh, his divine patron, provided a gourd plant to grow up over Jonah's head, giving shade that relieved him of any discomfort, Jonah was very happy over the plant.²⁴

²³ Proverb: Death is easier than forgiveness.

²⁴ Like the broom tree Yahweh provided for Elijah – a similar motif. Both prophets despair, and then are comforted.

The next morning at dawn, Jonah's divine patron sent a worm that ate the plant and it withered.

When the sun rose, Jonah's divine patron sent a burning east wind and the sun beat upon Jonah's head until he almost fainted.

Then Jonah prayed to die: *I would be better off dead than alive.*

But Jonah's divine patron said: *Why did the plant withering make you angry?*

I should be angry, Jonah answered, *angry enough to die.*

Then Yahweh said: You are concerned over a plant which cost you nothing. You did not plant it. It came up in one night and in one night it died. Tell me, why should I not be concerned over Nineveh, the great city, with more than 120,000 people -- who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left - - not to mention their livestock?

A Lament

(Ps 86:1-17)

A LAMENT OF DAVID

petition

¹ Incline your ear, O Yahweh, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.

² Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;
save your slave²⁵ who trusts in you.

You are my my divine patron; ³be gracious to me, O Yahweh,
for to you do I cry all day long.

⁴ Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Yahweh, I lift up my soul.

⁵ For you, O Yahweh, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

⁶ Give ear, O Yahweh, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.

²⁵ NRSV: servant

⁷ In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.

Profession of faith

⁸ There is none like you among the divine assembly, O Yahweh,
nor are there any works like yours.

⁹ All the peoples²⁶ you have made shall come
and bow down before you, O Yahweh,
and shall glorify your name.

¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are my divine patron.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Yahweh,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

¹² I give thanks to you, O Yahweh, my divine patron, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name for ever.

¹³ For great is your steadfast love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Complaint

¹⁴ O my divine patron, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.

Petition

¹⁵ But you, O Yahweh, are my divine patron merciful and gracious;
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving-maid.

¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Yahweh, have helped me and comforted me.

²⁶ NRSV: nations

Teaching on Prayer

(Luke 11:1-4)

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him: *Teacher,*²⁷ *teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.*

Jesus said: *When you pray, say:*

‘Abba, your name is holy,
your Kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins²⁸
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us,
and do not let us fail the final test of the end time.

²⁷ NRSV: Yahweh

²⁸ Jesus teaches his followers to forgive just as Yahweh tried to teach Jonah to forgive. Neither were particularly good students.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.
The day is bright, the air is cool, and my heart is full.
Be with me this day in all that I do
Help me live this day with a grateful heart
Because I know that you are with me.

Jonah prays for revenge; Jesus teaches the disciples to pray for forgiveness.

Thursday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 464

Reading I

[Mal 3:13-20b](#)

You have defied me in word, says the LORD,
yet you ask, "What have we spoken against you?"
You have said, "It is vain to serve God,
and what do we profit by keeping his command,
And going about in penitential dress
in awe of the LORD of hosts?²⁹
Rather must we call the proud blessed;
for indeed evildoers prosper,
and even tempt God with impunity."
Then they who fear the LORD spoke with one another,
and the LORD listened attentively;
And a record book was written before him
of those who fear the LORD and trust in his name.
And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts,
my own special possession, on the day I take action.
And I will have compassion on them,
as a man has compassion on his son who serves him.

²⁹ Why do the good suffer and the evil prosper?

Then you will again see the distinction
between the just and the wicked;
Between the one who serves God,
and the one who does not serve him.
For lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,
And the day that is coming will set them on fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch,
says the LORD of hosts.
But for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6](#)

R (Ps 40:5a) **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night.

R **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.

R **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Not so the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

R **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Gospel

[Lk 11:5-13](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:
"Suppose one of you has a friend
to whom he goes at midnight and says,

‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,
for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey
and I have nothing to offer him,’
and he says in reply from within,
‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked
and my children and I are already in bed.
I cannot get up to give you anything.’
I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves
because of their friendship,
he will get up to give him whatever he needs
because of his persistence.

"And I tell you, ask and you will receive;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives;
and the one who seeks, finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
What father among you would hand his son a snake
when he asks for a fish?
Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?
If you then, who are wicked,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit
to those who ask him?"

Friday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 465

Reading I

[Jl 1:13-15; 2:1-2](#)

Gird yourselves and weep, O priests!
Lament! You who care for the altar of Yahweh!
Spend the night in sackcloth, You who minister to our Godparent!

The house of your God is deprived of offering and libation.

Proclaim a fast,
Call an assembly;

Gather the elders,
all who dwell in the land into the house of the Yahweh, your divine
patron

and cry to the LORD!

Alas, the day!
for near is the day of the LORD,
and it comes as ruin from the Almighty.

Blow the trumpet in Zion,
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all who dwell in the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming;
Yes, it is near, a day of darkness and of gloom,
a day of clouds and somberness!
Like dawn spreading over the mountains,
a people numerous and mighty!
Their like has not been from of old,
nor will it be after them,
even to the years of distant generations.

Hymn (Psa 9)

¹ I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

² I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

³ When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished before you.

⁴ For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.

⁵ You have rebuked the nations, you have destroyed the wicked;

- you have blotted out their name forever and ever.
- ⁶ The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins;
their cities you have rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.
- ⁷ But the LORD sits enthroned forever,
he has established his throne for judgment.
- ⁸ He judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with equity.
- ⁹ The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
- ¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.
- ¹² For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- ¹³ Be gracious to me, O LORD.
See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death,
- ¹⁴ so that I may recount all your praises,
and, in the gates of daughter Zion,
rejoice in your deliverance.
- ¹⁵ The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.
- ¹⁶ The LORD has made himself known, he has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. *Higgaion. Selah*
- ¹⁷ The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.
- ¹⁸ For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

¹⁹ Rise up, O LORD! Do not let mortals prevail;
let the nations be judged before you.

²⁰ Put them in fear, O LORD;

let the nations know that they are only human. *Selah*

Gospel

[Lk 11:15-26](#)

When Jesus had driven out a demon, some of the crowd said:

"By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons,
he drives out demons."

Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven.

But he knew their thoughts and said to them,

"Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste
and house will fall against house.

And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?

For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons.

If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul,

by whom do your own people drive them out?

Therefore they will be your judges.

But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons,
then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

When a strong man fully armed guards his palace,
his possessions are safe.

But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him,
he takes away the armor on which he relied
and distributes the spoils.

Whoever is not with me is against me,

and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of someone,
it roams through arid regions searching for rest
but, finding none, it says,

'I shall return to my home from which I came.'

But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order.

Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits

more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there,

and the last condition of that man is worse than the first."



Monday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 467

(Rom 1:1-7)

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle and set apart for the Gospel of God, which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the Gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus our messiah and teacher.³⁰

Through Jesus we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all peoples,³¹ among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy.

Grace to you and peace from our Godparent,³² and our Teacher, Jesus Christ.

A Hymn (Ps 98:1-9)



Narmer with upraised *right hand and holy arm* wielding a war club

*3100-2890 BCE
Egyptian Museum, Cairo
ART37460*

³⁰ NRSV: Christ our Lord

³¹ NRSV: the Gentiles

³² NRSV: God our Father

Call to worship

¹Sing to YHWH a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of YHWH are victorious.³³

²YHWH has achieved victory;

YHWH has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³YHWH is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to YHWH, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing hymns.

⁵**Sing hymns** to YHWH with the lyre –

With the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and horns –

Make a joyful noise before YHWH, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas and all that fills it **roar** –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands;**

Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹at the presence of YHWH,

creation story

YHWH is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,

Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

A Trial of This Generation

(Luke 11:29-32)

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them:

³³ The raised hand and divine arm is an Egyptian metaphor alluding to the portrayal of pharaohs poised to strike the enemies of Egypt with a battle club.

This generation is evil; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

At the judgment the Queen of the Sheba will rise with this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, and there is someone greater than Solomon here.

At the judgment the people of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is someone greater than Jonah here.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for getting me up on this day when my mother died (October 14, 2001).

Thank you for all she was for me.

Help me remember the things I loved, and forgive those I did not.

I offer this day for her.

Jesus challenges us to pay attention to the signs we have, and not continue to ask for signs we do not. Faith is believing that our Godparent has given us what we need, and that we are where we are supposed to be – whether that seems bad or good to us.

The *sign* of Jonah here is not that he was in the belly of the Great Fish for three days as Jesus would be in the belly of the Earth before being raised back to life. The word Jesus uses would be better translated as *example* of Jonah.

Like *this generation* which was scandalized by the teaching of Jesus, Jonah was scandalized by his commission of YHWH to forgive the enemies of the Hebrews personified by the people of Nineveh.

God never endorses us where we are, but always calls us to go somewhere we are not. Faith demands we do things we least expected.



Tuesday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 468

(Rom 1:16-25)

Brothers and sisters:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of Our Godparent³⁴ for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of our Godparent from faith to faith; as it is written: *The one who is righteous by faith will live.*

The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them.

Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew their Godparent they did not accord him glory due the divine or give their Godparent thanks.

Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of their immortal Godparent for the likeness of an image of a mortal human or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes.

Therefore, Our Godparent handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies. They exchanged divine truth for a lie and revered and worshiped creatures rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

A Lament

(Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm dedicated to David.

³⁴ NRSV: God

Profession of faith

¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
The firmament proclaims the handiwork of YHWH.
² One day tells stories to another,
One night makes report to the next.³⁵
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard;
⁴ Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
Their words to the end of the world.
In the heavens YHWH has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵YHWH comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,³⁶
Our divine patron runs the course like a joyful athlete.
⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
Its circuit to the end of them;
Nothing is hidden from its warmth.
⁷ The instructions of YHWH are perfect,
Reviving the soul;
The teachings³⁷ of the YHWH are sure,
Making students wise;
⁸ The precepts of the YHWH are right,
Making minds rejoice;
The commandment of the YHWH is clear,
Enlightening the eyes;
⁹ Living morally³⁸ has no end,³⁹
Enduring forever;
the ordinances of the YHWH are true
Completely righteous.
¹⁰ More to be desired than gold,
Even fine gold in abundance;
Sweeter also than honey,
Dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

³⁵ NRSV: Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

³⁶ Hebrew: *huppah*

³⁷ NRSV: decrees

³⁸ *Fear of YHWH*

³⁹ NRSV: pure

- ¹¹ Moreover by them is your slave warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹² But who can detect their sins?
Clear me from hidden faults.
- ¹³ Stand between your slave⁴⁰ and the insolent;
Do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
Innocent of great transgression.
- ¹⁴ Let my mouth's words and my heart's prayer be acceptable to you,
O YHWH, who births me and delivers me from my enemies.

Teachings on Clean and Unclean (Luke 11:37-41)

After Jesus had finished teaching, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home.

Jesus entered the house of the Pharisee and reclined at table to eat.

The Pharisee was amazed to see that Jesus did not wash before eating.

Our Teacher⁴¹ said to him, *Oh you Pharisees! Although you wash the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you.*

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. Be with me today so that I can marvel at your creation – the world around me and my own abilities. Help me to remember that these are your gifts for which I want to be grateful, not my accomplishments for which I want to be praised.

The Decalogue teaches: *You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or*

⁴⁰ NRSV: servant

⁴¹ NRSV: Our Lord

worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, ¹⁰but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments (Deut 5:8-10). Here both Paul and Jesus emphasize that humans most often *commit adultery* by forgetting that both they and the world around them are divine gifts created by their Godparent. They are to be stewards of both nature and their own gifts, but instead take possession of both and want recognition for what they have accomplished. The most important virtues for humans are gratitude and docility or *teachability*. They should use their bodies and nature to see their Godparent, and be grateful for the quality of life that both allow them to enjoy.

Wednesday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 469

(Rom 2:1-11)

You, O man, are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment. For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things. We know that the judgment of God on those who do such things is true. Do you suppose, then, you who judge those who engage in such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you hold his priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that the kindness of God would lead you to repentance? By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will repay everyone according to his works, eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and distress will come upon everyone who does evil, Jew first and then Greek. But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone

who does good, Jew first and then Greek.
There is no partiality with God.

A Lament (Ps 62:1-12)

*Note to the director: sing to melody of Jeduthun⁴²
Dedicated to David*

Profession of faith

- ¹ For our divine patron alone my soul waits in silence;
from YHWH comes my salvation.
² YHWH alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress;
I shall never be shaken.

Complaint

- ³ How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
⁴ Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.

Selah

Profession of faith

- ⁵ For our divine patron alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from YHWH.
⁶ YHWH alone is my rock and my salvation,

⁴² A Levite of the household of Merari, and one of the three masters of music appointed by David (1 Chr 16:41 1 Chr 16:42 ; 25:1-6). He is called in 2 Chr 35:15 "the king's seer." His descendants are mentioned as singers and players on instruments (Neh 11:17). He was probably the same as Ethan (1 Chr 15:17-19). In the superscriptions to Psalms 39, 62, and 77, the words "upon Jeduthun" probably denote a musical instrument; or they may denote the style or tune invented or introduced by Jeduthun, or that the psalm was to be sung by his choir.

my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

⁷ On our divine patron rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in our divine patron.

Vow

⁸ Trust in YHWH at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before your divine patron;
our divine patron is a refuge for us.

Selah

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰ Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

¹¹ Once our divine patron has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to our divine patron,
¹² and steadfast love belongs to you, YHWH.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

A Trial of Religious Leaders (Luke 11:42-46)

Indictments

Our Teacher said:

“Woe to you Pharisees!

You pay tithes of mint and of rue⁴³ and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for our Godparent. These you should have done, without overlooking the others.

⁴³ ***Ruta graveolens*** — commonly known as **rue**, **common rue** or **herb-of-grace** — is a species of *Ruta* grown as an herb. It is native to the Balkan Peninsula. It is now grown throughout the

Woe to you Pharisees!

You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.”

Then one of the scribes⁴⁴ of the law said to him in reply: “Teacher, by saying this you are indicting us as well.”

And Jesus said:

“Woe also to you scribes of the law!

You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.”

Homily

Monday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 473

(Rom 4:20-25)

Brothers and sisters:

Abraham did not doubt God’s promise in unbelief; rather, he was empowered by faith and gave glory to God and was fully convinced that what God had promised he was also able to do. That is why *it was credited to him as righteousness*.

But it was not for him alone that it was written that *it was credited to him*; it was also for us, to whom it will be credited, who believe in the one who

world as an ornamental plant in gardens, especially because of its bluish leaves, and also sometimes for its tolerance of hot and dry soil conditions. It is also cultivated as a medicinal herb, as a condiment, and to a lesser extent as an insect repellent. Several species grow wild in Syria-Palestine. It is used for medicinal and culinary purposes. It has a powerful scent, and is a stimulant.

⁴⁴ NRSV: scholars

raised Jesus our Teacher from the dead, who was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification.

A Hymn (Latin: *Benedictus*)

(Luke 1: 68-79)

Call to Worship

⁶⁸ Bless Yahweh, divine patron of Israel,

Creation Story

for our divine patron has blessed the people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ Yahweh has raised up a mighty savior for us

from the household of his servant David,

⁷⁰ as Yahweh promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹that we would be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us.

⁷² Thus our divine patron has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,

and has remembered the holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath sworn to Abraham, ⁷⁴ that -- rescued from our enemies --

We might serve Yahweh without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness.

⁷⁶ You, my child, will be called *Prophet of the Most High*;

for you will go before our Teacher to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people

by forgiving their sins.

⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our divine patron,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Teaching on Detachment

(Luke 12:13-21)

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus: *Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.*

Jesus answered: *Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?*

Then Jesus taught the crowd: *Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions.*

Parable of a Foolish Farmer

(Luke 12: -21)

Then Jesus told them a parable.

There was a foolish farmer whose land produced a bountiful harvest.

The farmer asked: *What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest? This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself: Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!*

But his divine patron said: *You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?*

Thus will it be for those who store up treasure for themselves but rich not rich in what matters.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.
I want to believe -- like Abraham -- that you will keep your promises to me.
I want to be what you want me to be, not what I -- like the foolish farmer -- have stored up to be.
I want to be forgiving -- like John -- not judging.

Monday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 473

(Rom 4:20-25)

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But it was not for him alone that it was written that *it was credited to him*; it was also for us, to whom it will be credited, who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Teacher from the dead, who was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification.

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(Luke 1: 68-79)

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(Luke 12: -21)

Then Jesus told them a parable.

There was a foolish farmer whose land produced a bountiful harvest.

The farmer asked: *What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest? This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself: Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!*

But his divine patron said: *You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?*

Thus will it be for those who store up treasure for themselves but rich not rich in what matters.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.
I want to believe -- like Abraham -- that you will keep your promises to me.
I want to be what you want me to be, not what I -- like the foolish farmer -- have stored up to be.
I want to be forgiving -- like John -- not judging.

Tuesday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 474

(Rom 5:12-21)

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man,⁴⁵ and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the gift is not like the sin. Many died through one man's sin, but so many more have received the gift of grace from one man, Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore just as one man's sin led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁴⁷

A Lament

(Ps 40:1-17)

⁴⁵ Note, not through one woman – Eve.

⁴⁶ Hence original sin was not universal, otherwise those who received grace would be equal to those who were punished by original sin.

⁴⁷ Curiously, the more you sin, the more grace you receive.

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

Profession of faith

- ¹ I waited patiently for Yahweh;
My divine patron leaned down and heard my cry.
- ² Yahweh drew me up from *Sheol*,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
- ³ Yahweh put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our divine patron.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in Yahweh.
- ⁴ Happy are those who make
Yahweh their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false divine patrons.
- ⁵ You have multiplied, Yahweh, my divine patron,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.
- ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,
but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt-offering and sin-offering
you have not required.
- ⁷ Then I said: *Here I am! In the scroll it is written:*
⁸ I delight to do your will, O my divine patron;
your instruction is within my heart.

Vow

- ⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Yahweh.
- ¹⁰ I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness

from the great congregation.

Petition

¹¹ Do not, O Yahweh, withhold your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe for ever.

¹² For evils have encompassed me without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.

¹³ Be pleased, O Yahweh, to deliver me;
O Yahweh, make haste to help me.

¹⁴ Let all those be put to shame and confusion
who seek to snatch away my life;
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt.

¹⁵ Let those be shamed who say to me: *Aha, Aha!*

¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation say continually: *Great is Yahweh!*

¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy,
but Yahweh takes thought for me.

You are my help and my deliverer;
do not delay, O my Divine patron.

Gospel[LK 12:35-38](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Gird your loins and light your lamps
and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding,
ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks.

Blessed are those servants
whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival.

Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself,
have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them.

And should he come in the second or third watch
and find them prepared in this way,
blessed are those servants.”

Homily

Some laments in the book of Psalms lack a complaint or a petition, and have only a vow. These laments have been labeled “songs of thanksgiving.” One psalm with such a vow is preserved in part two of the book of Psalms. This numbered psalm in the Bible today actually combines two psalms: a hymn (Ps 66:1–12*) and a lament (Ps 66:13–20).

The government went back to work this week (October 18, 2013), and I went to see *Band of Sisters* (<http://www.bandofsistersmovie.com/>) by independent film maker Mary Tishman at Harkins Shea 14 where it plays through October 24. Tishman herself introduced the 88 minute film, and then was joined by Mary Margaret McBride of St. Joseph’s Hospital (<http://ncronline.org/news/people/excommunicated-sister-finds-healing>) for a Q&A with the audience at its end.

In the US today the average age of Catholic sisters is 77! Tishman spent 8 years filming their on-going commitment to making a difference in immigration, housing, peacemaking and environmental spirituality. She did not tell their stories; she let them tell their own.

The film is not a rant against Rome’s indictment of these religious women as *radical feminists* (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/15/us-pope-us-nuns-idUSBRE93EOPP20130415>) – it is meditation on what people of faith can do, and are doing, to make life for the poor in the US today less painful. The gentleness with which these women face violence is almost incredible. One sister providing pastoral care to undocumented prisoners at a detention center channels Paul when she says you have to love the jailers as much as you love their prisoners (Acts 16:16-40). Gone without regret, says another, are the cloisters where hundreds once lived, and in their place these same women live two by two in radical simplicity as Jesus envisioned (2 Tim 4:10-17).

Band of Sisters deserves a wide audience. It is an inspiring antidote to the ongoing embrace of cynicism and selfishness which now drives too much public discourse.

Thursday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary
Time

Lectionary 476

(Rom 6:19-23)

Brothers and sisters:

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of our divine patron,⁴⁸ the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. The wage of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Teacher.⁴⁹

Teaching on Prayer

(Ps 1:1-6)

adage

Wise are those who do not walk with the wicked . . .
Wise are those who do not stand with sinners . . .
Wise are those who do not sit with fools . . .

Wise are those who obey the law of Yahweh.
Wise are those who meditate on it day and night. ⁵⁰

proverb

The wise are like trees planted by water.
They yield fruit every season.

⁴⁸ NRSV: God

⁴⁹ NRSV: Lord

⁵⁰ Carmelite spirituality. Chapter 7 of the Rule. Why do I remember such things? Perhaps because I believed, because I believe in them.

Their leaves do not wither.
They thrive year after year.

Not so fools,
Not so.

Fools are like chaff.
They are blown away by the wind.

proverb

Fools never stand in the gates of the city,
Sinners never sit with the village assembly.

Yahweh protects the way of the wise.
Neither fools nor sinners shall stand in their way.

Yahweh protects the way of the wise,
The way of fools Yahweh leaves unguarded.

(Luke 12:49-53)

Jesus said to his disciples:⁵¹

I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!

There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Homily

⁵¹ Jesus issues a challenge, and the challenge demands a response, and the response is often divisive.

Be as committed to living well as you were to living badly (Rom).

In the world of the Bible, prayer never began abruptly. There was always a short, formal instruction, admonishing those who wished to pray on the seriousness of the work that they were about to begin, and the behavior that they must carefully observe when they crossed the threshold into the sanctuary.

Today, the Liturgy of the Hours prepares Christian monks and nuns for prayer with the words: *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise. God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.*

The Qur'an prepares Muslims for prayer with the words of the *Al-Fatihah*: *In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, the beneficent, the merciful, owner of the day of judgment. You alone we worship. You alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored, not the path of those who earn your anger, nor of those who go astray.*

There are three psalms that prepared the Hebrews for prayer and taught them how to pray (Ps 1:1–6; 15:1–5; 24:1–10). The first teaching is composed of three analogies. One analogy is an adage; two are proverbs.

An analogy is a genre in which something known is used to teach something unknown. It is the most common genre in the book of Proverbs. An analogy that compares the known with the unknown is an *adage*. An analogy that contrasts the known with the unknown is a *proverb*.

Each line in an analogy is called a *colon*. These lines are combined like a child's Legos into sets of two or three. The lines mirror or parallel one another by comparison or contrast. Parallelism is the identifying characteristic of all psalms in Hebrew and other Semitic languages.

The adage in the *Teaching on Prayer* is composed of five beatitudes (Ps 1:1–2). There are three beatitudes in the first line, and two in the second.

The first three beatitudes are expressed negatively: *Wise are those who do not walk with the wicked* (Ps 1:1).

The second three are expressed positively: *Wise are those who obey the law of Yahweh* (Ps 1:2).

Blessed or *happy* are the words that most translations use in beatitudes that are expressed positively. To be blessed is to be *wise*. The wise have status or honor. Only the wise can survive and are admitted to the sanctuary where households come to pray. The adage reminds those about to pray that they should not *walk with the wicked . . . stand with sinners, or sit with fools* (Ps 1:1). Only those who *obey the law of Yahweh* and *who meditate on it day and night* (Ps 1:2) are prepared to pray (Micah 6:8). The same motif appears in the book of Deuteronomy and in other psalms (Deut 30:15–20; Ps 19:7–13; 119:1–176).

The first proverb in the teaching contrasts the wise, who are *trees planted by water* (Ps 1:3) with fools, who are *chaff . . . blown away by the wind* (Ps 1:4). The wise are blessed. Fools are cursed. Because fools have no status and are shamed, they cannot survive. They cannot feed and protect their own households, and they cannot contribute to the support of households at risk in the tribe. The teaching does not say that fools will not prosper, but rather that the prosperity of fools will not last. The prosperity of fools appears quickly, but disappears as soon as the wind blows. The prosperity of the wise is slow in coming. It takes time for their roots to reach the water table. Yet, when they begin to bloom, they bloom season after season.

The second proverb contrasts fools who cannot stand, sit, or walk with the wise, who have Yahweh as a companion to watch over them wherever they go. It uses a chiasm or frame. *Yahweh protects (A), the way of the wise (B), the way of fools (B'), Yahweh leaves unguarded (A')*. The first phrase in the first line is parallel to the second phrase in the second line, and the second phrase in the first line is parallel to the first phrase in the second line.



Friday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 477

Teaching on Temptation

(Rom 7:18-25)

Brothers and sisters:⁵²

I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. For I take delight in good teachings,⁵³ in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with my better judgment,⁵⁴ taking me captive to the temptation to sin⁵⁵ that dwells in my members. Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body?

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Lament

(Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the teachings⁵⁶ of Yahweh.
- ² Happy are those who learn from the instructions⁵⁷ of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh with their whole heart,
- ³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.
- ⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast

⁵² Teachers in Proverbs address students as *son* or *daughter*. Paul addresses his students or disciples as *brothers* or *sisters*.

⁵³ NRSV: *law of God*

⁵⁴ NRSV: *law of my mind*

⁵⁵ NRSV: *law of sin*

⁵⁶ NRSV: *law*

⁵⁷ NRSV: *keep the decrees*

in learning from your instructions! ⁵⁸
⁶ Then I shall not be shamed,
having my eyes fixed on all your teachings.⁵⁹

Vow

⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your statutes.

Vow

¹³ With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
¹⁴ I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.
¹⁸ Open my eyes, so that I may behold
what wondrous things your law brings forth.

⁵⁸ NRSV: keeping your statutes

⁵⁹ NRSV: commandments

- 19 I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
- 20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
- 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
- 22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
- 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- 24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
- 25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
- 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
- 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- 28 My soul has collapsed from grief;
Your word will raise me up.⁶⁰
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.

⁶⁰ William L. Moran, "Note on Psalm 119:28," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (01/01, 1953), 10-10. MT reads : *dâl^epâ napsî mittûgâ qayy^emént kid^ebâr^ekâ*. I propose to render the first colon, "My soul has *collapsed* from grief." That the proposed meaning of *dip* is not foreign to Hebrew follows from Eccl 10:18, in which *dip* appears in parallelism with *mkk*, interpreted in the light of the Ugaritic parallelism, *mkk/ngs/dlp*. For, though "the house leaks" makes good sense in the Eccl passage, still the Ugaritic parallelism must be considered. In the latter, however, any such meaning as "drip, leak" seems impossible, and though the exact meaning is hard to determine, still "collapse" cannot be wrong by much. Once, therefore, this meaning of Hebrew *dip* is recognized, the parallelism with *qayy^emênî*; "raise me up," certainly favors, if it does not make imperative, our proposal.

- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
- 40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.
- 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.
- 42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
- 43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
- 44 I will keep your law continually,
for ever and ever.
- 45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 46 I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
- 47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
- 48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.
- 49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

Declaration of innocence

- 50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.

51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.
53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.

57 Yahweh is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who act morally,
of those who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

65 You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,

- but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
- 70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
- 71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
- 72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.
- 73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
- 74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
- 75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
- 76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
- 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*
- 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
- 84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
- 85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
- 86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
- 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;

but I have not forsaken your precepts.
88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
100 I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

108 Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

- 121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
- 122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
- 123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
- 124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
- 125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
- 126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

- 127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
- 128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.
- 129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
- 130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
- 131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

- 132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
- 133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
- 134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
- 135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
- 136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.
138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.
144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.

156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfill your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;
give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.

- 172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
- 173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
- 174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.
- 175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
- 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Teaching on Seizing the Opportunity⁶¹ (Luke 12:54-59)

Jesus said to the crowds,

“When you see a cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain – and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot – and so it is.

You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

“Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

Homily

⁶¹ Teaching first appears in the *Stories of Gilgamesh* where Siduri the Brewer advises Gilgamesh to stop mourning for his friend, Enkidu who has died, and get on with his life. Horace: *carpe diem* (Horace, *Odes* Bk 1: 11)

Saturday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 478

Reading 1 [ROM 8:1-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus
has freed you from the law of sin and death.
For what the law, weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do,
this God has done:
by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh
and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us,
who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
For those who live according to the flesh
are concerned with the things of the flesh,
but those who live according to the spirit
with the things of the spirit.
The concern of the flesh is death,
but the concern of the spirit is life and peace.
For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God;
it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it;
and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
But you are not in the flesh;
on the contrary, you are in the spirit,
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
But if Christ is in you,
although the body is dead because of sin,
the spirit is alive because of righteousness.
If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
the one who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also,
through his Spirit that dwells in you.

A Hymn

(Ps 24: 1-10)

Of David. A Psalm.

- ¹ The earth is Yahweh's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
² for Yahweh has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.
- ³ Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh?
And who shall stand in holy place of Yahweh?
⁴ Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
⁵ They will receive blessing from Yahweh,
and vindication from the divine patron of their salvation.
⁶ Such is the company of those who seek Yahweh,
who seek the face of the divine patron of Jacob.

Selah

- ⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the Glorious Ruler⁶² may come in.
⁸ Who is the Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, strong and mighty,
Yahweh, mighty in battle.
⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the Glorious Ruler may come in.
¹⁰ Who is this Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, chief of the divine warriors⁶³,
Yahweh is the Glorious Ruler.

Selah

Gospel[LK 13:1-9](#)

⁶² NRSV: King of Glory, a title comparable to Sun King (Louis XIV of France) or Dazzling Sun Disk or Radiant Pharaoh
– sending out the rays of the sun (Amenhotep IV of Egypt)

⁶³ NRSV: Lord of hosts

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans
whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.
He said to them in reply,
“Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way
they were greater sinners than all other Galileans?
By no means!
But I tell you, if you do not repent,
you will all perish as they did!
Or those eighteen people who were killed
when the tower at Siloam fell on them—
do you think they were more guilty
than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem?
By no means!
But I tell you, if you do not repent,
you will all perish as they did!”

And he told them this parable:
“There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard,
and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none,
he said to the gardener,
‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree
but have found none.
So cut it down.
Why should it exhaust the soil?’
He said to him in reply,
‘Sir, leave it for this year also,
and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it;
it may bear fruit in the future.
If not you can cut it down.’”

Monday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 479

Reading I

[Rom 8:12-17](#)

Brothers and sisters,

we are not debtors to the flesh,
to live according to the flesh.
For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,
but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,
you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of Our Godparent are sons of Our Godparent.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a spirit of adoption,
through which we cry, "Abba, Father!"
The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit
that we are children of Our Godparent,
and if children, then heirs,
heirs of Our Godparent and joint heirs with Christ,
if only we suffer with him
so that we may also be glorified with him.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 68 (lament and hymn)

Petition (Ps 68:1-3)

- ¹ Let Our Godparent 1) rise up, let his enemies 2) be scattered;
let those who hate him 3) flee before him.
- ² As smoke is driven away, so 4) drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked 5) perish before Our Godparent.
- ³ But let the righteous 6) be joyful;
let them 7) exult before Our Godparent;
let them 8) be jubilant with joy.

Call to worship (Ps 68:4)

- ⁴ Sing to Our Godparent, sing praises to the name;
lift up a song to the Cloud Rider —
The name of Yahweh—
Exult!

Creation Story (Ps 68:5-

- ⁵ Patron of Orphans and Protector of Widows
is the Household of Our Godparent.
- ⁶ Our Godparent gives the desolate a place to live;
Leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but rebellious fools live in the desert.
- ⁷ Our Godparent, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*
- ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at your presence, Our Godparent in the Sinai,
at your presence, Our Godparent in Israel.
- ⁹ Rain in abundance, O Our Godparent, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;
- ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O Our Godparent, you provided for the needy.
- ¹¹ Yahweh gives the command;
great is the company of those who bore the tidings:
- ¹² “The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!”
The women at home divide the spoil,
- ¹³ though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its feathers with green gold.
- ¹⁴ When the Almighty scattered kings there,
snow fell on Zalmon.
- ¹⁵ O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
- ¹⁶ Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mountain that Our Godparent desired for his house,
where Yahweh will live forever?
- ¹⁷ With mighty chariots, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
Yahweh came from Sinai into the holy place.
- ¹⁸ You ascended the high mountain,
leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against Yahweh, Our Godparent’s abiding there.

19 Blessed be Yahweh,
who daily bears us up;
Our Godparent is our salvation. *Selah*
20 Our Our Godparent is a Our Godparent of salvation,
and to OUR GODPARENT, Yahweh, belongs escape from death.

21 But Our Godparent will shatter the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their guilty ways.

22 Yahweh said,
“I will bring them back from Bashan,
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
23 so that you may bathe your feet in blood,
so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.”

24 Your solemn processions are seen, O Our Godparent,
the processions of my Our Godparent, my King, into the sanctuary—
25 the singers in front, the musicians last,
between them girls playing tambourines:
26 “Bless Our Godparent in the great congregation,
Yahweh, O you who are of Israel’s fountain!”
27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead,
the princes of Judah in a body,
the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

Petition (Ps 68:28-

28 Summon your might, O Our Godparent;
show your strength, O Our Godparent, as you have done for us before.
29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem
kings bear gifts to you.
30 Rebuke the wild animals that live among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples.
Trample under foot those who lust after tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight in war.
31 Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to Our Godparent.

Call to Worship (Ps 68:32-

³² Sing to Our Godparent, O kingdoms of the earth;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*
³³ O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.
³⁴ Ascribe power to Our Godparent,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.
³⁵ Awesome is Our Godparent in his sanctuary,
the Our Godparent of Israel;
he gives power and strength to his people.

Blessed be Our Godparent!

Gospel

[Lk 13:10-17](#)

Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath.
And a woman was there who for eighteen years
had been crippled by a spirit;
she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect.
When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said,
"Woman, you are set free of your infirmity."
He laid his hands on her,
and she at once stood up straight and glorified Our Godparent.
But the leader of the synagogue,
indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath,
said to the crowd in reply,
"There are six days when work should be done.
Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day."
The Lord said to him in reply, "Hypocrites!
Does not each one of you on the sabbath
untie his ox or his ass from the manger
and lead it out for watering?
This daughter of Abraham,
whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now,
ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day
from this bondage?"
When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated;
and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

What is the spirit of a law?

Today Ramadan 2003 begins. To find the spirit by ignoring the flesh.

Tuesday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 480

Teaching on the Environment

(Rom 8:18-25)

Brothers and sisters:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

Lament

(Ps 126:1-6)

A Song of Ascents.

Profession of faith

¹ When Yahweh restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,
‘Yahweh has done great things for them.’
³ Yahweh has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

Petition

⁴ Restore our fortunes, Yahweh,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Parable of a Mustard Seed (Luke 13:18-19)

Jesus taught:

What is the Kingdom of God like?

To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a farmer took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches.

Parable of Yeast (Luke 13:20-21)

Jesus taught:

To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God?

It is like yeast that a mother of a household took and mixed in with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened.

Homily

Found in Translation

'Kingdom of God' is so last-century. Are there new ways to talk about Jesus' good news?

Brian D. McLaren

Sojourners (March 2006)

<http://sojo.net/magazine/2006/03/found-translation>

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, his language was charged with urgent political, religious, and cultural electricity. But if we speak of the kingdom of God today, the original electricity is largely gone, and in its place we often find a kind of tired familiarity that inspires not hope and excitement, but anxiety or boredom.

Why is kingdom language not as dynamic today? First, in our world, kingdoms have given way to republics, democracies, and democratic republics. Where kings exist, they are by and large anachronisms, playing a limited ceremonial role in relation to parliaments and prime ministers, evoking nothing of the power and authority they did in Jesus' day.

In addition, for many today, kingdom language evokes patriarchy, chauvinism, imperialism, domination, and a regime without freedom—the opposite of the liberating, barrier-breaking, domination-shattering, reconciling movement the kingdom of God was intended to be! If Jesus were here today, I'm quite certain he wouldn't use the language of kingdom at all, which leaves us wondering how he would articulate his message.

It's a very practical question for people like me who believe that the secret message of Jesus has radical transformational potential today—and who feel called to try to communicate it. Of course, we'll always need to go back to Jesus' original words and story, seeking to understand how kingdom language worked in his own day. But then we must discover fresh ways of translating his message into the thought forms and cultures of our contemporary world, if we are to “teach what Jesus taught in the manner he taught it.”

The search for the best translation is an artistic pursuit as well as a theological one. It involves not just a deep understanding of Jesus' message, but also a substantial understanding of our contemporary culture and its many currents and crosscurrents. Whatever metaphors we choose will likely have a limited shelf life, and each will be open to various misunderstandings—just as Jesus' own metaphors were.

I've been playing with a number of metaphors for the last few years; six strike me as having special promise.

The dream of God. I frequently try to put the prayer of the kingdom (what we often call "The Lord's Prayer") into my own words so that I don't just recite it on autopilot. But I often struggle with how to paraphrase the clause "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Since the language of "will" can take us down a trail of control, domination, and coercion, and since I don't believe those ideas are in Jesus' mind, I have looked for other words.

The Greek word that lies beneath our English word "will" can also be translated "wish." But to say, "May your wish come true" sounds fairy tale-ish and creates other problems. But I have found the idea of "the dream of God for creation" does the job nicely. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven" could thus be rendered, "May all your dreams for your creation come true." This language suggests a more personal, less mechanistic relationship between God and our world. It would resonate, for example, with a mother who has great dreams for her child, or an artist who has great dreams for a novel or symphony he is creating.

The call to faith is the call to trust God and God's dreams enough to realign our dreams with God's, to dream our little dreams within God's big dream. The call to receptivity is the call to continually receive God's dreams—a process that seems to be a lifelong one. The call to baptism is the call to publicly identify with God's dream and to disassociate with all competing isms or ideologies that claim to provide the ultimate dream (including nationalism, consumerism, hedonism, conservatism, liberalism, and so on). And the call to practice is the call to learn to live the way God dreams for us to live.

The revolution of God. For people like Martin Luther King Jr., attuned to fighting injustice, corruption, oppression, racism, and other forms of social evil, the "revolution" or "revolutionary movement" of God naturally flows from the metaphor of the dream of God for creation.

This metaphor claims that we human beings have created a totalitarian regime—a regime of lust (where too many people are reduced to sex objects or hyped into sexual predators), a regime of pride and power (where some thrive at the expense or to the exclusion of others), a regime of racism, classism, ageism, and nationalism (where people are identified as enemies or evil or inferior because of the color of their skin or the physical or social location of their birth), a regime of consumerism and greed (where life is commodified,

where people become slaves to their jobs, where the environment is reduced to natural resources for human consumption, where time is money, which makes life become money). This regime is unacceptable, and God is recruiting people to join a revolutionary movement of change.

The revolution cannot use the corrupt tactics of the current regime; otherwise, it will only replace one corrupt regime with another. For example, if it uses violence to overcome violence, deceit to overcome deceit, coercion to overcome coercion, fear to overcome fear, then the revolution isn't really revolutionary; it's just a matter of lateral conversion or regime change. The very success of such a revolution would reinforce confidence in its tactics.

So perhaps we need a modifier in front of revolution to show how the goals and tactics of this regime are radically different: the peace revolution of God, the spiritual revolution of God, the love revolution of God, the reconciling revolution of God, the justice revolution of God. In these ways, we get much closer to the dynamic hidden in Jesus' original language of kingdom of God.

The mission of God. The Latin term *missio dei* has long been used to describe God's work in the world. Its etymology (the root *miss* means "send") reminds us that God sends us into the world to be agents of change: We have a task to do for God. True, there is more to the kingdom than mission; being in relationship is essential to life in the kingdom, so kingdom life is not just doing work. But this metaphor still has great value, as long as we complement it with more relational language.

We might adapt the metaphor and speak of the medical mission of God, adding the relational connotations of caring and healing. Imagine that everyone on earth has become infected with a horrible virus. The virus makes people physically sick and mentally insane. Its symptoms vary from person to person and place to place: In one place it causes violence, in another sexual aggression, in another lying, in another paralysis, and so on.

Imagine that a doctor develops a cure. He brings the cure to you and says, "Once you take this medicine, you'll begin to feel better, but I'm not just giving you the cure for your sake. As soon as you feel well enough, I want you to make more of the cure and begin bringing it to others. And tell them the same thing: they are being healed not just so they can be healthy but also so they can become healers for the sake of others." Just as the disease spread "virally," now the cure will spread. A healing mission—where you are healed so

you can join in healing others—would be an apt metaphor for the kingdom of God.

The party of God. Jesus often compared the kingdom to parties, feasts, and banquets. Today we could say that God is inviting people to leave their gang fights, workaholism, loneliness, and isolation and join the party, to leave their exclusive parties (political ones, for example, which win elections by dividing electorates) and join one inclusive party of a different sort, to stop fighting, complaining, hating, or competing and instead start partying and celebrating the goodness and love of God.

Just today I met some folks from a church in Minneapolis who demonstrate this metaphor in a dramatic and fun way. A group of them gather on a street corner in a poor part of town. They take overturned trash cans, old pots and pans, and an assortment of drums and other percussion instruments and start creating a loud, joyful rhythm. Soon a crowd gathers. It's impossible not to smile when you hear the joyful music being made mostly from junk. Homeless folk and people from the neighborhood start dancing. Then the church members start distributing food—not in the somber style of a soup kitchen, but in the joyful atmosphere of a street party. They don't have to say a word, really; they're demonstrating their message—that the kingdom of God is like a street party to which everybody is invited.

The network of God. A promising new metaphor works with the idea of a network or system. God is inviting people into a life-giving network. First, God wants people to be connected, plugged in, in communication with God, so God can transfer to them what they need—not just information but also virus-debugging software, along with love, hope, empowerment, purpose, and wisdom. As well, each person who is connected to God must become integrally connected to all others in the network. In this way, the network of God breaks down the walls of smaller, exclusive networks (like networks of racism, nationalism, and the like) and invites them into the only truly worldwide web of love. The network becomes a resource for people outside the network as well, and of course, people are always invited to enter the connectivity themselves.

The metaphor of an ecosystem could work in a similar way: We are currently living in an imbalanced, self-destructive ecosystem, but God is inviting us to live in a new network of relationships that will produce balance, harmony, and health. The metaphor of a community works along similar lines. One thinks of theologian Stanley Grenz speaking in terms of “the community of

God,” or Dr. King’s preferred phrases, “the beloved community” or “the inescapable network of mutuality.”

The dance of God. In the early church, one of the most powerful images used for the Trinity was the image of a dance of mutual indwelling. The Father, Son, and Spirit live in an eternal, joyful, vibrant dance of love and honor, rhythm and harmony, grace and beauty, giving and receiving. The universe was created to be an expression and extension of the dance of God—so all creatures share in the dynamic joy of movement, love, vitality, harmony, and celebration. But we humans broke with the dance. We stamped on the toes of other dancers, ignored the rhythm, rejected the grace, and generally made a mess of things. But God sent Jesus into the world to model for us a way of living in the rhythm of God’s music of love, and ever since, people have been attracted to the beauty of his steps and have begun rejoining the dance.

There are many other metaphors we could explore. In a sense, Jesus’ creative use of parables sets an example for us to follow. It inspires us to ongoing creative communication—seeking to convey the kingdom through the symbolism of words as he did in the short fictional form of parable, and also in poetry, short story, novel, or essay. But it doesn’t stop with the symbolism of words. People have been inspired to express the kingdom through the symbols of space and form, color, and texture—in architecture and interior design. They have used the symbolism of movement and gesture in dance and drama. They’ve used the visual languages of painting, sculpture, collage, flower arranging, or gardening. Even the symbolic language of taste can express the kingdom in cooking. Come to think of it, we might say that the kingdom of God is like an arts colony.

*Brian McLaren, a Sojourners board member, is founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in Maryland. This article is adapted from his new book, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*. Reprinted with permission from W Publishing Group. © 2006.*



Wednesday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time
Lectionary 481

(Rom 8:26-30)

Brothers and sisters:

The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit herself⁶⁴ intercedes with inexpressible labor pains.⁶⁵ The one who searches hearts knows the Spirit's intention, because she⁶⁶ intercedes for the faithful_holy ones according to 'Abba's will.

We know that all things work for good for those who are faithful to 'Abba,⁶⁷ and who are called according to divine⁶⁸ purpose. For those 'Abba foreknew 'Abba also predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.⁶⁹ Those 'Abba predestined 'Abba also called; and those 'Abba called 'Abba also justified; and those 'Abba justified 'Abba also glorified.⁷⁰

A Lament

(Ps 13:1-6)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Complaint

¹ How long, O Yahweh? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Petition

³ Consider and answer me, O Yahweh my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

⁶⁴ NRSV: himself

⁶⁵ NRSV: groanings The Spirit is a Godmother

⁶⁶ NRSV: he

⁶⁷ NRSV: love God

⁶⁸ NRSV: God's

⁶⁹ Another birth image

⁷⁰ Point here is that even the saved are saved not by their own merits, but by the grace of God

⁴ and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed';
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

Vow

⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Yahweh,
because my divine patron has dealt bountifully with me.

(Luke 13:22-30)

Jesus passed through towns and villages,
teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem.
Someone asked him,
"Lord, will only a few people be saved?"
He answered them,
"Strive to enter through the narrow gate,
for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter
but will not be strong enough.
After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door,
then will you stand outside knocking and saying,
'Lord, open the door for us.'
He will say to you in reply,
'I do not know where you are from.'
And you will say,
'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.'
Then he will say to you,
'I do not know where you are from.
Depart from me, all you evildoers!'
And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth
when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God
and you yourselves cast out.
And people will come from the east and the west
and from the north and the south
and will recline at table in the Kingdom of God.

For behold, some are last who will be first,
and some are first who will be last."⁷¹

Homily

Abba in the mouth of Jesus is a relic, an *ipsissima vox* relayed by tradition (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).⁷² The word sums up Jesus' unique relationship to the Father because he employed an intimate family expression, *Abba*, used in Aramaic almost exclusively in these contexts and rarely if ever in regard to Yahweh. In the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, in the article *Abba*, Kittel writes: "In any case there can be no doubt that the use of the word in the community is linked with Jesus' term for God and thus denotes an appropriation of the relationship proclaimed and lived out by Him. Jewish usage shows how this father-child relationship to God far surpasses any possibilities of intimacy assumed in Judaism, introducing indeed something which is entirely new."

More than anyone else, as far as I can gather, Joachim Jeremías has popularized this view, based on his own and previous research. In the popular booklet, *The Lord's Prayer*, he writes: "*Abba* was an everyday word, a homely family-word, a secular word, the tender address of the child to its father: 'Dear father/ No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner. Jesus did it always, in all his prayers which are handed down to us, with one single exception, the cry from the cross: 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?'" (19-20).

There is indeed no difficulty in accepting *Abba* as an everyday family word used by Jesus. Nor is there any need to question that Jesus' use of the word *Abba* to address God has something very special about it, since tradition is careful to record this in Mark, Romans, and Galatians. However, *Abba* does have many shades of meaning according to its context. In the Targums, for example, it is everywhere used where there is a direct address to a human father (see examples in comments further ahead on Gen. 22:7) and with a variety of nuances. My purpose here is to examine the meaning of *Abba* within the context of Mark 14:32-42, "the agony in the garden."

⁷¹ Who will be saved? Why this is a burning question for some – those who are unsure they will be saved, and not for others – those who are sure they are saved. God will do what God is going to do, and regardless, I will understand and be satisfied, so why worry?

⁷² Joseph A. Grassi, "Abba, Father (Mark 14:36) : Another Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 3 (09/01, 1982), 449-458.

Thursday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 482

(Rom 8:31-39)

Brothers and sisters:

If 'Abba is for us, who can be against us? 'Abba did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against Abba's chosen ones? It is 'Abba who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Jesus, our Messiah, who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of 'Abba, who indeed intercedes for us.

What will separate us from the love which our Messiah has for us? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

As it is written:

*For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered.*⁷³

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of 'Abba in Jesus, our messiah and Teacher and Messiah.

A Lament

(Ps 109:1-31)

⁷³ ²² Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (Ps 44:22)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

Petition

¹ Do not be silent, my divine patron which I worship.

Complaint

² For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,
speaking against me with lying tongues.

³ They beset me with words of hate,
and attack me without cause.

⁴ In return for my love they accuse me,
even while I make prayer for them.

⁵ So they reward me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.

⁶ They say, 'Appoint a wicked man against him;
let an accuser stand on his right.

⁷ When he is tried, let him be found guilty;
let his prayer be counted as sin.

⁸ May his days be few;
may another seize his position.

⁹ May his children be orphans,
and his wife a widow.

¹⁰ May his children wander about and beg;
may they be driven out of the ruins they inhabit.

¹¹ May the creditor seize all that he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.

¹² May there be no one to do him a kindness,
nor anyone to pity his orphaned children.

¹³ May his posterity be cut off;
may his name be blotted out in the second generation.

¹⁴ May the iniquity of his father be remembered before Yahweh,
and do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.

¹⁵ Let them be before Yahweh continually,
and may his memory be cut off from the earth.

¹⁶ For he did not remember to show kindness,
but pursued the poor and needy
and the broken-hearted to their death.

¹⁷ He loved to curse; let curses come on him.

He did not like blessing; may it be far from him.
18 He clothed himself with cursing as his coat,
may it soak into his body like water,
like oil into his bones.
19 May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself,
like a belt that he wears every day.'

Petition

20 May that be the reward of my accusers from Yahweh,
of those who speak evil against my life.
21 But you, Yahweh, my Yahweh,
act on my behalf for your name's sake;
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me.

Complaint

22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is pierced within me.
23 I am gone like a shadow at evening;
I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting;
my body has become gaunt.
25 I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.

Petition

26 Help me, Yahweh, my divine patron!
Save me according to your steadfast love.
27 Let them know that this is your hand;
you, Yahweh, have done it.
28 Let them curse, but you will bless.
Let my assailants be put to shame; may your servant be glad.
29 May my accusers be clothed with dishonor;
may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a mantle.

Vow

30 With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord;
I will praise him in the midst of the throng.

³¹ For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save them from those who would condemn them to death.

Trial of Jerusalem

(Luke 13:31-35)

Sentence

Some Pharisees came to Jesus and said: *Go away, leave this area because Herod wants to kill you.*

Jesus said: *Go and tell that womanizer,⁷⁴ Behold, I cast out demons and I perform healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I accomplish my purpose. Yet I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day, for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem.*

Appeal

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned. But I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh.

Homily

Monday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 485

⁷⁴ NRSV: fox. "Fox" here means "randy" as "fox" is used in the Song. Herod is a womanizer!

Reading I

[Rom 11:29-36](#)

Brothers and sisters:
The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable⁷⁵.

Just as you once disobeyed God -- but have now received mercy --
because of their⁷⁶ disobedience,
so they have now disobeyed in order that,
by virtue of the mercy shown to you,
they too may now receive mercy.
For God delivered all to disobedience,
that he might have mercy upon all.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!

For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counselor?
Or who has given him anything
that he may be repaid?

For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To God be glory forever. Amen.

A Lament

(Ps 69:1-36)

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of David.

Petition

¹ Save me, my divine patron,

Complaint

⁷⁵ Once 'Abba blesses you with land and children – no one can take away the blessing.

⁷⁶ Who is "their" – Adam and Eve, the Hebrews?

for the waters have come up to my neck.
² I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
³ I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my divine patron.
⁴ More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause;
many are those who would destroy me,
my enemies who accuse me falsely.

Declaration of Innocence

] What I did not steal
must I now restore?
⁵ My divine patron, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Petition

⁶ Do not let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me,
O Yahweh, chief of the divine warriors;⁷⁷
do not let those who seek you be dishonored because of me,
O divine patron of Israel.

Declaration of Innocent

⁷ It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that shame has covered my face.
⁸ I have become a stranger to my household,
an outsider⁷⁸ to my mother's children.
⁹ It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.
¹⁰ When I humbled my soul with fasting,

⁷⁷ NRSV: Lord of hosts

⁷⁸ NRSV: alien

they insulted me for doing so.

¹¹ When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.

¹² I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate,
and the drunkards make songs about me.

Petition

¹³ But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Yahweh.
At an acceptable time, my divine patron,
in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.

With your faithful help ¹⁴rescue me
from sinking in the mire;

let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.

¹⁵ Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or *Sheol* close its mouth over me.

¹⁶ Answer me, O Yahweh, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

¹⁷ Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.

¹⁸ Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.

Complaint

¹⁹ You know the insults I receive,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.

²⁰ Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.

²¹ They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Petition

²² Let their table be a trap for them,
a snare for their allies.

- ²³ Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.
- ²⁴ Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.
- ²⁵ May their campsite be a desolation;
let no one live in their tents.
- ²⁶ For they persecute those whom you have struck down,
and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more.
- ²⁷ Add guilt to their guilt;
may they have no acquittal from you.
- ²⁸ Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.
- ²⁹ But I am lowly and in pain;
let your salvation, my divine patron, protect me.

Vow

- ³⁰ I will praise the name of my divine patron with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
- ³¹ This will please Yahweh more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
- ³² Let the oppressed see it and be glad;
you who seek my divine patron, let your hearts revive.
- ³³ For Yahweh hears the needy,
and does not despise his own that are in bonds.
- ³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise Yahweh,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
- ³⁵ For my divine patron will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and the people of Yahweh shall live there and possess it;
- ³⁶ the descendants of his people shall inherit it,
and those who are faithful⁷⁹ the name of Yahweh shall live in it.

(Luke 14:12-14)

⁷⁹ NRSV: love

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine
at the home of one of the leading Pharisees.
He said to the host who invited him,
"When you host a meal,
do not invite your friends or your covenant partners or your relatives or your
wealthy neighbors,
in case they may invite you back and you have repayment.
Rather, when you hold a banquet,
invite the powerless, the crippled, the lame, the blind.⁸⁰
You will be blessed by their inability to repay you at the resurrection of the
righteous."⁸¹

Homily

Wednesday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 487

Reading I

[Rom 13:8-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another;
for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
The commandments, You shall not commit adultery;
you shall not kill;
you shall not steal;
you shall not covet,
and whatever other commandment there may be,
are summed up in this saying, namely,

⁸⁰ Faith comes only to the sinner – the powerless.

⁸¹ The rapture?

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
Love does no evil to the neighbor;
hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 112:1b-2, 4-5, 9](#)

R (5a) **Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need.**

or:

R **Alleluia.**

Blessed the man who fears the LORD,
who greatly delights in his commands.
His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth;
the upright generation shall be blessed.

R **Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need.**

or:

R **Alleluia.**

He dawns through the darkness, a light for the upright;
he is gracious and merciful and just.
Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice.

R **Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need.**

or:

R **Alleluia.**

Lavishly he gives to the poor;
his generosity shall endure forever;
his horn shall be exalted in glory.

R **Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need.**

or:

R **Alleluia.**

Gospel

[Lk 14:25-33](#)

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus,
and he turned and addressed them,
"If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother,
wife and children, brothers and sisters,
and even his own life,
he cannot be my disciple.
Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me

cannot be my disciple.
Which of you wishing to construct a tower
does not first sit down and calculate the cost
to see if there is enough for its completion?
Otherwise, after laying the foundation
and finding himself unable to finish the work
the onlookers should laugh at him and say,
'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.'
Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down
and decide whether with ten thousand troops
he can successfully oppose another king
advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops?
But if not, while he is still far away,
he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.
In the same way,
everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple."

Friday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 489

Reading I

[Rom 15:14-21](#)

I myself am convinced about you, my brothers and sisters,
that you yourselves are full of goodness,
filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.
But I have written to you rather boldly in some respects to remind you,
because of the grace given me by God
to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles
in performing the priestly service of the Gospel of God,
so that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable,
sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast in what pertains to God.
For I will not dare to speak of anything

except what Christ has accomplished through me
to lead the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed,
by the power of signs and wonders,
by the power of the Spirit of God,
so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum
I have finished preaching the Gospel of Christ.
Thus I aspire to proclaim the Gospel
not where Christ has already been named,
so that I do not build on another's foundation,
but as it is written:

Those who have never been told of him shall see,
and those who have never heard of him shall understand.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4](#)

R (see 2b) **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
His right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

R **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

R **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

R **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

Gospel

[Lk 16:1-8](#)

Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward
who was reported to him for squandering his property.
He summoned him and said,
‘What is this I hear about you?

Prepare a full account of your stewardship,
because you can no longer be my steward.'
The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do,
now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me?
I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg.
I know what I shall do so that,
when I am removed from the stewardship,
they may welcome me into their homes.'
He called in his master's debtors one by one.
To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?'
He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.'
He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note.
Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.'
Then to another he said, 'And you, how much do you owe?'
He replied, 'One hundred measures of wheat.'
He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note;
write one for eighty.'
And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently.
For the children of this world
are more prudent in dealing with their own generation
than the children of light."

Saturday of the Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 490

(1 Thess 4:9-11)

My brothers and sisters:

On the subject of sharing you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by 'Abba, our godparent, to love one another. Indeed, you do this for all Christians throughout Macedonia. Nevertheless we urge you, brothers and sisters, to progress even more, and to aspire to live a tranquil life, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you.

A Hymn
(Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh have gained victory.

²Yahweh has made known victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre –

with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn

Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas roar and all that fills it –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans clap their hands;

Let the mountains sing together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,

Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

A Parable of Talents

(Matt 25:14-30)

Jesus taught his disciples this parable:

A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave 80 years wages, to another 32 years wages; to a third 16 years wages – to each according to his ability.⁸²

Then he went away.
Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five.
Likewise, the one who received two made another two.
But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.
After a long time
the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them.
The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five.
He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.'
His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'
Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.'
His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'
Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.'
His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?'

⁸² A *talent* is the weight an adult male can carry – like the ox-hide ingot of copper, or about 65 pounds. A talent is 6,000 days or 16 years wages paid in silver. The average daily wage during the first century was a *denarius*. Sixty pounds of silver was worth more than \$20,000 in 2013 -- \$1250 a year.

Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.
For to everyone who has,
more will be given and he will grow rich;
but from the one who has not,
even what he has will be taken away.
And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”

Homily

The single most frequent habit of happy people is gratitude. They notice it, feel it, express it, absorb it, and practice it. Gratitude is a stress reliever, a mood booster, and it [gives the immune system a lift](#). (1) It offers these benefits of exercise plus [better sleep](#) without all the sweat.

Still, it's surprisingly easy to lose sight of this simple habit. In fact, it can be very difficult to be grateful when you are faced with a heavy "to do" list, a surly teenager, an annoying spouse, or a stack of bills. You might even think that it's frankly impossible to be grateful with the mountain of troubles in your life.

But here's the thing: Happy people are grateful regardless of their circumstances. If they have cancer, they're grateful for their medical care and family support. If they're single, they're grateful for their friendships. If they're unemployed, they're grateful to have a roof over their heads. You get the idea.

Furthermore, happy people experience gratitude in bite-sized bits all day long. In my book [Shortcuts to Inner Peace](#), I explain how gratitude is the foundation for happiness. So let's break gratitude down into the fundamentals.

Happy people are grateful for the little things They don't take for granted everyday experiences like waking up alive, running water, electricity, vision, or a plate of food. They notice everyday miracles and are grateful for them.

Happy people intentionally take time for gratitude They have an assortment of gratitude practices that they employ. They may spend time at the end of the day writing down or mentally listing the things from their day for which they're grateful. They may use meals as a time for reflection on their blessings. They make gratitude a daily practice.

Happy people let gratitude sink in They take a moment to let their experience of gratitude fill them up. They don't just say the words, "I'm grateful", they actually *feel* the experience of gratitude. They might sigh, breathe, or exclaim as a way of absorbing their feeling.

Happy people are grateful for the people around them They have the habit of thanking people in their lives for the little things. They dole out frequent compliments, thank yous, and positive feedback.

Happy people talk about their gratitude They share with others their feelings of bliss and abundance. They are vocal with their gratitude and infect others with their joy.

Happy people are grateful for other people's successes and joys Happy people enjoy other people's good fortune. They live in a world where there is plenty to go around. They do not see someone else's gain as their personal loss. They see gain as something to be shared and celebrated by all.

Happy people know that life is an obvious miracle. You too can see life in this way once you train yourself to notice wonder. So open your eyes, practice gratitude habits regardless of your circumstances, and watch the happy moments in your life multiply.⁸³

Monday of the Thirty-Second Week of the Year

Lectionary: 491

(Wis 1:1-7)

Love justice, you who judge the earth;
think of the Lord in goodness,
and seek him in integrity of heart;
Because he is found by those who test him not,
and he manifests himself to those who do not disbelieve him.
For perverse counsels separate a man from God,
and his power, put to the proof, rebukes the foolhardy;
Because into a soul that plots evil, wisdom enters not,
nor dwells she in a body under debt of sin.

⁸³ Hanson, R. & Mendius R. *Buddha's Brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2009: 75.

For the holy Spirit of discipline flees deceit
and withdraws from senseless counsels;
and when injustice occurs it is rebuked.
For wisdom is a kindly spirit,
yet she acquits not the blasphemer of his guilty lips;
Because God is the witness of his inmost self
and the sure observer of his heart
and the listener to his tongue.
For the Spirit of the Lord fills the world,
is all-embracing, and knows what man says.

A Lament

(Ps 139:1-24)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

Profession of faith

- ¹ Yahweh, you have searched me and known me.
² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
³ You search out my path
and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, Yahweh, you know it completely.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Declaration of Innocence

- ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹ Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light around me become night,
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Profession of faith

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you palpated me⁸⁴ in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, my divine patron!
How vast is the sum of them!
18 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Petition

19 O that you would kill the wicked, my divine patron,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—
20 those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil!
21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Yahweh?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, my divine patron, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
24 See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Gospel [LK 17:1-6](#)

⁸⁴ NRSV: you knit me together

Jesus said to his disciples,
“Things that cause sin will inevitably occur,
but woe to the one through whom they occur.
It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck
and he be thrown into the sea
than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.
Be on your guard!
If your brother sins, rebuke him;
and if he repents, forgive him.
And if he wrongs you seven times in one day
and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’
you should forgive him.”

And the Apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”
The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,
‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

Homily

Tuesday of the Thirty-Second Week of the Year

Lectionary: 492

(Wis2:23—3:9)

Our creator⁸⁵ formed humans⁸⁶ to be imperishable; an image of divine nature our creator made them. But by the envy of the Devil, death entered the world, and they who are in the possession of the Devil experience it.

But the souls of the just are in the hand of our divine patron, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction.

But they are in peace. For if before others, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality; Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed,

⁸⁵ NRSV: God

⁸⁶ NRSV: man

because our divine patron tried them and found them worthy of the divine plane. As gold in the furnace, our creator proved them, and as sacrificial offerings our divine patron took them to the divine plane.

In the time of their visitation the souls of the just shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble. They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and Yahweh shall be their patron forever. Those who trust in our divine patron shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with our divine patron in love. Because grace and mercy are with the holy ones, and the care of our divine patron is with the elect.

A Hymn (Ps 34:1-22)

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Call to Worship

- ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times;
I will sing praise Yahweh continually.
- ² My soul boasts in Yahweh;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify Yahweh with me,
let us exalt the name of Yahweh together.

Creation story

- ⁴ I sought Yahweh,
Yahweh answered me,
Yahweh delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to Yahweh
be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor soul cried,
was heard by Yahweh,
was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ The messenger of Yahweh encamps around those who live morally Yahweh,
and delivers them.

Call to worship

- ⁸ O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
happy are those who take refuge in Yahweh.
- ⁹ Live morally,⁸⁷ holy ones of Yahweh,
for those who live morally have no want.
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you how to live morally.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

Creation story

- ¹⁵ The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous,
and the ears of Yahweh are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of Yahweh is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh rescues them from them all.
- ²⁰ Yahweh keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- ²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² Yahweh redeems the life of the servants of Yahweh;
none of those who take refuge in Yahweh will be condemned.

Gospel [LK 17:7-10](#)

⁸⁷ Comparable to ...*fear Yahweh*

Jesus said to the Apostles:
“Who among you would say to your servant
who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field,
‘Come here immediately and take your place at table’?
Would he not rather say to him,
‘Prepare something for me to eat.
Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink.
You may eat and drink when I am finished’?
Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?
So should it be with you.
When you have done all you have been commanded, say,
‘We are unprofitable servants;
we have done what we were obliged to do.’”

Homily

Wednesday of the Thirty-Second Week of the Year

Lectionary: 493

(Wis 6:1-11)

Hear, O kings, and understand;
learn, you magistrates of the earth's expanse!
Hearken, you who are in power over the multitude
and lord it over throngs of peoples!
Because authority was given you by the Lord
and sovereignty by the Most High,
who shall probe your works and scrutinize your counsels.
Because, though you were ministers of his kingdom, you judged not rightly,
and did not keep the law,
nor walk according to the will of God,
Terribly and swiftly shall he come against you,
because judgment is stern for the exalted—
For the lowly may be pardoned out of mercy
but the mighty shall be mightily put to the test.
For the Lord of all shows no partiality,
nor does he fear greatness,
Because he himself made the great as well as the small,

and he provides for all alike;
but for those in power a rigorous scrutiny impends.
To you, therefore, O princes, are my words addressed
that you may learn wisdom and that you may not sin.
For those who keep the holy precepts hallowed shall be found holy,
and those learned in them will have ready a response.
Desire therefore my words;
long for them and you shall be instructed.

A Lament

(Ps 82:1-8)

A Psalm of Asaph

- ¹ Our divine patron goes to the podium⁸⁸ in the divine assembly,
and indicts the other divine patrons:⁸⁹
² *How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?*

Selah

- ³ *Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the homeless.*
⁴ *Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*
- ⁵ The powerless have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk around in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- ⁶ *You are divine patrons, sons and daughters of the Creator⁹⁰
nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
and fall like any prince.*
- ⁸ Stand up, our divine patron, judge the earth;
for all peoples belong to you!

(Luke 17:11-19)

⁸⁸ NRSV: has taken his place

⁸⁹ NRSV: gods

⁹⁰ NRSV: gods, children of the Most High, all of you;

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem,
he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.
As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him.
They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying,
“Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!”
And when he saw them, he said,
“Go show yourselves to the priests.”
As they were going they were cleansed.
And one of them, realizing he had been healed,
returned, glorifying God in a loud voice;
and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.
He was a Samaritan.
Jesus said in reply,
“Ten were cleansed, were they not?
Where are the other nine?
Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”
Then he said to him, “Stand up and go;
your faith has saved you.”

Homily

Thursday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 494

Reading 1 [WIS 7:22B-8:1](#)

In Wisdom is a spirit
intelligent, holy, unique,
Manifold, subtle, agile,
clear, unstained, certain,
Not baneful, loving the good, keen,
unhampered, beneficent, kindly,
Firm, secure, tranquil,
all-powerful, all-seeing,
And pervading all spirits,
though they be intelligent, pure and very subtle.
For Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion,
and she penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity.
For she is an aura of the might of God
and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nought that is sullied enters into her.

For she is the refulgence of eternal light,
the spotless mirror of the power of God,
the image of his goodness.
And she, who is one, can do all things,
and renews everything while herself perduring;
And passing into holy souls from age to age,
she produces friends of God and prophets.
For there is nought God loves, be it not one who dwells with Wisdom.
For she is fairer than the sun
and surpasses every constellation of the stars.
Compared to light, she takes precedence;
for that, indeed, night supplants,
but wickedness prevails not over Wisdom.

Indeed, she reaches from end to end mightily
and governs all things well.

A Lament (Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the teachings⁹¹ of Yahweh.
² Happy are those who learn from the instructions⁹² of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh with their whole heart,
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.
- ⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in learning from your instructions! ⁹³
⁶ Then I shall not be shamed,

⁹¹ NRSV: law

⁹² NRSV: keep the decrees

⁹³ NRSV: keeping your statutes

having my eyes fixed on all your teachings.⁹⁴

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will follow your instructions;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your teachings.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your instructions.

Vow

- ¹³ With my lips I declare
all the instructions of your mouth.
¹⁴ I delight in the way of your teachings
as much as in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your slave,
so that I may live and observe your word.
¹⁸ Open my eyes, so that I may behold
what wondrous things your law brings forth.
¹⁹ I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing

⁹⁴ NRSV: commandments

- for your ordinances at all times.
- 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
- 22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
- 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- 24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
- 25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
- 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
- 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- 28 My soul has collapsed from grief;
Your word will raise me up.⁹⁵
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.

⁹⁵ William L. Moran, "Note on Psalm 119:28," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (01/01, 1953), 10-10. MT reads : *dâl^epâ napsî mittûgâ qayy^emént kid^ebâr^ekâ*. I propose to render the first colon, "My soul has *collapsed* from grief." That the proposed meaning of *dip* is not foreign to Hebrew follows from Eccl 10:18, in which *dip* appears in parallelism with *mkk*, interpreted in the light of the Ugaritic parallelism, *mkk/ngs/dlp*. For, though "the house leaks" makes good sense in the Eccl passage, still the Ugaritic parallelism must be considered. In the latter, however, any such meaning as "drip, leak" seems impossible, and though the exact meaning is hard to determine, still "collapse" cannot be wrong by much. Once, therefore, this meaning of Hebrew *dip* is recognized, the parallelism with *qayy^emênî*; "raise me up," certainly favors, if it does not make imperative, our proposal.

- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
- 40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.
- 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.
- 42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
- 43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
- 44 I will keep your law continually,
for ever and ever.
- 45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 46 I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
- 47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
- 48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.
- 49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

Declaration of innocence

- 50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
- 51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
- 52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.

53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.

57 Yahweh is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who act morally,
of those who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

65 You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
71 It is good for me that I was humbled,

so that I might learn your statutes.

72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.

73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.

75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.

76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.

77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.

78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.

79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.

80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.

82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*

83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?

85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.

86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!

87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.

88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- 91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
- 92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
- 94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
- 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
- 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.
- 97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
- 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
- 100 I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
- 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
- 102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
- 103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- 104 Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

- 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
- 106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,

to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

108 Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.

- 123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
- 124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
- 125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
- 126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

- 127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
- 128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.
- 129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
- 130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
- 131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

- 132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
- 133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
- 134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
- 135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
- 136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.
- 137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.
- 138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
- 139 My zeal consumes me

because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.
144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

- 159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
- 160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.
- 161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
- 162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
- 163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
- 164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
- 165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
- 166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfill your commandments.
- 167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
- 168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

- 169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;
give me understanding according to your word.
- 170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

- 171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
- 172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
- 173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
- 174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.

175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your slave, for I do not forget your commandments.

(Luke 17:20-25)

Asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come,
Jesus said: *The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed,
and no one will announce: Look, here it is or There it is. For behold, the
Kingdom of God is among you.*"

Then Jesus taught his disciples: *The days will come when you will long to
see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. There will be those
who will say: Look, there he is or Look, here he is. Do not go off, do not run in
pursuit. For just as lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the
other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer greatly and
be rejected by this generation.*

Homily

Friday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 495

(Wis 13:1-9)

All men were by nature foolish who were in ignorance of God,
and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing him who is,
and from studying the works did not discern the artisan;
But either fire, or wind, or the swift air,
or the circuit of the stars, or the mighty water,
or the luminaries of heaven, the governors of the world, they considered gods.
Now if out of joy in their beauty they thought them gods,
let them know how far more excellent is the Lord than these;
for the original source of beauty fashioned them.
Or if they were struck by their might and energy,
let them from these things realize how much more powerful is he who made
them.
For from the greatness and the beauty of created things

their original author, by analogy, is seen.
But yet, for these the blame is less;
For they indeed have gone astray perhaps,
though they seek God and wish to find him.
For they search busily among his works,
but are distracted by what they see, because the things seen are fair.
But again, not even these are pardonable.
For if they so far succeeded in knowledge
that they could speculate about the world,
how did they not more quickly find its Lord?

A Lament (Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
the firmament proclaims the handiwork of Yahweh.
² One day tells stories to another,
One night hands on its traditions to the next.⁹⁶
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens Yahweh has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,⁹⁷
like an athlete joyfully runs a course.
⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
its circuit to the end of them;
nothing is hidden from its warmth.

⁷ The instructions of Yahweh are perfect,
reviving the soul;
the teachings⁹⁸ of the Yahweh are sure,

⁹⁶ NRSV: Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

⁹⁷ Hebrew: *huppah*

⁹⁸ NRSV: decrees

making students wise;
8 the precepts of the Yahweh are right,
making minds rejoice;
the commandment of the Yahweh is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 living morally⁹⁹ is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Yahweh are true
completely righteous.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even fine gold in abundance;
sweeter also than honey,
dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

11 Moreover by them is your slave warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their sins?
Clear me from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your slave¹⁰⁰ also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
14 Make my mouth's words and my heart's prayer acceptable to you;
You, Yahweh, birth me and deliver me from my enemies.

Teachings on Mindfulness

(Luke 17:26-37)

Jesus taught his disciples:

*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be on the Day of the Son of Man;
they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day
that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

*Similarly, as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating, drinking, buying,
selling, planting, building; on the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone*

⁹⁹ *Fear of Yahweh*

¹⁰⁰ NRSV: servant

rained from the sky to destroy them all. So it will be on the Day of the Son of Man is revealed.

On that day, women grinding on the roof and must not go down to get belongings in the house; men working in the field must not return to what they left behind. Remember the wife of Lot. Whoever seeks to preserve life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it.

Trust me, on that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. Two women grinding grain together; one will be taken, the other left.

They asked: *Where, Teacher?*

Jesus said: *Where the body is, there the vultures will gather.*

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.

Help me to live today with open hands to receive your blessings.

For blessings coming: Yes

For blessings received: Thank you.

Help me to live morally,

Help me not to be afraid.

Living in the moment (Pali: *satipatthana*) is an active attention to what is happening right now. The mindful observe their thoughts and feelings, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting life pass unobserved, they pay attention to every experience. For the Buddha mindfulness was essential to Enlightenment (Pali: *bodhu*). It is the seventh step on the Noble Path – the antidote to distraction (Pali: *moha*).

Saturday of the Thirty-second week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 496

(Wis 18:14—19:9)

When peaceful stillness compassed everything and the night in its swift course was half spent,¹⁰¹ Yahweh, your all-powerful word,¹⁰² from heaven's royal throne bounded, like a fearless warrior, into Egypt, the Land of the Dead,¹⁰³ bearing the sharp sword of your inexorable decree to let your people go. Yahweh descended and filled every household with the death of their firstborn.¹⁰⁴ Yahweh still reached to heaven, while he stood upon the earth.

¹⁷Then at once apparitions in dreadful dreams greatly troubled them, and unexpected fears assailed them; ¹⁸ and one here and another there, hurled down half dead, made known why they were dying; ¹⁹ for the dreams that disturbed them forewarned them of this, so that they might not perish without knowing why they suffered.

²⁰ The experience of death touched also the righteous, and a plague came upon the multitude in the desert, but the wrath did not long continue. ²¹ For a blameless man was quick to act as their champion; he brought forward the shield of his ministry, prayer and propitiation by incense; he withstood the anger and put an end to the disaster, showing that he was your servant.

²² He conquered the wrath not by strength of body, not by force of arms, but by his word he subdued the avenger, appealing to the oaths and covenants given to our ancestors. ²³ For when the dead had already fallen on one another in heaps, he intervened and held back the wrath, and cut off its way to the living.

²⁴ For on his long robe the whole world was depicted, and the glories of the ancestors were engraved on the four rows of stones, and your majesty was on the diadem upon his head.

²⁵ To these the destroyer yielded, these he feared; for merely to test the wrath was enough.

But the ungodly were assailed to the end by pitiless anger, for God knew in advance even their future actions: ² how, though they themselves had permitted your people to depart and hastily sent them out, they would change

¹⁰¹ At midnight, when darkness is greatest

¹⁰² Jesus as the Word = Yahweh as the Word

¹⁰³ The doomed land of Egypt; Egypt's tombs

¹⁰⁴ Aqhat? Death of the Firstborn

their minds and pursue them. ³ For while they were still engaged in mourning, and were lamenting at the graves of their dead, they reached another foolish decision, and pursued as fugitives those whom they had begged and compelled to leave.

⁴ For the fate they deserved drew them on to this end, and made them forget what had happened, in order that they might fill up the punishment that their torments still lacked, ⁵ and that your people might experience an incredible journey, but they themselves might meet a strange death.

For all creation, in its several kinds, was being made over anew, serving its natural laws, that your people might be preserved unharmed. The cloud overshadowed their camp; and out of what had before been water, dry land was seen emerging: Out of the Red Sea an unimpeded road, and a grassy plain out of the mighty flood.

Over this crossed the whole nation sheltered by your hand, after they beheld stupendous wonders. For they ranged about like horses, and bounded about like lambs, praising you, Yahweh, as their deliverer.

A Hymn to Yahweh as Divine Warrior

(Ps 105: 1-45)

Call to worship

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh,
Call on the name¹⁰⁵ of Yahweh,
make known the deeds of Yahweh among the peoples.

² Sing to Yahweh,
sing praises to Yahweh;
tell of all the wonderful works of Yahweh.

³ Glory in the holy name of Yahweh;
let the hearts of those who seek Yahweh rejoice.

⁴ Seek Yahweh
Seek the strength of Yahweh;
seek the presence of Yahweh continually.

⁵ Remember the wonderful works Yahweh has done,
the miracles of Yahweh,

¹⁰⁵ Students call their teachers by name; slaves call their owners by name. Only those clients who have patrons can use their patron's name.

and the judgments Yahweh has uttered,

⁶ O offspring of Abraham, slave of Yahweh¹⁰⁶,
the household of Jacob, the chosen people of Yahweh.

Creation story

⁷Yahweh is our divine patron;
the judgments are in all the earth.

⁸Yahweh is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that Yahweh commanded, for a thousand generations,

⁹ the covenant that Yahweh made with Abraham,
the promise of Yahweh sworn to Isaac,

¹⁰ which Yahweh confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,

¹¹ saying: *To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance.*

¹² When they were few in number,
of little account, and outsiders in it,

¹³ wandering from one people to another,
from one state to another,

¹⁴Yahweh allowed no one to oppress them;
Yahweh rebuked rulers on their account,

¹⁵ saying: *Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm.*

¹⁶ When Yahweh summoned famine against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,

¹⁷Yahweh had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

¹⁸ His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;

¹⁹ until what Yahweh had said came to pass,
the word of Yahweh kept testing him.

²⁰ The king sent and released him;
Pharaoh set him free.

¹⁰⁶ Curiously, English translations use both *servant* and *slave* to translate *'ebed*. Typically, the Hebrews have *servants* or are *servants*; none Hebrews have *slaves* or are *slaves*. The issue, however, is not whether or not humans are servants or slaves, but rather whose slaves they are. The Hebrews are not slaves of the Egyptians, they are the slaves of Yahweh. Therefore, *slave of Yahweh* is a title of honor for Moses, not a title of shame.

²¹Yahweh made him lord of Pharaoh's household,
and steward of all Pharaoh's possessions,
²² to instruct his officials at his pleasure,
and to teach his elders wisdom.

²³ Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an outsider in the land of Ham.
²⁴ And Yahweh made the people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their foes,
²⁵ whose hearts Yahweh then turned to hate the people,
to deal craftily with the slaves of Yahweh.

²⁶Yahweh sent his slave Moses,
and Aaron whom Yahweh had chosen.
²⁷ They performed signs of Yahweh among them,
and miracles in the land of Ham.
²⁸Yahweh sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled against the words of Yahweh.
²⁹Yahweh turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
³⁰ Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their rulers.
³¹Yahweh spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
³²Yahweh gave them hail for rain,
and lightning that flashed through their land.
³³Yahweh struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their land.
³⁴Yahweh spoke, and the locusts came,
and young locusts without number;
³⁵ they devoured all the vegetation in their land,
and ate up the fruit of their ground.
³⁶Yahweh struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the first issue of all their strength.

³⁷ Then Yahweh brought Israel out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
³⁹Yahweh spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.

⁴⁰ They asked, and Yahweh brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.

⁴¹ Yahweh opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.

⁴² For Yahweh remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, the slave of Yahweh.

⁴³ So Yahweh brought the people out with joy,
the chosen people with singing.

⁴⁴ Yahweh gave them the lands of all the peoples of Syria-Palestine,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,

⁴⁵ that they might keep the statutes of Yahweh
and observe the laws of Yahweh.

Call to worship

Praise Yahweh!

A Parable on Persevering

(Luke 18:1-8)

Jesus taught his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to persevere in praying, and not to become discouraged.

Once there was a judge in a village, who feared neither God, nor any human being. A widow in that same village came to the judge, day after day, with the same petition: Give me justice against my enemy.

For a long time the judge was unwilling to hear her case, but eventually he thought: I neither fear God, nor respect any human being, but because this widow will not stop petitioning me, I shall give her justice. Otherwise, she will be the death of me.

Then Jesus said:

Pay attention to what the judge says. If this evil judge eventually answers the petition of the widow, will a good God not give justice to the chosen people who petition day and night? Will God be slow to answer them? I tell you, God will see to it that justice is done for them promptly. But when the Son of Man does come, will the chosen people still be waiting? Or will they have become discouraged and stopped praying?

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up today.

Thank you for instilling me with a sense of perseverance and confidence.

Thank you for helping me as I finish *Deuteronomy, a feminist commentary*.

Thank you for the hope you bring by being at my side.

The Gospel of Luke is remarkable for the number of traditions with female characters, including three parables. In one, a woman hides yeast in bread dough (13:20-21); in another, a woman searches diligently for a lost coin (15:8-10); and in a third, a widow confronts an unjust judge until she gains justice (18:1-8).

While the last two are unique to Luke, the first has a parallel in the gospels of Matthew (13:33) and Thomas (96). In a gospel that gives a mixed message about women, each of these parables offers a bold portrait of the female face of God.

Unique to Luke's gospel are stories about Elizabeth (1 5-7, 24-25, 39-45, 57-66), Mary (1 26-56, 2 1-52, Acts 1 14), Anna (Luke 2 36-38), the widow of Nam (7 11-17), and a woman bent double (13 10-17). Only Luke tells of the woman who utters a blessing (11 27-28) and only Luke records the lament voiced by women of Jerusalem as Jesus follows the way of the cross (23 26-32).

There are also traditions shared with Mark and Matthew featuring Simon's mother in law (4 38-39), Jairus' daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage (8 40-56), and a widow who gives her all (21 1-4).

Like the other synoptic evangelists, Luke tells of Galilean women who witness Jesus' death and burial (23 44-49, 50-56) and who discover the empty tomb (24 1-12), but he introduces Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and other ministering Galilean women much earlier (8 1-3). Finally, Luke's traditions about Martha and Mary is unique (Luke 10 38-42; see John 11-12).

If the judge represents 'Abba, the parable teaches that badgering 'Abba can eventually get a positive response. Such a notion is theologically abhorrent and is flatly contradicted by other biblical traditions (Luke 11:9-13; Sir 35:14-19), which insist that 'Abba is eager to give all good things to those who ask, particularly to those who are poorest.

Here the widow represents 'Abba. When one doggedly resists injustice, faces it, names it, and denounces it until justice is achieved, then one is acting as 'Abba does.

Moreover, the parable displays divine power revealed in seeming weakness. The persistence of an apparently powerless widow achieves victory for right. The ludicrous image of a powerful judge fearing a seemingly helpless widow may be Jesus' wry comment on the futility of resorting to violence in the quest for justice. This message achieves its fullest force in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, whose seeming helplessness before his executioners is transformed into the very defeat of the powers of sin and death. Followers of Jesus are invited to take up this same stance, to draw on the power of apparent weakness to overcome death-dealing powers.

Finally, it is important to recognize Luke's concern to tame this story of an unconventional woman. He recasts her in a docile and acceptable role—an example of one who prays incessantly, much like Anna in the temple (2:36-38).

Although Christian tradition has generally downplayed female images of God, these parables show how women, as well as men, fully embody the mission of Jesus when they emulate the widow who persistently pursues justice. By dislodging sexist stereotypes that see women only as tending to trivial tasks, or as badgering men with perpetual nagging, these parables can empower women to take bold, public steps toward the pursuit of justice and transformation. A woman's actions have the potential to transform not only her own situation but that of others, for a fuller manifestation of the reign of God.

Even women who think of themselves as powerless because of the intractability of the interlocking systems of racism, sexism, militarism, and economic imbalance can be encouraged by the widow. Her actions carry power both by their sheer persistence and by their subversive tactics. The dogged persistence of the widow has unimaginable power.

The persevering widow motif also appears in Ruth and Tamar -- seemingly powerless widows who took bold steps that ensured Yahweh's plan for the continuance of Israel. They are also in the same vein as other female images of Yahweh. Deuteronomy and Isaiah portray Yahweh as a mother giving birth (Deut 32:18; Isa 42:14). Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's tenderness as that of a mother consoling her child (Isa 49:15; 66:13). Isaiah and Psalms portray God as a midwife drawing Israel forth from the womb (Isa 66:9; Ps 22:10-11). And the psalmist compares Yahweh's care for humans to that of a mother eagle for

her brood (Ps 91:4). Jesus uses this same image to express his care for Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

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Monday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 497

10 From the successors of Alexander the Great came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in 175 B.C.E.¹⁰⁷

11 In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying: *Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us.*

¹²This proposal pleased them, ¹³and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. ¹⁴So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, ¹⁵and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

16 When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become pharaoh of the land of Egypt, in order that he might reign over both states. ¹⁷So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. ¹⁸He engaged Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. ¹⁹They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.

¹⁰⁷ NRSV: the 137th year of the kingdom of the Greeks

20 After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the 169 B.C.E. ¹⁰⁸He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. ²¹He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. ²²He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink-offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off.²³He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. ²⁴Taking them all, he went into his own land.

¹⁰⁸ NRSV: the 143rd year of the kingdom of the Greeks

A Lament for Jerusalem

(1 Macc 1:24-28)

Antiochus shed much blood,

and spoke with great arrogance.

²⁵ Israel mourned deeply in every community,

²⁶ rulers and elders groaned,

young women and young men became faint,

the beauty of the women faded.

²⁷ Every bridegroom took up the lament;

she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. ¹⁰⁹

²⁸ Even the land trembled for its inhabitants,

and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

²⁹ Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. ³⁰Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. ³¹He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. ³²They took captive the women and children, and seized the

livestock. ³³Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. ³⁴They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; ³⁵they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace,

³⁶ for the citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary,
an evil adversary of Israel at all times.

³⁷ On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood;
they even defiled the sanctuary.

³⁸ Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled;

she became a dwelling of strangers;

she became strange to her offspring,

and her children forsook her.

³⁹ Her sanctuary became desolate like a desert;

her feasts were turned into mourning,

her sabbaths into a reproach,

her honour into contempt.

¹⁰⁹ See: Jer

⁴⁰ Her dishonour now grew as great as her glory;
her exaltation was turned into mourning.

41 Then Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, ⁴²and that all should give up their particular customs. ⁴³All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath.

⁴⁴And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the villages of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, ⁴⁵to forbid burnt-offerings and sacrifices and drink-offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and festivals, ⁴⁶to defile the sanctuary and the priests, ⁴⁷to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice hogs and other unclean animals, ⁴⁸and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, ⁴⁹so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. ⁵⁰He added: *And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.*

51 In such words Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the villages of Judah to offer sacrifice, village by village. ⁵²Many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; ⁵³they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

54 Now on the 15th day of Chislev, in the 145th year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt-offering. They also built altars in the surrounding villages of Judah, ⁵⁵and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. ⁵⁶The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. ⁵⁷Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. ⁵⁸They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. ⁵⁹On the 25th day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt-offering. ⁶⁰In accordance with the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, ⁶¹and their households and those who circumcised them; **and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.**

62 But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. ⁶³They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.

A Lament

(Ps 119:1-176)

Profession of faith

- ¹Wise are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the teachings¹¹⁰ of Yahweh.
²Wise¹¹¹ are those who learn from the instructions¹¹² of Yahweh,
who seek Yahweh without reservation,¹¹³
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in the ways of Yahweh.
⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.

Petition

- ⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast
in learning from your instructions! ¹¹⁴
⁶ Then I shall not be shamed,
having my eyes fixed on all your teachings.¹¹⁵

Vow

- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
⁸ I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Declaration of innocence

- ⁹ How can the young keep their way pure?
By walking according to your word.

¹¹⁰ NRSV: law

¹¹¹ NRSV: Happy – they will succeed in life

¹¹² NRSV: keep the decrees

¹¹³ NRSV: with their whole heart = with their whole mind – without reservation

¹¹⁴ NRSV: keeping your statutes

¹¹⁵ NRSV: commandments

- 10 With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
11 I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, Yahweh;
teach me your statutes.

Vow

- 13 With my lips I declare
all the teachings of your mouth.
14 I delight in the way of your instructions
as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your stipulations,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

petition

- 17 Deal bountifully with your client,¹¹⁶
so that I may live and follow your word.
18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
what wondrous things your law brings forth.
19 I live as an outsider in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.
25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;

¹¹⁶ NRSV: servant

- teach me your statutes.
- 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- 28 My soul has collapsed from grief;
Your word will raise me up.¹¹⁷
- 29 Put false ways far from me;
graciously teach me your law.
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
- 31 I cling to your decrees, Yahweh;
let me not be put to shame.
- 32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
- 36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your client your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
- 40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.
- 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, Yahweh,
your salvation according to your promise.
- 42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,

¹¹⁷ William L. Moran, "Note on Psalm 119:28," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (01/01, 1953), 10-10. MT reads : *dâl^epâ napsî mittûgâ qayy^emént kid^ebâr^ekâ*. I propose to render the first colon, "My soul has *collapsed* from grief." That the proposed meaning of *dip* is not foreign to Hebrew follows from Eccl 10:18, in which *dip* appears in parallelism with *mkk*, interpreted in the light of the Ugaritic parallelism, *mkk/ngs/dlp*. For, though "the house leaks" makes good sense in the Eccl passage, still the Ugaritic parallelism must be considered. In the latter, however, any such meaning as "drip, leak" seems impossible, and though the exact meaning is hard to determine, still "collapse" cannot be wrong by much. Once, therefore, this meaning of Hebrew *dip* is recognized, the parallelism with *qayy^emênî*, "raise me up," certainly favors, if it does not make imperative, our proposal.

for I trust in your word.
43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
44 I will keep your law continually,
for ever and ever.
45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
46 I will also speak of your decrees before rulers,
and shall not be put to shame;
47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.
49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

Declaration of innocence

50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, Yahweh.
53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the night, Yahweh,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.
57 Yahweh is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.

- 61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
- 62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
- 63 I am a companion of all who act morally,
of those who keep your precepts.
- 64 The earth, Yahweh, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

Petition

- 65 You have dealt well with your servant,
Yahweh, according to your word.
- 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
- 67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
- 68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
- 69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
- 70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
- 71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
- 72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver coins.
- 73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
- 74 Those who act morally you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
- 75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
- 76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
- 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.

- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
May I not be shamed.

Complaint

- 81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask: *When will you comfort me?*
83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Profession of faith

- 89 Yahweh exists for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.

- ⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.
- ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
- ⁹⁸ Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
- ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
- ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.
- ¹⁰¹ I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
- ¹⁰² I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
- ¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- ¹⁰⁴ Through your precepts I become wise;
therefore I hate every false way.

Petition

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
- ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
- ¹⁰⁷ I am severely afflicted;
give me life, Yahweh, according to your word.

Profession of faith

- ¹⁰⁸ Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,
and teach me your ordinances.
- ¹⁰⁹ I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
- ¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
- ¹¹¹ Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
- ¹¹² I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

- 113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding-place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.

Petition

- 116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.
- 121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
126 It is time for Yahweh to act,
for your law has been broken.

Declaration of innocence

- 127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate every false way.

129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

Petition

132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom towards those who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, Yahweh,
and your judgments are right.
138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.
144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, Yahweh.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,

that I may observe your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
Yahweh, in your justice save my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, Yahweh,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, Yahweh;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

Declaration of innocence

159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever.
161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you

for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, Yahweh,
and I fulfill your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Petition

169 Let my cry come before you, Yahweh;
give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

Vow

171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
174 I long for your salvation, Yahweh,
and your law is my delight.
175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Gospel [LK 18:35-43](#)

As Jesus approached Jericho
a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging,
and hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what was happening.
They told him,
“Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”
He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!”
The people walking in front rebuked him,
telling him to be silent,

but he kept calling out all the more,
“Son of David, have pity on me!”
Then Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to him;
and when he came near, Jesus asked him,
“What do you want me to do for you?”
He replied, “Lord, please let me see.”
Jesus told him, “Have sight; your faith has saved you.”
He immediately received his sight
and followed him, giving glory to God.
When they saw this, all the people gave praise to God.

Tuesday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 498

(2 Macc 6:18-31)

Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes,
a man of advanced age and noble appearance,
was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork.
But preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement,
he spat out the meat,
and went forward of his own accord to the instrument of torture,
as people ought to do who have the courage to reject the food
which it is unlawful to taste even for love of life.
Those in charge of that unlawful ritual meal took the man aside privately,
because of their long acquaintance with him,
and urged him to bring meat of his own providing,
such as he could legitimately eat,
and to pretend to be eating some of the meat of the sacrifice
prescribed by the king;
in this way he would escape the death penalty,
and be treated kindly because of their old friendship with him.
But Eleazar made up his mind in a noble manner,
worthy of his years, the dignity of his advanced age,
the merited distinction of his gray hair,
and of the admirable life he had lived from childhood;
and so he declared that above all
he would be loyal to the holy laws given by God.

He told them to send him at once
to the abode of the dead, explaining:

“At our age it would be unbecoming to make such a pretense; many young people would think the ninety-year-old Eleazar had gone over to an alien religion. Should I thus pretend for the sake of a brief moment of life, they would be led astray by me, while I would bring shame and dishonor on my old age. Even if, for the time being, I avoid the punishment of men, I shall never, whether alive or dead, escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave to the young a noble example of how to die willingly and generously for the revered and holy laws.”

Eleazar spoke thus, and went immediately to the instrument of torture. Those who shortly before had been kindly disposed, now became hostile toward him because what he had said seemed to them utter madness. When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned and said: “The Lord in his holy knowledge knows full well that, although I could have escaped death, I am not only enduring terrible pain in my body from this scourging, but also suffering it with joy in my soul because of my devotion to him.” This is how he died, leaving in his death a model of courage and an unforgettable example of virtue not only for the young but for the whole nation.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 3:2-3, 4-5, 6-7](#)

R. (6b) **The Lord upholds me.**

O LORD, how many are my adversaries!
Many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
“There is no salvation for him in God.”

R. **The Lord upholds me.**

But you, O LORD, are my shield;
my glory, you lift up my head!

When I call out to the LORD,
he answers me from his holy mountain.

R. The Lord upholds me.

When I lie down in sleep,
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.
I fear not the myriads of people
arrayed against me on every side.

R. The Lord upholds me.

Gospel[LK 19:1-10](#)

At that time Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.

Now a man there named Zacchaeus,
who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man,
was seeking to see who Jesus was;
but he could not see him because of the crowd,
for he was short in stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus,
who was about to pass that way.

When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said,
“Zacchaeus, come down quickly,
for today I must stay at your house.”

And he came down quickly and received him with joy.

When they saw this, they began to grumble, saying,
“He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.”

But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
“Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor,
and if I have extorted anything from anyone
I shall repay it four times over.”

And Jesus said to him,

“Today salvation has come to this house
because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.
For the Son of Man has come to seek
and to save what was lost.”

Wednesday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary
Time

Lectionary: 499

Martyrology (2 Macc 7:1, 20-31)

Once, seven brothers were arrested, with their mother. They were tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of Law of God.

Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons all killed in a single day, yet bore it courageously because of her hope in Yahweh. Filled with a spirit of honor that stirred her womanly heart with manly courage, she exhorted each of them in the language of their ancestors with these words: "I do not know how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed. Therefore, since it is the Creator of the Universe who shapes each human being, as he brings about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of his law."

Antiochus, ruler of Syria-Palestine, suspecting insult in her words, thought he was being ridiculed. As the youngest brother was still alive, the king appealed to him, not with mere words, but with promises on oath, to make him rich and happy if he would abandon his ancestral customs: he would make him his Friend and entrust him with high office. When the youth paid no attention to him at all, the king appealed to the mother, urging her to advise her boy to save his life. After he had urged her for a long time, she went through the motions of persuading her son. In derision of the cruel tyrant, she leaned over close to her son and said in their native language: "Son, have pity on me, who carried you in my womb for nine months, nursed you for three years, brought you up,

educated and supported you to your present age.
I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth
and see all that is in them;
then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things;
and in the same way the human race came into existence.
Do not be afraid of this executioner,
but be worthy of your brothers and accept death,
so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the youth said:
"What are you waiting for?
I will not obey the king's command.
I obey the command of the law given to our fathers through Moses.
But you, who have contrived every kind of affliction for the Hebrews,
will not escape the hands of God."

Lament (Ps 17)

petition

- ¹ Hear a just cause, Yahweh
 Attend to my cry;
 Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.
- ² From you let my vindication come;
 let your eyes see the right.
- ³ If you try my heart,
 If you visit me by night,
 If you test me,
You will find no wickedness in me;
 My mouth does not transgress.
- ⁴ As for what others do, by the word of your lips
 I have avoided the ways of the violent.
- ⁵ My steps have held fast to your paths;
 my feet have not slipped.
- ⁶ I call upon you, for you will answer me, my divine patron;
 incline your ear to me, hear my words.
- ⁷ Wondrously show your steadfast love,
 O savior of those who seek refuge

from their adversaries at your right hand.

- ⁸ Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
⁹ from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
¹⁰ They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
¹¹ They track me down; now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.
¹² They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

- ¹³ Rise up, Yahweh, confront them, overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,
¹⁴ from mortals—by your hand, Yahweh—
from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.
May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them;
may their children have more than enough;
may they leave something over to their little ones.

- ¹⁵ As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

Parable within a Parable ([Lk 19:11-28](#))

While people were listening to Jesus speak,
he proceeded to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem
and they thought that the Kingdom of God
would appear there immediately.

So he said,

"A rich man went off to a distant country |
to obtain the kingship for himself and then to return.
He called ten of his servants and gave them ten gold coins
and told them, 'Engage in trade with these until I return.'
His fellow citizens, however, despised him
and sent a delegation after him to announce,
'We do not want this man to be our king.'
But when he returned after obtaining the kingship, |

he had the servants called, to whom he had given the money,
to learn what they had gained by trading.
The first came forward and said,
'Sir, your gold coin has earned ten additional ones.'
He replied, 'Well done, good servant!
You have been faithful in this very small matter;
take charge of ten cities.'
Then the second came and reported,
'Your gold coin, sir, has earned five more.'
And to this servant too he said,
'You, take charge of five cities.'
Then the other servant came and said,
'Sir, here is your gold coin;
I kept it stored away in a handkerchief,
for I was afraid of you, because you are a demanding man;
you take up what you did not lay down
and you harvest what you did not plant.'
He said to him,
'With your own words I shall condemn you,
you fool.
You knew I was a demanding man,
taking up what I did not lay down
and harvesting what I did not plant;
why did you not put my money in a bank?
Then on my return I would have collected it with interest.'
And to those standing by he said,
'Take the gold coin from him
and give it to the servant who has ten.'
But they said to him,
'Sir, he has ten gold coins.'
He replied, 'I tell you,
*"To everyone who has, more will be given,
but from the one who has not,
even what he has will be taken away."*
Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me as their king,
bring them here and slay them before me.'"

After he had said this,
he proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem.

Homily

God of the Universe, divine patron of the mother with seven sons,

You not only created the world where we live, but each one of us.
Help me today to find that part of me that can hear the complaint of the student with
compassion.

Give me the compassion which Jesus had for all of us, for the students who complain.
Help me to negotiate with hope, not respond with anger and pain. Amen.



Friday of the Third Week of the Year

Lectionary: 501

(1 Macc 4:36-59)

³⁶ Then Judas and his brothers said, 'See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it.' ³⁷ So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion. ³⁸ There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins. ³⁹ Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes ⁴⁰ and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.

⁴¹ Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary. ⁴² He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, ⁴³ and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place.

⁴⁴ They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt-offering, which had been profaned. ⁴⁵ And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, ⁴⁶ and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. ⁴⁷ Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one.

⁴⁸ They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts. ⁴⁹ They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. ⁵⁰ Then they offered incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple. ⁵¹ They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.

⁵² Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, ⁵³ they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt-offering that they had built. ⁵⁴ At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. ⁵⁵ All the people fell on their faces and worshipped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. ⁵⁶ So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and joyfully offered burnt-offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving-offering. ⁵⁷ They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the

priests, and fitted them with doors. ⁵⁸There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed.

⁵⁹Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

A Hymn

(1 Chr 29:10-12)

Call to worship

¹⁰Blessed are you, Yahweh,
Blessed are you, divine patron of our ancestor Israel, for ever and ever.

Creation story

¹¹Yours, Yahweh, are greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty;
All in the heavens and on the earth is yours;
Yours is the kingdom, O Yahweh,
You are exalted as head above all.
¹²Riches and honor come from you,
You rule over all.
In your hand are power and might;
Your hand makes great and gives strength to all.

A Trial of the Priests

(Luke 19:45-46)

Sentence

Jesus entered the Great Room of the Temple and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things.

Indictment

My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

A Trial of Jesus

(Luke 19:47-48)

Indictment

Every day Jesus was teaching in the Great Room of the Temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death, but they could find no way to accomplish their purpose because all the people were hanging on his words.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning. Thank you for the song in my heart. Where has the church which so inspired me gone? Where is the vision which JFK saw today?
--

Memorial of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

Lectionary: 510

A Didache Teaching

(1 John 2:22-28)

Followers of Jesus:¹

Who is the liar?

Whoever denies that Jesus is our messiah;²

Whoever denies the Father and the Son is the antichrist;

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.

Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father. Eternal life is the promise that Jesus made us.

I write you these things about those who would deceive you. As for you, the anointing that you received from Jesus remains in you, so that you do not need anyone to teach you.³ But the anointing you received from Jesus teaches you about everything and is true and not false; just as the anointing you received from Jesus taught you, remain in him.

Now, my disciples⁴ remain in Jesus, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame by him at his coming.

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh are victorious.

²Yahweh has achieved victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to Yahweh, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing hymns.

⁵**Sing hymns** to Yahweh with the lyre –

with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶with trumpets and horns --

Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas **roar** and all that fills it –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands;**

Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.
Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Gospel [JN 1:19-28](#)

This is the testimony of John.

When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, “Who are you?”

He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Christ.”

So they asked him,

“What are you then? Are you Elijah?”

And he said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

So they said to him,

“Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?”

What do you have to say for yourself?”

He said:

“I am the *voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’* as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Some Pharisees were also sent.

They asked him,

“Why then do you baptize

if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?”

John answered them,

“I baptize with water;

but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me,

whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Homily

Visiting the real *Merton’s Heart*

Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M.

Daniel P Horan, O.F.M., St Bonaventure University class of 2005, is a Franciscan friar of Holy Name Province, a columnist for America magazine, and the author of several books including The Last Words of Jesus: A Meditation on Love and Suffering (2013) and the forthcoming The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: A New Look at the Spiritual Influence of His Life, Thought, and Writing (2014).

Students, alumni, faculty and staff of St. Bonaventure University know exactly

what I mean

when I say *Merton's Heart*. It is that somewhat heart-shaped pasture that can be seen etched into the enchanted Allegheny Mountains across the river and overlooking the SBU campus.

Whether you've had the opportunity to hike up to the clearing in the past or only have glanced at it from afar, it nevertheless remains a fixture in the collective Bonaventure landscape of our memories.

Yet, few of the St. Bonaventure family know about that hillside heart's namesake or the significance of the Franciscan tradition generally and the St. Bonaventure campus specifically for Thomas Merton.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was a Trappist Monk who is generally remembered as a best-selling author of spiritual writing and, toward the end of his life, a leading Catholic voice in the civil rights, anti-war, and interreligious-dialogue movements.

Born in France but raised in England and the United States, Merton studied literature at Columbia University, converted to Catholicism in 1938, and discerned a vocation to religious life. This process of discernment and the recommendation of his philosophy professor and mentor Dan Walsh led Merton to the Franciscan Order.

Several people who knew the young man even told him that he had a *Franciscan spirit*. He applied to enter Holy Name Province (the same province of Franciscans that founded St. Bonaventure) to become a Franciscan friar and was initially accepted into the novitiate.

For a constellation of reasons, Merton would never become a Franciscan friar—there would be no *Thomas Merton, O.F.M.* He was told that he should probably withdraw his application after he expressed serious doubts and confessed that he had withheld certain details of his youthful past during his interview with the friars at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City.

Merton was devastated, interpreting this change of plans as a sign that God found him unacceptable for religious life.

With an MA in English from Columbia in hand, he set out looking for a job. He knew of an opening at a small Franciscan school in Western New York called St. Bonaventure College.

He had actually spent time nearby during the summer at his friend's family cabin in Olean, along with one of his best friends, Robert Lax, who would

himself go on to become a renowned literary figure and talented poet, and even visited the campus. He landed an interview with Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., president of St. Bonaventure at the time, and was hired to teach in the English department.

For a year-and-a-half, Merton lived on campus, taught his courses, became lifelong friends with several friars - especially Thomas Plassmann, Irenaeus Herscher and Philotheus Boehner - and continued to discern where God was calling him.

In addition to the deeply personal friendships he formed, Merton's intellect and spirituality was shaped by the Franciscan tradition. He studied the works of Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and other Franciscan greats with Boehner. He joined the Secular Franciscan Order during his time at St. Bonaventure, concretizing his *Franciscan spirit* in the form of a professed way of living after the example of St. Francis.

As Merton's official biographer, Michael Mott, describes it, *Merton was to find another way of membership among the tramps of God - in blue jeans, if not patched brown cloth.*

What began early as the nascent seed of Franciscan spirit in Merton was nurtured by the friars, tradition and spirituality that Merton encountered on the campus of St. Bonaventure, and eventually blossomed into the full Franciscan heart that continued to guide one of the 20th century's most-famous spiritual writers throughout his life.

In letters and journal entries from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Merton wrote about the enduring influence of his time at St. Bonaventure, the significance of his friar friends and mentors, and the spiritual worldview of St. Francis that shaped his *Franciscan side, which continues to grow.*

As the St. Bonaventure community begins the celebrations commemorating his 100th birthday on Jan. 31, 2015, we can look to our older Bonaventure brother Thomas Merton for guidance and inspiration, knowing that we share much in common. As we continue to think of the meadow on the hill overlooking campus as *Merton's Heart*, we should also pause to recall how the Bonaventure experience so many of us hold in each of our hearts also indelibly shaped the real heart of Thomas Merton.

Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

Lectionary: 510A

Reading 11 [JN 3:7-10](#)

Children, let no one deceive you.
The person who acts in righteousness is righteous,
just as he is righteous.
Whoever sins belongs to the Devil,
because the Devil has sinned from the beginning.
Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the Devil.
No one who is begotten by God commits sin,
because God's seed remains in him;
he cannot sin because he is begotten by God.
In this way,
the children of God and the children of the Devil are made plain;
no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God,
nor anyone who does not love his brother.

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)



3100-2890 BCE

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh are victorious.⁵

²Yahweh has achieved victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to Yahweh, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing hymns.

⁵**Sing hymns** to Yahweh with the lyre –

with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶with trumpets and horns –

Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas and all that fills it **roar** –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands**;

Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,

Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Gospel [JN 1:35-42](#)

John was standing with two of his disciples,

and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said,

“Behold, the Lamb of God.”

The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them,

“What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher),

“where are you staying?”

He said to them, “Come, and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying,

and they stayed with him that day.

It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter,

was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus.

He first found his own brother Simon and told him,

“We have found the Messiah,” which is translated Christ.

Then he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said,

“You are Simon the son of John;

you will be called Cephas,” which is translated Peter.

Homily

Forgiving Wrongdoers

(1 Cor 6:1-11)

John W. Baker, Ph.D.

Baker did his graduate work in Near Eastern Studies at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore) with Jerrold S. Cooper and at the University of Munich with D.O. Edward. He earned a Ph.D. in linguistics at Rice University (Houston) where he also taught Languages of the Ancient Near East.

Surely you know that wrongdoers will never possess the kingdom of God.

I have been working on this pericope because a hapax legomenon supposedly meaning "sodomites" is in the list of wrongdoers. (I don't think anybody knows what the word means, but that is not my point here).

If I understand this right, there was a very remarkable early church practice here alluded to by Paul: Christians actively reconciling with and forgiving wrongdoers against whom they held grievances, *in order to save them (and themselves) from coming under divine judgment.*

In other words, when Paul warns they will not enter the kingdom, and reminds them these are fellow Christians, and that they are guilty of the same wrongdoings his readers were forgiven, he is saying if they are judged by God *it is on you!* You are all responsible now in the last days to forgive their sins and become reconciled to them, so they do not go to hell. Presumably, he meant that grievances would be arbitrated by "the saints" in the community and then resolved "in the Lord" with no winners or losers and no continuing grievances (as in pagan state courts).

But his clear implication is, in the words of Jesus, "If you retain the sins of any, they are retained." If that happens, your brother in Christ may fall under punishment *on account of you.*

Paul thinks it best just to have as little to do with wrongdoers at large, but in the church remember you were such once and let go your grievances or at least have them arbitrated and forgiven in the church. But under no circumstances should Christian take Christian to court, as this will perpetuate grievances or create new ones, wrongdoers will not be forgiven, and if that happens, they, or maybe you, will come under divine judgment. You were

forgiven. Now forgiving the world is your vocation. *"Blessed are the peacemakers."*

Amazing how far off the word-focused fundamentalist reading of Scripture can be, eh?

Paul's list of wrongdoers is a list of unsavory types in business relations, the kind of jerks whose dealings tend to be the subject of lawsuits by people they "screwed." If the word "sodomite" here really refers to male-male sex in street Greek parlance, I take the reference to be metaphorical; not literal. It means I suspect a ruthless bastard crook, the kind of guy we have a colorful term for in English because "he would screw his own mother." "Nevertheless," says Paul, "you were once the same, so we must clear the grievances and bring all closer to the Lord by reconciling and forgiving; not by suing. We are in the last days."

I find amazing the concept "if you retain them" then their sin is on you in a sense, because you could have forgiven them and cleared them but did not.

Memorial of Anthony, Abbot

January 17
Lectionary: 513

Homily



Anthony of the Desert (251-356) was born at Heracelopolis (Egypt)

Saint Anthony Abbot - ca. 261-356

In the third century a young Egyptian named Anthony sold all his possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor, and went into the desert to lead a life of prayer and contemplation. His example attracted other men to the desert, and eventually they formed the first Christian monastic community. The Life of St. Anthony by St. Athanasius of Alexandria (298-373) spread the saint's influence and inspired the

formation of monastic communities throughout the Christian world.

PORTRAITS

Anthony's attributes are well summarized in a 17th century commentary by Théophile Raynaud: "St. Anthony is portrayed as a venerable old man with a long beard wearing a monk's habit with a T printed on the left side of the hood, holding a book and staff in one hand and a bell in the other, and having a pig at his feet. Also a brightly burning fire."1 (At left is the frontispiece from Raynaud's work.)⁶

The Habit and the Pig

As for the habit and pig, in the middle ages Anthony was the patron of a monastic order known as the Hospitallers of St. Anthony, who made a specialty of treating diseases of the poor in medieval cities. These monks wore a black habit and were authorized to support their charities by raising swine.² For this reason, Anthony is often depicted in the same black habit and with a pig as his attribute (example). Some images emphasize his intercessions on behalf of those suffering from epidemic diseases. In a Tintoretto painting commissioned by the Doge Nicolò da Ponte, the latter prays to Anthony for relief from the plague of 1575-77; Anthony in turn addresses the Child Jesus, who directs his right hand in blessing over the city of Venice. The saint frequently appears with St. Catherine (example), who as one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers protects against sudden death – as does St. Barbara, with whom he is grouped in a 1474 fresco by Vincent de Kastav and a 1523 altarpiece by Jacopo Palma il Vecchio. Also relevant to Anthony's role as health-bringer may be Giordano's Birth of the Virgin, in the lower half of which the figure of Anthony mediates between the wizened parents in the dim background and the plump, pink, and fully illuminated baby in the arms of a correspondingly youthful midwife.

Raynaud, uncomfortable with the pig symbol for a holy saint and mindful that Anthony was a vegetarian, suggests that placing the animal at his feet signifies either his efforts to feed the poor or the subjugation of "the three porcine kinds of men: ...pagans, heretics, and Christian voluptuaries," citing numerous commentaries and biblical texts that use pigs as a pejorative symbol (32-41). However, it must be noted that the images typically do not show the pig under the saint's feet or portray the animal as uncomfortable with its setting. (A possible exception shows Anthony standing on a demon that could be considered pig-like and impaling the fiend with his staff.) By contrast, evil creatures vanquished at the feet of other saints are usually shown in some sort of discontent, if not torment. (See examples with SS. Bartholomew, Margaret,

<http://www.aug.edu/augusta/iconography/anthonyAbbot.html>

Vincent, and Thomas Aquinas.) On the other hand, despite the Bible's consistently negative figures of speech involving dogs,³ those at the feet of SS. Roch and Dominic are unambiguously positive in their signification. Thus, the position of St. Anthony's pig is by no means a necessary sign that it represents enemies of the Christian Church.

The Bell

Bells were used to call swine in at the end of the day, so a single bell or a pair (example) entered the canon of the saint's attributes. Raynaud notes that many writers have taken the bell to signify the saint's guardianship of swine and other beasts but again protests the unsuitability of such a signification to a holy saint (52-7).

The Staff and the Tau

As in the frontispiece at left, the staff almost always has a tau-shaped top (another example; exception). The staff itself may be the oldest of the Antonine attributes. Raynaud cites one ancient source as saying the staff was the symbol of monasticism in Egypt and another as relating the symbol to the monks' physical journey into the desert and spiritual journey in "seceding from this world."⁴ For the tau top on the staff, he cites the prestigious contemporary scholars Molanus (Jan Vermeulen) and Jacob Gretser, who agree that the T shape was the way Egyptians represented the cross of Christ in Anthony's time, and he reminds the reader of the many times the cross protected the saint from demons who assailed him in the desert (59). We see the cross doing just that in a clever portrait painted by Lelio Orsi in the 1570s: Anthony sits blissfully in the foreground with his book and pig while a gleaming cross separates him from monstrous figures in the background. In memory of the tau-top staff, the Antonine monks adopted the T on their hood from their founding at the end of the 11th century, and that is why it is sometimes placed retrospectively on the saint's hood in his images, as at left and in the Tintoretto painting and this example (Raynaud 57).

Prayer Beads

In the Orsi painting the cross also figures on a pair of beads that hangs from Anthony's left wrist. We also see him with prayer beads in a fresco in Urbino.

Hair and Beard

Anthony's "venerable old" age is most often expressed by some degree of baldness, usually affecting the top of the skull but not the sides of the head (example) but sometimes leaving a bit of hair on top (example). The head is only

rarely covered by a hat (example) or abbatial mitre (example). The saint's beard is almost always long, forked, and white (example).

The Flames

The brightly burning fire may be anywhere in the portrait: sometimes on the saint's hand (example), sometimes atop the staff (example), or even consuming the hand of a diseased supplicant, as in one 16th-century woodcut.⁵ Butler and Duchet-Suchaux explain the flame as related to "St. Anthony's Fire," the disease erysipelas, outbreaks of which were said to be relieved by prayer to this saint and invocation of his relics.⁶ Raynaud also relates it to erysipelas, from which God has granted Anthony to be a defender, but also to his commission to defend others from the eternal fires of Hell and himself as a monk from the "profane fires of lust" (3-32).

This latter signification is supported by many episodes involving fire in the hagiography. In one episode in the Golden Legend, St. Anthony throws into the fire a heap of gold that the devil had set in his path as a temptation (image). In another, and also in one from Athanasius' Life, a silver platter appearing before the saint vanishes in a puff of smoke when he dismisses it as another diabolical trick. In Athanasius, fire is a continually repeated theme, referring variously to lust, worldly desires, Satan's breath, and "the fire prepared for the demons who attempt to terrify men with those flames in which they themselves will be burned" (¶24).

The Book

Finally, the book (see at left and this example) is a more noteworthy attribute than one might think. Books appear in the images of a great many saints, signifying their having read or written religious works. But after taking up the eremitic life St. Anthony eschewed books, relying on his memory of sacred literature previously read.⁷ Raynaud notes this fact and explains the book as bearing several significations (41-45). First, the saint serves mankind as a "book" from which one can learn the Christian virtues. Second, we are reminded of his continually reciting the prayers learned from books seen in his early life. Third, the book in Anthony's hand recalls the portraiture of the ancient philosophers and shows he is their Christian counterpart. And finally, without actual books in his cell, Anthony was better able to contemplate the "book of God's creation" in the world around him.

NARRATIVE IMAGES

The Golden Legend's life of Anthony begins with the brutal torments visited upon him by demons, and these are a favorite subject in the art (image). Narrative images also draw on episodes from the Legend's lives of Anthony and St. Paul the Hermit. The former famously undertook a difficult journey (image) to visit the latter and learn from his wisdom (image). While he was visiting, the two were fed by a raven that brought one loaf of bread for each of them (image). On a second visit, St. Anthony found the old hermit dead. Lacking a shovel to bury him, he managed to get him into the ground with the help of some passing lions (image).



Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Lectionary: 524

Reading 1 [MAL 3:1-4](#)

Thus says the Lord GOD:

Lo, I am sending my messenger
to prepare the way before me;

And suddenly there will come to the temple
the LORD whom you seek,

And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.

Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who will endure the day of his coming?

And who can stand when he appears?

For he is like the refiner's fire,

or like the fuller's lye.

He will sit refining and purifying silver,

and he will purify the sons of Levi,

Refining them like gold or like silver

that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD.

Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem

will please the LORD,

as in the days of old, as in years gone by.

A Pilgrimage Hymn

(Ps 24: 1-10)

Of David. A Psalm.

Creation story

- ¹ The earth is Yahweh's and all that is in it,
-- the world, and those who live in it;
² Yahweh has founded the earth on the seas,
-- established it on the rivers.
- ³ Who shall climb the mountain⁷ of Yahweh?
Who shall stand in the Holy Place of Yahweh?
⁴ Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
who do not swear deceitfully.
⁵ They will receive blessing from Yahweh,
-- vindication from the divine patron who delivers them.⁸
⁶ Such is the company of those who seek Yahweh,
who seek the face of the divine patron of Jacob.

Selah

Call to worship

- ⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
Open, O ancient doors!
So that the Glorious Ruler⁹ may come in.
⁸ Who is the Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, strong and mighty,
Yahweh, mighty in battle.
⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
Open, O ancient doors!
So that the Glorious Ruler may come in.
¹⁰ Who is this Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, chief of the divine warriors,¹⁰
Yahweh is the Glorious Ruler.

Selah

Reading 2[HEB 2:14-18](#)

Since the children share in blood and flesh,
Jesus likewise shared in them,

that through death he might destroy the one
who has the power of death, that is, the Devil,
and free those who through fear of death
had been subject to slavery all their life.
Surely he did not help angels
but rather the descendants of Abraham;
therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters
in every way,
that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God
to expiate the sins of the people.
Because he himself was tested through what he suffered,
he is able to help those who are being tested.

Gospel[LK 2:22-40](#)

When the days were completed for their purification
according to the law of Moses,
Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem
to present him to the Lord,
just as it is written in the law of the Lord,
Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,
and to offer the sacrifice of
a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,
in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.
This man was righteous and devout,
awaiting the consolation of Israel,
and the Holy Spirit was upon him.
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit
that he should not see death
before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.
He came in the Spirit into the temple;
and when the parents brought in the child Jesus
to perform the custom of the law in regard to him,
he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go
in peace, according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him;
and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,
“Behold, this child is destined
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be contradicted
—and you yourself a sword will pierce—
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”
There was also a prophetess, Anna,
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.
She was advanced in years,
having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage,
and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.
She never left the temple,
but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.

And coming forward at that very time,
she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child
to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions
of the law of the Lord,
they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.
The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
and the favor of God was upon him.

Homily

CANDLEMAS:¹¹

Though the celebration of Candlemas is mentioned just briefly in *Le Morte D'arthur* by Malory. This ancient holy day antedates Christianity in Europe. Roots for Candlemas exist throughout Europe, especially in ancient holidays such as *Imbolc* and the *Feast of Februa*, celebrations of the change of season.

In Medieval Europe Catholics celebrated the Purification of Mary on February 2. The tradition of *churching* or purifying women 40 days after giving birth brought their post-partum to a close. They were returned to active membership in their communities, and could resume intercourse with their husbands. Theologically, women during this period were considered unclean because of the original sin in which she gives birth to her children.

The name *Candlemas* derives from a tradition in England of women carrying candles in procession to the church, and holding lighted candles during their purification. Pope Sergius (650-701) extended the celebration to the universal church, and churches were filled with as many candles as possible on this day. These candles were supposedly endowed with special powers of protection and healing. In Poland *gromnica* candles were distributed to the people who used them throughout the year as protection from evil.

<http://amamariesimard.tripod.com/id16.html>

The celebration of Candlemas was also a point of heated debate and contention in the church. The theology of the Immaculate Conception taught that Mary was conceived and born without original sin, and therefore could not have passed that sin on to Jesus. Celebrating Mary's purification from giving birth to a child with original sin would deny she was conceived without original sin, and suggest that Jesus was born with original sin.

The similarities between Candlemas and other festivals are compelling. The candles used by Catholic women were originally used to celebrate the meeting (Greek: *uoaoamta* or *hupapanta*) of Simeon and Anna with Joseph, Mary and Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:31-41).

Candlemas is also parallel to the Roman festival of *Februa*. On this night, the Romans carried lit torches and candles through the streets of Rome to the temples of Februa in honor of her son, Mars. Pope Sergius repurposed the festival so that Christian participants would celebrate not Februa and her son Mars, but Mary and her son Jesus.

Candlemas also became the last day for removing Christmas decorations. The brittle boughs and branches are swept out and burned, with special attention given to cracks, corners, and rugs so that no trace of any decorations may inadvertently remain and curse the household.

Predicting the beginning of spring was also associated with Candlemas – a kind of Christian *Groundhog Day*. A popular weather poem for Candlemas:

If Candlemas Day be fair and bright,
 Winter will have another flight,
If Candlemas Day be clouds and rain,
 Winter be gone and will not come again.

Similarly:

On Candlemas Day if the thorns hang adrop,
 You can be sure of a good pea crop.

In the Hebrides' Islands Christians adopted Briid -- Briget, Brigantia, Breed, Brighid, Bridget, the divine patron of metal workers, poets, and the hearth, -- as the patron saint of Candlemas. Briid wandered the countryside on Candlemas eve, bringing blessings to both the people and the animals whose households had laid a fire or bed for her in their fireplaces. Therefore, women would model a female figure from a sheaf of oats, dress it in women's clothes, put it in a large basket, and lay a wooden hammer by it in their fireplaces. They called the arrangement: *Briid's Bed*. Before going to bed the women sang:

Come to our house, Briid. You are welcome here. When they got up on the morning of February 2, if there was the shape of *Briid's Hammer* in the ashes, indicating Briid had warmed herself by their fire, their crops would be full and the year would be prosperous.

Christian women venerated Bridget as the foster mother of Jesus and Mary's midwife. At Kildare in Ireland, both pagan pre-Christian female priests and later Christian nuns kept an eternal flame burning in her honor.

Other Britons honored Briid with *Imbolc* or *Oimeic* – sheep's milk. At the beginning of spring Britons prayed to Briid, the patron of metal workers, to bless their iron farming tools, and then started plowing their fields. Fishers cleaned their boats. Pregnant ewes were milked. The winter season was turning to spring. Candlemas was the beginning of a new year celebrated by making fresh starts, cleaning out the old and welcoming in the new. It was also a favorable time to be married and to renew vows.

Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle

Lectionary: 535

Reading [11 PT 5:1-4](#)

Beloved:

I exhort the presbyters among you,
as a fellow presbyter and witness to the sufferings of Christ
and one who has a share in the glory to be revealed.
Tend the flock of God in your midst,
overseeing not by constraint but willingly,
as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly.
Do not lord it over those assigned to you,
but be examples to the flock.
And when the chief Shepherd is revealed,
you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

A Hymn

(Ps 23:1-6 DCB)

creation story

When YHWH is shepherd of my household, I shall not want.
YHWH grazes its sheep in green pastures;
YHWH leads them to still waters;
YHWH restores my life.

YHWH leads the sheep in safe paths
For the sake of the name of YHWH.
Even though the sheep walk in the valley of darkness,
I fear no evil;
For YHWH is always with me;
Your rod and your staff protect me.
You prepare a table before me;
You set a table in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My bowl overflows.
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
All the days of my life;
My household shall dwell in the house of YHWH
My whole life long.

Inauguration of Peter

(Matt 16:13-19)

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his followers: *Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*

The followers of Jesus answered: *Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.*

Jesus then asked them: *But who do you say that I am?*

Simon Peter answered: You are our messiah, the Son of our life giving divine patron.

Jesus said: *Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my godparent in the heavens. So I declare: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on the earth below shall be bound in the heavens above. Whatever you loose on the earth below shall be loosed in the heavens above.*

Homily

To emphasize that Jesus himself was not founding a religion, but reforming the Judaism of his day, I am in the habit of saying that two things Jesus never taught his followers were: 1) write me a Bible and 2) build me a church, because Jesus already had a Bible – the Hebrew Bible, and he already had a “church” – the community of ancient Israel.

I have considered Matt 16:13-19 to be a teaching of the early Christian community perhaps connected with Ignatius of Antioch, rather than a teaching of Jesus because neither the parallels in Luke 9:18-21, nor Mark 8:27-30 contain a commission of Peter to found a church.

Memorial of Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr

Lectionary: 550

A Trial of Peter and John

(Acts 5:27-33)

Indictment

When the court officers had brought the Apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the High Priest questioned them: *We gave you strict orders did we not, to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us.*

Peter and the Apostles said: *We must obey Yahweh rather than men. The divine patron of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. Yahweh exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom Yahweh has given to those who obey him.*

Sentence

When they heard this, they became infuriated and wanted to put them to death.

A Hymn (Ps 34:1-22)

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Call to worship

- ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times;
Praise of Yahweh shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² My soul makes its boast in Yahweh;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify Yahweh with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

Creation story

- ⁴ I sought Yahweh, and Yahweh answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to Yahweh, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by Yahweh,
and was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ A messenger of Yahweh encamps
around those who act morally, and delivers them.
- ⁸ O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
happy are those who take refuge in Yahweh.

- ⁹ O fear Yahweh, you holy ones,
for those who act morally have no want.
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you how to act morally.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous,
and the ears of Yahweh are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of Yahweh is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh rescues them from them all.
- ²⁰ Yahweh keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- ²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² Yahweh redeems the life of the people of Yahweh;
none of those who take refuge in Yahweh will be condemned.

(John 3:31-36)

The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

Whoever does accept his testimony certifies that 'Abba is trustworthy. For the one whom 'Abba sent speaks divine words. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. Those who believe in the Son have eternal life, but those who disobey the Son will not see life, but divine wrath remains upon them.

Homily

Stanislaus of Szczepanów (July 26, 1030 – April 11, 1079) was a bishop of Krakow martyred by Polish king Boleslaw II. Now one of the patron saints of Poland including Our Lady, Queen of Poland, Adalbert of Prague, Stanislaus Kostka, Andrew Bobola and Florian.

The disciples – and Stanislaus -- struggled with the challenge or how to distinguish divine voices from the human voices. Actually, there was no challenge for them, but there is for us. Peter and John clearly testify that they are doing what Yahweh has told them to do, and have absolutely no qualms about not doing what the High Priest is telling them to do. So how do we decide which voice in our lives to obey? The choice, of course, becomes more difficult when the punishment for disobeying a human voice is death!

Scholars who reconstruct biblical manuscripts use a principle called *lectio difficilior*. When manuscripts preserve different readings of a biblical verse – different words, or different forms of the same word – textual critics generally assume the more *difficult reading* -- the more unlikely word or form – is original. The earthly voice in the gospel is the *easy reading*; the voice from above is the *difficult reading*.

What God teaches us to do seldom makes sense in purely human terms. Jesus inspires us to live selflessly, which makes no sense in a highly competitive economy. Jesus inspires us to lay down our lives for others, which makes no sense in a world where only the fittest survive.

Feast of Saint Mark, Evangelist

April 25

Lectionary: 555

(1 Pet 5:5-14 DCB)

Followers of Jesus:

Clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for as Job says: *YHWH opposes the proud, but bestows favor on the humble* (Job

22:29). So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of YHWH so that YHWH may exalt you in due time. Cast all your worries upon YHWH because YHWH cares for you.

Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist the Devil, steadfast in faith, knowing that your brothers and sisters throughout the world undergo the same sufferings.

The divine patron of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Jesus, our Teacher, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little.

TO JESUS BE DOMINION FOREVER. AMEN.

I write you this briefly through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful follower of Jesus, exhorting you and testifying that this is the true grace of YHWH.

Remain firm in it. The chosen one at Babylon sends you greeting, as does Mark, my student.

Greet one another with the kiss of peace. Peace to all of you who have accepted Jesus as our Teacher.

A Lament

(Ps 89:1-52 DCB)

A maskil lament dedicated to Ethan from the household of Ezra

Vow

- ¹ I will sing of your steadfast love, YHWH, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
² I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Profession of faith

- ³ You said: *I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:*
⁴ *I will establish your descendants forever,
and build your throne for all generations.*

Selah

Call to worship

⁵ Let the heavens praise your wonders, YHWH,
your faithfulness in the divine assembly.¹²

Creation story

⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to YHWH?
Who in the divine assembly is like YHWH,
⁷ a divine patron respected in the divine assembly,
great and awesome above all who surround YHWH?
⁸ You are YHWH, commander of divine warriors;
who is as mighty as you, YHWH?
Your faithfulness surrounds you.
⁹ You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.
¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
¹¹ The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it—you have founded them.
¹² The north and the south—you created them;
Mt. Tabor and Mt. Hermon joyously praise your name.
¹³ You have a mighty arm;
strong is your hand, high your right hand.
¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.
¹⁵ Wise¹³ are the people who know the proclamation of a feast day,
Wise are those who walk, YHWH, in the light of your face;¹⁴
¹⁶ they exult in your name all day long,
and extol your righteousness.
¹⁷ For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.
¹⁸ For our shield belongs to YHWH,
our ruler to the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁹ Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said:
*I have set the crown on one who is mighty,
I have exalted one chosen from the people.*
²⁰ *I have found my servant David;
with my holy oil I have anointed him;*
²¹ *my hand shall always remain with him;*

my arm also shall strengthen him.
22 *The enemy shall not outwit him,
the wicked shall not humble him.*
23 *I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.*
24 *My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
and in my name his horn shall be exalted.*
25 *I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the rivers.*
26 *He shall cry to me: You are the father of the divine household,
my divine patron, and the midwife who brought me into life! ¹⁵*
27 *I will make him my heir,¹⁶
the highest of the rulers of the earth.*
28 *Forever I will keep my steadfast faithfulness to him,¹⁷
and my covenant with him will stand firm.*
29 *I will establish his line forever,
and his throne as long as the heavens endure.*
30 *If his descendants forsake my law
and do not walk according to my teachings,
31 if they violate my instructions
and are unfaithful to our covenant,
32 then I will punish their transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with whips;
33 but I will not remove from him my commitment,¹⁸
or be false to my faithfulness.*
34 *I will not violate our covenant,
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.*
35 *Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie to David.*
36 *His line shall continue forever,
and his throne shall endure before me like the sun.*
37 *It shall be established for ever like the moon,
an enduring witness in the skies.*

Selah

complaint

38 *But now you have spurned and rejected him;
you are full of wrath against your anointed.*
39 *You have renounced the covenant with your servant;*

you have defiled his crown in the soil.
40 You have broken through all his walls;
you have laid his strongholds in ruins.
41 All who pass by plunder him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his enemies;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.
43 Moreover, you have turned back the edge of his sword,
and you have not supported him in battle.
44 You have removed the scepter from his hand,
and hurled his throne to the ground.
45 You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with shame.

Selah

Petition

46 How long, YHWH? Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your anger burn like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is –
for how fragile you have created all mortals!
48 Who can live and never see death?
Who can escape the power of Sheol?

Selah

49 YHWH, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
50 Remember, YHWH, how your servant is taunted;
how I bear in my bosom the insults of the peoples,
51 with which your enemies taunt, YHWH,
with which they taunted the footsteps of your anointed.

Call to worship

52 Express your gratitude to YHWH¹⁹ forever.
Amen and Amen.

An Inauguration of the Eleven (Mark 16:15-20 DCB)

Commission

Jesus appeared to the Eleven and commissioned them: Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Talisman

These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out evil spirits, they will speak new languages. They will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any poison, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Compliance report

Then Jesus, our teacher, after he spoke to them, was taken up into the heavens and took his seat at the right hand of his divine patron.

Then the Eleven went forth and preached everywhere, while our teacher worked with them and confirmed their gospel with signs.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning...

Self-reliance is a fundamental American value. We say to one another: *God blessed you with a good head. Use it!* There is nothing wrong with taking responsibility for our lives except that taking responsibility for our lives makes it very easy to forget about God. We think of our life as a wage, when it is a divine gift. The *Teachings of Peter* encourages the followers of Jesus: *Forget about yourself – that is pride. Put your life in the hands of God – that is humility. When things go wrong, do not blame yourself. Simply realize that the suffering will end, and it will end shortly.*

The Devil in us all is the voice that says: *You can do it!* The only thing we can do is to put our lives into the hands of God.

Memorial of Saint Catherine of Siena
Virgin and Doctor of the Church
April 29
Lectionary: 557

(Acts 4:32-37)

The community of believers was of one heart and mind,
and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own,
but they had everything in common.
With great power the Apostles bore witness
to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,
and great favor was accorded them all.
There was no needy person among them,
for those who owned property or houses would sell them,
bring the proceeds of the sale,
and put them at the feet of the Apostles,
and they were distributed to each according to need.

Thus Joseph, also named by the Apostles Barnabas
(which is translated “son of encouragement”),
a Levite, a Cypriot by birth,
sold a piece of property that he owned,
then brought the money and put it at the feet of the Apostles.

A Hymn

(Ps 93:1-5)

Creation story

¹ Yahweh is our ruler,
Yahweh is robed in majesty;
Yahweh is robed...
...girded with strength.
Yahweh has established the cosmos;
it shall never be moved;
²your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

Call to worship

³ The primeval oceans have lifted up, Yahweh,
the primeval oceans have lifted up their voice;
the primeval oceans lift up the roar of their waves.
⁴ More majestic than the thunder of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is Yahweh!

Creation story

⁵ Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your sanctuary, Yahweh, for evermore.

(John 3:7-15)

Jesus said to Nicodemus:
“You must be born from above.”
The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes,
but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes;
so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”
Nicodemus answered and said to him,
“How can this happen?”
Jesus answered and said to him,
“You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this?
Amen, amen, I say to you,
we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen,
but you people do not accept our testimony.
If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe,
how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?
No one has gone up to heaven
except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.
And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

Homily

How curious a day! A celebration of a woman, who lived in a time when there were three popes, just a few days following the celebration of four popes – John XXIII, John Paul II, Benedict XV and Francis – when two living popes canonized the two who were dead.

Together with the patron saint of the present pope – Francis of Assisi -- she is the patron of Italy – and presumably the Vatican whose politics she worked so hard to reform, which still remains in need of the kind of commitment to service she sought from the church she loved.

Catherine was accused of heresy – as certainly as the present Francis will be. Perhaps, like her, Francis will survive because of the goodness of his own life. Not that he is perfect, but unlike many around him, he is striving to live as Jesus lived.

Hopefully Catherine will protect Pope Francis so that he will not have to wait until after his death to do the good to which he is clearly committed.

Catherine was canonized in 1461, a mere 81 years after she died. In 1939, as the Second World War was breaking out in Europe, she was named co-patron saint of Italy with St. Francis of Assisi.²⁰ And in 1970, at the start of the women's liberation movement, she was declared a Doctor – a teacher who clearly understood the meaning of Jesus' teachings. With St. Teresa of Avila and later St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine was the first woman given that honor. Her feast is April 29 (formerly April 30).

Catherine was born on another feast day, the Annunciation (March 25) in 1347. She was the 24th of 25 children (her twin sister died at three months), born to Lapa di Puccio di Piacenti, the daughter of a poet, and Giacomo di Benincasa, a prosperous wool dyer. The year after she was born, the plague descended upon Tuscany and the region was plunged into a severe economic depression. Walled, hilltop cities like Siena endured constant military and political struggles during these years.

As a child, Catherine was merry, playful and joyous, and her good humor stayed with her throughout her life. At age six or seven she had a mystical experience. Over the Dominican church in Siena she saw a regally dressed Jesus sitting on a throne, together with Sts. Peter, Paul and John the Evangelist. Jesus had smiled upon her and held out his hand to bless her. She decided to vow herself to the service of God as a virgin, at a time when young women married to improve the financial or social status of their families.

She had to convince her parents that she did not want to marry (by cutting her golden brown hair) and endured their displeasure, which relegated her to servile duties within her family. Finally, her father allowed her a room at home for meditation and prayer. Here she began the austere fasting and ascetic practices that marked the rest of her life.

Catherine sought spiritual direction from the Dominican friars. She also endured long periods of feeling abandoned by God. She reportedly once prayed, "O Lord, where were you when my heart was so vexed with foul and hateful temptations?" A voice answered her, saying, "Daughter, I was in your heart, fortifying you by grace." At the age of 20, while praying in her room, she saw herself being "mystically espoused" to Jesus, who gave her a ring only she could see.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Apr2006/Feature1.asp>

After three years she was allowed to leave her family home and physically live with the *Mantellate*. These women (mostly widows) devoted themselves to charitable work among the poor in town and followed the Third Order Rule of St. Dominic. From age 21 until her death at 33, she nursed in the primitive hospitals, distributed alms to the poor and visited prisoners.

She attracted followers (*Caterinati*) and wrote copious letters to her spiritual “family.” Until the last three years of her life, she didn’t even know how to read or write, as was often the case for women in the 14th century. But she dictated hundreds of letters. Her letters grew to encompass popes and princes, priests and soldiers, religious men and women. More than 400 of her letters still exist.

At one point, however, Catherine was denounced as a fake and summoned to a General Chapter of Dominicans to answer charges of hypocrisy and presumption. All were disproved.

Like St. Francis of Assisi, Catherine received the stigmata (the wounds of Christ). While praying in front of a crucifix in a church in Pisa in 1375, she received these signs of her identification with Jesus’ suffering and fainted from the pain. The wounds of Christ remained invisible to others until after her death when all could see them.

In 1376 Catherine went to Avignon to make peace between the people of Florence and Pope Gregory XI, but failed. She did succeed, however, in ending the 74-year-long papacy in Avignon by convincing the pope to return to Rome.

Returning to Siena, she wrote her great spiritual classic *The Dialogue*, an account of her conversations with God. She calls God “first Gentle Truth” and the “essence of Charity,” a God in love with humanity. She regards Jesus as the bridge between heaven and earth, “a lifeboat to draw the soul out of the tempestuous sea to conduct her to the port of salvation.”

When a rival pope was set up in 1378, initiating the Great Schism, Catherine wrote letter after letter asking European princes to recognize Urban VI in Rome as pope. She also wrote Urban to bolster him in his trials. The pope eventually told her to come to Rome that he might have her advice close at hand.

But she died soon afterward of a stroke in Rome in 1380. She said she was offering herself to God as a victim for the pope and Church unity. The Great Schism did not end until 1415.

Great points that Christ welcomes us as we are and we don't all need to be the same (as in revivalism, where every soul has to confess to total profligacy up front).

It is not possible to read and study the OT like a long syllogism that ends up with Christ.

Absolutely. Since the Enlightenment, we assume the answers for today's questions will be found in future research. In traditional cultures like ancient Israel, the answers to today questions are found in past teachings. Today's problems are the result of having forgotten something, so just as Jesus does on the road to Emmaus, the Hebrews go patiently through the Bible to find the answer. The old: when it doesn't work, read the directions that came in the box. Jesus was an anomaly. As the temptation stories reflect, Jesus was not a military hero, a social reformer who fed the poor, or a miracle worker who could leap from buildings in a single bound unhurt. The read back through the Bible by the followers of Jesus led them to traditions in the *Creation of Zion* (Isa 40:1—55:13) in which the Hebrew people in Babylon are cast as a *Servant of YHWH* tortured by the Babylonians. The servant modeled a powerless messiah like Jesus, who powerless became a link to the suffering throughout the Roman empire.

Revelation means God's self-disclosure of what was otherwise unknowable. I think we have to say Jesus did come to overthrow the Torah in a certain sense, that the scriptures had it wrong in many places. It is possible to begin with Christ and read and study the OT like a long midrash on him. You know, election, for one thing. Christ is the elect seed of Abraham, to my thinking. The other idea, a national god, is like one of those useless branches in John 15 (cf. Romans 11). The Cosmic Christ of the first chapters of Ephesians and Colossians is such a totally new and different religion to anything before to me that it's hard to see how we got there. Glad we did, as it starts to be accessible to me there as a Gentile.

I tend to side with the Jesus who describes his ministry as fulfilling the Torah teachings. I think Jesus focused on traditions in Torah like a *Covenant between YHWH and Abraham* (Gen 14:24—15:10) which understands the people of YHWH to include all the peoples (stars), not simply the Hebrews. He also brings Daniel into play.

The thing that is overlooked at Pentecost in the tongues, a reversal of Babel, the miracle if you will, is that in and through the Holy Spirit they all ***understood one another***.

The powerless of Jesus is appealing, because every human being – in fact, most – experience powerlessness, and see Jesus

accept and survive is an inspiring message. Powerlessness is the most universal bond between human beings.

Reading Julian of Norwich, how I got onto Rahner, as she is a universalist it seems.

Julian, and the other women mystics – like all mystics, posed a creative challenge to the male hierarchy of the Catholic church. Mystics go around the clergy, and access God directly in their spiritual experiences. Because Julian and others continued to present themselves as faithful Catholics, and because they were so wildly popular, popes could not condemn them, so they carried out reforms which although unwelcome to the clergy were welcome by ordinary people. They truly understood the priesthood of the faithful, and anticipated the Reformation.

Have been praying the rosary but varying the decades and mysteries using the Jesus Prayer and others ad lib.

The rosary – originally 15 decades, then shortened to 5 – was a Medieval piety which developed for villagers to use as a work mantra. Originally workers memorized the 150 psalms which they prayed as they worked. When the mental acuity such memorization demanded was no longer part of the literacy of villagers, the psalms were replaced by 150 Ave Maria's.

While repeating the Ave's, villagers were expected to focus on significant events – the mysteries – in the lives of Jesus and Mary. "Mystery" here is used in the Eastern Christian sense of "sacrament" – events which opened a window on the human plane, so that villagers could see the divine plane, and use the event to synchronize their own lives with that of Jesus and Mary.

Dominic de Guzman, who founded the mendicant Order of Preachers, popularized the use of the rosary.

At my Mother's funeral vigil, I asked members of our family to write her a letter, which they read before we prayed each decade of the rosary. I read from her Bible – passages she had underlined or annotated, prayers she had inserted as bookmarks. My favorite was her "golfer's prayer" which went something like: O Lord, help me keep my head down, my eye on the ball, my swing steady... The golfers at the vigil erupted in laughter and applause.

Feast of Saints Philip and James, Apostles

May 3

Lectionary: 561

Paul's Creed (1 Cor 15:1-8)

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the good news I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:

- Our messiah²¹ died for our sins in accordance with the Bible;
- He was buried;
- He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Bible;
- He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.
- Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers and sisters at once -- most are still living, some have fallen asleep.
- Then he appeared to James, then to all the Apostles.
- Finally, as to a child born long after its due date, he appeared to me.

A Lament (Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm dedicated to David.

Profession of faith

¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
The firmament proclaims the handiwork of YHWH.

² One day tells its stories to another,
One night makes report to the next.²²

³ Not a sound, nor a word;
No voice is heard;

⁴ Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
Their words to the end of the world.

YHWH has pitched the heavens like a tent for the sun,

⁵YHWH steps out like a groom from under his wedding canopy,²³

Our divine patron runs the course like a joyful athlete.

⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
Its circuit to the end of them;
Nothing is hidden from its warmth.

⁷ The teachings of YHWH are perfect,
They revive the soul;
The teachings²⁴ of YHWH are sure,
They make wise students;

⁸ The stipulations of YHWH are right,
They make minds rejoice;
The commandments of YHWH are clear,
They enlighten the eyes;

⁹ Living morally²⁵ is the only path to sincerity,
The only way of life which lasts forever.
The stipulations of YHWH are true;
The teachings of YHWH are completely righteous.

¹⁰ Being faithful to them is more precious than gold;
Learning from them is more valuable than unlimited pure gold;
Living by them is sweeter also than honey,
Walking their way tastes better than honey dripping fresh a comb.

[http://www.interfaithfamily.com/life_cycle/weddings/The_Jewish_Wedding_Canopy_\(Huppah\).shtml](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/life_cycle/weddings/The_Jewish_Wedding_Canopy_(Huppah).shtml)

Petition

- ¹¹ The teachings of YHWH make your followers²⁶ wise;
Being faithful to them is great reward.
- ¹² Even so, who knows how often we will fail?
Forgive me for the faults hiding from me.
- ¹³ Stand between your followers and their enemies;
Do not let them have dominion over me.
- Then I shall be blameless,
Innocent of great transgression.
- ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to you,
YHWH, who births me and delivers me from my enemies.

(John 14:6-14)

Jesus said to Thomas:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father of my household except through me. If you know me, then you will also know the father of my household. From now on you do know and have seen your divine patron.

Philip said to him:

Teacher, teach us about the father of your household, and that will be enough for us.

Jesus said to him:

*Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me sees the father of my household. How can you say: Teach us about the father of your household? Do you not believe that **I AM** the father of my household and the father of my household is **I**? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The father of my household who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that **I AM** the father of my household and the father of my household is **I** or else, believe because of the works themselves.*

Trust me, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the father of my household. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the father of my household may be glorified in his heir. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.

Homily

'Abba, thank you for waking me up this morning. Help me live today for Jim and Laurie.

Like Philip and Thomas we all struggle to follow the will of God. *What does God want us to do?*

Philip and Thomas ask Jesus an honest question. *Teach us about the father of your household.*

Jesus answers that he is the heir of the household of his father – the beloved. Words are unnecessary. Look at how I live! Imitate me. I am the living image of the father of my household. I do what the father of my household does, that is all you need to learn.

The greatest testimony any of us will ever give about our faith is how we live our lives. Words can alienate – life is a gentle and convincing message.

Feast of Matthias, Apostle

May 14

Lectionary 564

Inauguration of Matthias

(Acts 1:15-17, 20-26)

Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers and sisters -- a group of about 120 people.²⁷ He said, "My brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who was the guide for those who arrested Jesus. Judas was numbered among us and was allotted a share in this ministry.

For it is written in the book of Psalms:

*Let his village become abandoned,
and may no one dwell in it.*

May another take his office.

Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time Jesus, our teacher,²⁸ came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection.²⁹

So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed: *You, Teacher, who know the hearts of all,³⁰ show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place.*

Then they gave lots to them,³¹ and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the Eleven.³²

A Hymn (Ps 113:1-9)

Call to worship

¹Praise YHWH!

Praise, O servants of YHWH.

Praise the name *YHWH*.

²Bless the name *YHWH*.

²Bless the name *YHWH* now and forever.

³From the rising of the sun to its setting

Praise the name *YHWH*.

Creation story

⁴YHWH is high above all peoples,

The glory of YHWH above the heavens.

⁵Who is like YHWH our divine patron?

Who is seated on high,

⁶Who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

⁷YHWH raises the powerless from the soil,

YHWH lifts the needy from the trash,³³

⁸To sit them with the powerful,

with the elite males of the people of YHWH.
⁹YHWH gives infertile women a home,³⁴
YHWH makes them the joyous mothers of children.

Call to worship

Praise YHWH!

A Teaching

(John 15:9-17)

teaching

Jesus taught his followers:

Just as the father of my household is faithful³⁵ to me, so I also will be faithful to you. Remain faithful to me. If you follow my teachings,³⁶ you will remain in my love, just as I have followed the teachings of the father of my household and remain faithful to him.

Commentary

I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my teaching:³⁷ be faithful to one another as I have been faithful to you.

None are more faithful than those who lay down their lives for the members of their household.³⁸

You are members of my household if you do what I teach you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his owner is doing. I have called you members of my household ³⁹because I have told you everything I have heard from the father of my household. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the father of my household in my name he may give you.⁴⁰ Be faithful to one another.⁴¹

Homily

Thank you for waking me up this morning, 'Abba. I am grateful for this day – a good day, the first day. With you at my side, I will live it mindfully – remembering that life is something given, not something earned. Stay close to the people of Ukraine, the young women in Nigeria and Matt Ewing. Make the butterfly of my day become a tsunami for good elsewhere.

The Church needs to choose a new Matthias to bring it back to life. Perhaps his name is Francis, chosen pope on March 13, 2013.

Memorial of Saint Philip Neri, Priest

May 26

Lectionary: 291

(Acts 16:11-15)

We set sail from Troas, making a straight run for Samothrace, and on the next day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, a leading city in that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We spent some time in that city.

On the sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river where we thought there would be a place of prayer.

We sat and spoke with the women who had gathered there.

One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying.

After she and her household had been baptized, she offered us an invitation,

“If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home,” and she prevailed on us.

A Hymn

(Ps 149:1-9)

Call to worship

¹ **Praise** Yahweh!

Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Praise Yahweh in the assembly of the faithful.

² Let Israel **be glad** in its Maker;

Let the children of Zion **rejoice** in their divine ruler.

³ Let them **praise** the name of Yahweh with dancing,

making melody to Yahweh with tambourine and lyre.

Creation story

⁴ For Yahweh takes pleasure in the people of Yahweh;

Yahweh adorns the humble with victory.

Call to worship

⁵ Let the faithful exult in glory;

let them sing for joy on their dining couches.

⁶ Let high praises for their divine patron be in their throats

and two-edged swords in their hands,⁴²

⁷ to execute vengeance on their enemies

and punishment on the peoples,

⁸ to bind their rulers with fetters

and their leaders with chains of iron,

⁹ to execute on them the judgment decreed.

This is glory for all the faithful of Yahweh.

Praise Yahweh!

(John 15:26—16:4)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“When the Advocate⁴³ comes whom I will send you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father,
he will testify to me.
And you also testify,
because you have been with me from the beginning.

“I have told you this so that you may not fall away.⁴⁴
They will expel you from the synagogues;⁴⁵
in fact, the hour is coming when everyone who kills you⁴⁶
will think he is offering worship to God.
They will do this because they have not known either the Father or me.
I have told you this so that when their hour comes
you may remember that I told you.”

Homily

Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Saturday After Second Sunday After Pentecost

Lectionary: 573

Feast of Barnabas, Apostle

June 11

Lectionary: 580

Inauguration of Barnabas

(Acts 11:21—13:3)

In those days a great number who believed turned to our Father. The news about them reached the ears of the Church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of our Father, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to our Father in firmness of heart, for he was **a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.**⁴⁷

And a large number of people was added to our Father. Then he went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the Church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians”.⁴⁸

Now there were in the Church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon the Black, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping our Father and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

A Hymn

(Ps 98:1-9)

- ¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,
for our divine patron has done marvelous things.
The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh
have gained victory.
- ²Yahweh has made known victory;
Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of the nations.
- ³Yahweh remembers unconditional love and faithfulness to the household of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.
- ⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
- ⁵Sing praises to Yahweh with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
- ⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.
- ⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
- ⁸Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

A Teaching

(Matt 5:20-2)

Jesus taught his disciples:

Basic teaching

"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees,⁴⁹ you will not enter into the Household of Heaven.⁵⁰

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother

will be liable to judgment,
and

whoever says to his brother,
Raqa, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin,
and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."⁵¹

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

June 29

Lectionary: 591

(Acts 12:1-11)

In those days, King Herod laid hands upon some members of the Church
to harm them.

He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword,
and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews
he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

–It was the feast of Unleavened Bread.–

He had him taken into custody and put in prison
under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each.
He intended to bring him before the people after Passover.
Peter thus was being kept in prison,
but prayer by the Church was fervently being made
to God on his behalf.

On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial,
Peter, secured by double chains,
was sleeping between two soldiers,
while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison.
Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him
and a light shone in the cell.
He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying,
“Get up quickly.”
The chains fell from his wrists.
The angel said to him, “Put on your belt and your sandals.”
He did so.
Then he said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.”
So he followed him out,
not realizing that what was happening through the angel was real;
he thought he was seeing a vision.
They passed the first guard, then the second,
and came to the iron gate leading out to the city,
which opened for them by itself.
They emerged and made their way down an alley,
and suddenly the angel left him.
Then Peter recovered his senses and said,
“Now I know for certain
that the Lord sent his angel
and rescued me from the hand of Herod
and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting.”

Responsorial Psalm [PS 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (5) **The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.**

I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the LORD;
the lowly will hear me and be glad.

R. **The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.**

Glorify the LORD with me,
let us together extol his name.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

R. **The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.**

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,
and your faces may not blush with shame.
When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,
and from all his distress he saved him.

R. **The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.**

The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
Taste and see how good the LORD is;
blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

R. **The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.**

Reading [22 TM 4:6-8, 17-18](#)

I, Paul, am already being poured out like a libation,
and the time of my departure is at hand.
I have competed well; I have finished the race;
I have kept the faith.
From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me,
which the Lord, the just judge,
will award to me on that day, and not only to me,
but to all who have longed for his appearance.

The Lord stood by me and gave me strength,
so that through me the proclamation might be completed
and all the Gentiles might hear it.
And I was rescued from the lion's mouth.
The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat
and will bring me safe to his heavenly Kingdom.
To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel [MT 16:13-19](#)

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter said in reply,
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Homily

Israeli parliament lauds John XXIII as example of unity

Elise Harris

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/israeli-parliament-lauds-john-xxiii-as-example-of-unity/>

Vatican City, May 16, 2014 / 05:42 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- In an unprecedented session held earlier this week, members of the Israeli parliament praised St John XXIII for his efforts in improving Jewish-Christian relations, both before and during his pontificate.

“John XXIII should serve as an example for all men of the need to bring together peoples of different races, faiths and beliefs,” former immigration and absorption minister Yair Tzeven voiced during the May 13 event, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The paper reports in a May 13 article that during the encounter members of the parliament, known as the Knesset, gave special attention to the saint’s efforts in saving Jews during the holocaust while serving as Apostolic Nuncio to Turkey.

He was also praised for laying the groundwork of Nostra Aetate, a declaration of the Second Vatican Council that was instrumental in reconciling Jewish and Catholic relationships.

Published in 1965, the document was released after the pontiff's death and rejected former claims against the Jewish people, principally that they were guilty of Jesus's death.

Canonized last month alongside Polish Pope Saint John Paul II, John XXIII was born in Italy as Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, and served as the Supreme Pontiff from 1958 until his death in 1963.

While an archbishop, Roncalli was appointed as apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece in 1934, which is a position held for the majority of World War II. While serving in Istanbul, the future Pope distributed numerous documents to Jewish refugees who were fleeing the Nazi regime and attempting to make their way to Mandatory Palestine.

The archbishop also wrote thousands of such documents to the Vatican's ambassador in Budapest at the time, Angelo Ratti, who was working with the diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, among others, to save Jews from the terrors of the Holocaust.

Roncalli's efforts during the war are credited for helping save thousands of Jews from the Nazi concentration camps, the Post reports, including many from Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

Speaking during the Knesset's session, the Jerusalem Post states that Tzeven recalled how five years ago many historians, authors and public figures in Israel called on the state to recognize John XXIII's actions during the Holocaust as well as his efforts in repairing relations with the Jewish people, and praised Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein for supporting this recognition of the pope.

"There has not been an event like today's in the history of the Knesset, an event which is so important to our relations with the Christian and Catholic world" Tzeven explained, noting that "John XXIII should serve as an example for all men" of the need for unity.

Following Tzeven's remarks, the Post reports that Edelstein then opened the session by stating that "Pope John XXIII was known as a humanist, a sensitive man and someone who helped save Jews during his service as a papal emissary in Turkey."

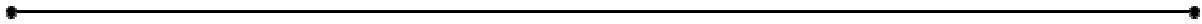
Continuing, the Knesset speaker remarked that Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog, the grandfather of the parliament's current opposition leader Isaac Herzog who was also present at the meeting, "recognized John XXIII as an exceptional person who served as a contact person for the various rescue operations of Jews throughout Europe (during the Holocaust)."

Rising to the podium after the Edelstein, Herzog recalled the frequent meetings held between then-Archbishop Roncalli and his grandfather, noting that “When the news from Europe first reached my grandfather, he did everything to save Jews.”

“As part of these efforts, he met many times with Roncalli and stated that at these meetings the Archbishop wept,” he continued.

“John XXIII made tremendous efforts to save Jews, and because of him thousands of Jews were indeed saved.”

Observing how “this special person served just five years as pope,” Herzog recounted how “He took up the post at age 77 and initiated a massive revolution;” one which “established that Judaism was the older brother to Christianity.”



Memorial of Saint Mary of Magdala

July 22

Lectionary: 603

(Exod 16:1-5,9-15)

The children of Israel set out from Elim,
and came into the desert of Sin,
which is between Elim and Sinai,
on the fifteenth day of the second month
after their departure from the land of Egypt.
Here in the desert the whole assembly of the children of Israel
grumbled against Moses and Aaron.
The children of Israel said to them,
“Would that we had died at YHWH’s hand in the land of Egypt,
as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread!
But you had to lead us into this desert
to make the whole community die of famine!”

Then YHWH said to Moses,
“I will now rain down bread from heaven for you.
Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion;
thus will I test them,
to see whether they follow my instructions or not.
On the sixth day, however, when they prepare what they bring in,
let it be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Tell the whole congregation
of the children of Israel:
Present yourselves before YHWH,
for he has heard your grumbling.”
When Aaron announced this to the whole assembly of the children of Israel,
they turned toward the desert, and lo,
the glory of YHWH appeared in the cloud!
YHWH spoke to Moses and said,
“I have heard the grumbling of the children of Israel.
Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh,

and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread,
so that you may know that I, YHWH, am your God.”

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp.
In the morning a dew lay all about the camp,
and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert
were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground.
On seeing it, the children of Israel asked one another, “What is this?”
for they did not know what it was.
But Moses told them,
“This is the bread which YHWH has given you to eat.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM PS 78:18-19, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28

R. (24b) **YHWH gave them bread from heaven.**

They tempted God in their hearts
by demanding the food they craved.
Yes, they spoke against God, saying,
“Can God spread a table in the desert?”

R. **YHWH gave them bread from heaven.**

Yet he commanded the skies above
and the doors of heaven he opened;
He rained manna upon them for food
and gave them heavenly bread.

R. **YHWH gave them bread from heaven.**

Man ate the bread of angels,
food he sent them in abundance.
He stirred up the east wind in the heavens,
and by his power brought on the south wind.

R. **YHWH gave them bread from heaven.**

And he rained meat upon them like dust,
and, like the sand of the sea, winged fowl,
Which fell in the midst of their camp
round about their tents.

R. **YHWH gave them bread from heaven.**

ALLELUIA

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way?

I saw the glory of the risen Christ, I saw his empty tomb.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

GOSPEL JN 20:1-2, 11-18

On the first day of the week,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning,
while it was still dark,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter
and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them,
“They have taken YHWH from the tomb,
and we don’t know where they put him.”

Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping.
And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb
and saw two angels in white sitting there,
one at the head and one at the feet
where the Body of Jesus had been.
And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
She said to them, “They have taken my Lord,
and I don’t know where they laid him.”
When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there,
but did not know it was Jesus.
Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?
Whom are you looking for?”
She thought it was the gardener and said to him,
“Sir, if you carried him away,
tell me where you laid him,
and I will take him.”
Jesus said to her, “Mary!”
She turned and said to him in Hebrew,
“Rabbouni,” which means Teacher.
Jesus said to her,
“Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.
But go to my brothers and tell them,
‘I am going to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God.’”
Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,

“I have seen YHWH,”
and then reported what he told her.

Feast of Saint James, Apostle July 25

Lectionary: 605

(2 Cor 4:7-15)

Brothers and sisters:

We hold this treasure in earthen vessels,
that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us.
We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not abandoned;
struck down, but not destroyed;
always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body.
For we who live are constantly being given up to death
for the sake of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So death is at work in us, but life in you.
Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith,
according to what is written, *I believed, therefore I spoke*,
we too believe and therefore speak,
knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus
will raise us also with Jesus
and place us with you in his presence.
Everything indeed is for you,
so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people
may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.

Lament

(Ps 126:1-6)

A Song of Ascents.

Profession of faith

¹ When YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion,

we were like those who dream.
² Then our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues trilled with shouts of joy;
then it was said among all peoples:
YHWH has done great things for them.
³ YHWH has done great things for us,
Therefore, we rejoiced.

Petition

⁴ Restore our fortunes, YHWH,
like the *wadis* filled with water in the Negeb Desert.
⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

(Matt 20:20-28)

The mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons
and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something.

He said to her,

“What do you wish?”

She answered him,

“Command that these two sons of mine sit,
one at your right and the other at your left, in your Kingdom.”

Jesus said in reply,

“You do not know what you are asking.

Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”

They said to him, “We can.”

He replied,

“My chalice you will indeed drink,
but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give
but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

When the ten heard this,

they became indignant at the two brothers.

But Jesus summoned them and said,

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and the great ones make their authority over them felt.

But it shall not be so among you.
Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant;
whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.
Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served
but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Homily

‘Abba, thank you for getting me up today.

Memorial of Saint Martha

July 29

Lectionary: 607

(Exod 34:29-35)

As Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands, he did not know that his face was radiant while he talked with YHWH.

When Aaron, then, and the other people of Israel saw Moses and realized how radiant his face had become, they were afraid to come near him.

Only after Moses called to them did Aaron and all the leaders of the community come back to him. Moses then spoke to them. Later on, all the people of Israel came up to him, and he enjoined on them all that YHWH had told him on Mt. Sinai.

When Moses finished speaking with them, he put on a mask. Whenever Moses entered the presence of YHWH to converse, he removed the mask until he came out again.

On coming out, Moses would tell the people of Israel all that had been commanded.

Then the people of Israel would see that Moses’ face was radiant; so he would again put the mask over his face until he went in to talk with YHWH.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 99:5, 6, 7, 9](#)

R. (see 9c) **Holy is YHWH our God.**

Extol YHWH, our God,

and worship at his footstool;
holy is he!

R. Holy is YHWH our God.

Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
and Samuel, among those who called upon his name;
they called upon YHWH, and he answered them.

R. Holy is YHWH our God.

From the pillar of cloud he spoke to them;
they heard his decrees and the law he gave them.

R. Holy is YHWH our God.

Extol YHWH, our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for holy is YHWH, our God.

R. Holy is YHWH our God.

GOSPEL [JN 11:19-27](#)

Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to comfort them about their brother [Lazarus, who had died].

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went to meet him;

but Mary sat at home.

Martha said to Jesus,

“Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,
God will give you.”

Jesus said to her,

“Your brother will rise.”

Martha said to him,

“I know he will rise,
in the resurrection on the last day.”

Jesus told her,

“I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,
and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?”

She said to him, “Yes, Lord.

I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
the one who is coming into the world.”

OR LK 10:38-42

Jesus entered a village
where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him.
She had a sister named Mary
who sat beside YHWH at his feet listening to him speak.
Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said,
“Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?
Tell her to help me.”
YHWH said to her in reply,
“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.
There is need of only one thing.
Mary has chosen the better part
and it will not be taken from her.”

Homily

The use of masks is common in ancient Egypt. The ritual reminds audiences that although they are being addressed by a human priest, the priest, in fact, is speaking for a member of the divine assembly. The mask also shields the audience from the divine holiness which emanates from the priest. Have talked with a member of the divine assembly face to face priests were permeated with divine holiness (Hebrew: *qabod*). Like radiation today, this holiness threatens humans, and unless precautions, like wearing masks, are taken, can kill them.

Memorial of Saint Dominic, Priest

Lectionary: 617

(Exod 20:1-13)

Reading **1NM 20:1-13**

The whole congregation of the children of Israel
arrived in the desert of Zin in the first month,

and the people settled at Kadesh.
It was here that Miriam died, and here that she was buried.

As the community had no water,
they held a council against Moses and Aaron.
The people contended with Moses, exclaiming,
“Would that we too had perished with our kinsmen in the LORD’s presence!
Why have you brought the LORD’s assembly into this desert
where we and our livestock are dying?
Why did you lead us out of Egypt,
only to bring us to this wretched place
which has neither grain nor figs nor vines nor pomegranates?
Here there is not even water to drink!”
But Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly
to the entrance of the meeting tent, where they fell prostrate.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them,
and the LORD said to Moses,
“Take your staff and assemble the community,
you and your brother Aaron,
and in their presence order the rock to yield its waters.
From the rock you shall bring forth water for the congregation
and their livestock to drink.”
So Moses took his staff from its place before the LORD, as he was ordered.
He and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock,
where he said to them, “Listen to me, you rebels!
Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?”
Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff,
and water gushed out in abundance for the people
and their livestock to drink.
But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,
“Because you were not faithful to me
in showing forth my sanctity before the children of Israel,
you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them.”

These are the waters of Meribah,
where the children of Israel contended against the LORD,
and where the LORD revealed his sanctity among them.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tested me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Gospel MT 16:13-23

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi
and he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter said in reply,
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.
And so I say to you, you are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven.
Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
Then he strictly ordered his disciples
to tell no one that he was the Christ.

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples
that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly
from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed and on the third day be raised.
Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,
“God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.”
He turned and said to Peter,
“Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

Homily

‘Abba, my Godfather

Thank you for getting me up this morning
Help me to live this day with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach
Let me hear you say: Young man, I say to you Arise
Give me open hands, not closed fists
On this day of Dominic, help me to remember that times of great need in the Church are times of great saints. Dominic came to a church driven by both affluence and materials. The Albigensians responded with a total rejection of the world; Dominic embracing the world with restraint.
Send the Church saints today who will reach out to women, to gays and lesbians, to solid leaders. Your people are in need.
I have the courage to pray these words because of the example of your son, Jesus, and the support of the spirit of others like me – especially Patrice. Amen

As the Middle Ages were approaching their peak, the pope grew in prominence beyond any king in Christendom. The spiritual life of the Church was in the process of renewal, but there was still ignorance and division that threatened to get worse. In the year 1170, the same year in which Saint Thomas Becket was martyred in England, Dominic de Guzman was born in Calarogo, now Caleruega, Spain, about 20 miles from the Cathedral in Osma.

Before his mother conceived him, she saw in a vision that a dog with a burning torch in its mouth would come forth from her womb and set the world aflame. Later, she saw the moon on his forehead, yet at his Baptism, his godmother perceived it as a star. The boy was christened probably after Saint Dominic of Silas whose nearby shrine was a favorite of his mother.

His parents were Blessed Jane or Joan of Aza, renown for her charity to the poor and her miracles, and a nobleman named Felix de Guzman. They lived in a tower in the little village of which they were the royal wardens. Their eldest son Anthony would become a Canon of Saint James, and their second, Mannes, would eventually follow his younger brother in the Order of Preachers. Mannes was later beatified. Two nephews of Dominic would also join the Order, sons most likely of his sister. As a boy, Dominic was sent to his mother's brother to receive instruction for seven years. His uncle was a parish priest in Gumiel d'Izan. Even as a child, Dominic avoided games and denied himself the comfort of a bed to sleep on the floor.

At the age of 14, he went to the university in Palencia, in the kingdom of Leon. Around that time, there was a terrible famine. To give alms to the poor, he sold his possessions, even his precious annotated books, thinking that the living skins of the famished were more important than the dead skins of his books. Music was studied in the quadrivium. Consequently Dominic loved to sing, particularly the Ave Maris Stella and the Veni Creator. His study of the arts lasted six years.

Then in 1190, he was appointed to the canonry at Osma, while pursuing theological studies. Around five years later, he was ordained to the priesthood. The Canons Regular were essentially clerics who customarily followed the Rule of Saint Augustine. He continued with this life for another nine years. During his nightly vigils, Father Dominic grew in holiness as he wept for sinners. Of the many books he read, he was particularly fond of the Conferences of the Desert Fathers by Cassian. When Dominic was 31 years old and the subprior of his community, his prior, Diego d'Azevedo, succeeded the Bishop of Osma.

Dominic accompanied his holy bishop in 1203 to the Marches of France, in the Languedoc region, because of a royal wedding. It was there that they were struck by the spread of falsehood. People were adopting Albigensianism which considered all material things to be evil. While at Toulouse, Dominic stayed up all night until he had persuaded the innkeeper to accept the true faith. About that time, the pope had called upon the Cistercian abbots to preach against this heresy. At Montpellier, Bishop Diego convinced them to abandon their ostentatious retinues. He himself put on the Cistercian habit and joined the mission, taking Dominic with him. From then on, the subprior was called "Brother Dominic."

The preachers held disputations from town to town, attended by the lowly and the noble alike. At Fanjeaux, arbiters held a trial by fire for the manuscripts written by Dominic and his adversaries. The one written by Saint Dominic flew out of the flames three times. A similar miracle took place at Montreal.

The Albigensians were extremely austere, but Dominic surpassed them all by his charitable sacrifices. He might eat a bit of dried fish or a little bread and soup. Women who often fed him testified that he never ate more than two eggs, and his wine was about two-thirds water. Dominic wore an abrasive hairshirt, and had an iron chain forged around his waist. He slept very little, and when he did, it was always on the floor, preferably in the chapel. There, the fire of the Holy Spirit even dried his rain-soaked habit better than those of his companions who spent the night by the fireplace. Exhausted from his vigils, he sometimes napped on the side of the road. It was his practice to carry his shoes until he got to town. Once when he needed directions, people maliciously sent him along a path of briars, but he was always happy to bear a little more for the love of God.

Dominic once told a pompous bishop, "... heretics are more easily won over by examples of humility and virtue than by external display or a hail of words. Should we not rather arm ourselves with devout prayers and, carrying before us the standard of true humility, proceed in our bare feet against Goliath?" As hard as he was on himself, nevertheless, Dominic was easy on others.

On the night of July 22, 1206, the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen, on a hill of Fanjeaux overlooking the little town of Prouille on the plain, Saint Dominic saw what appeared to be a globe of fire descending upon a shrine of Our

Lady. The sign from Our Lady (or sign of God, "Seignadou" in the local dialect) occurred again the next two nights. From this, he understood that he was to establish a monastery of nuns at Prouille. In the months that followed, Dominic converted nine young women. Consequently, the first "Dominican" convent opened on the 27th of December. Saint Mary Magdalen, the penitent Apostle to the Apostles, therefore, would become the patroness and mother not only of the converted nuns of Prouille but of the Order of Preachers about to be born.

Bishop Diego returned to his diocese in 1207, but died soon after. Saint Dominic then took charge of the small band of preachers. Already at Prouille, there was a double monastery or priory next to the monastery, but the brothers were not yet bound to Dominic canonically. Unfortunately in 1208, servants of an Albigensian count murdered a papal legate, giving the heresy more political significance. As a result, the mission turned into a bloody crusade in the hands of aristocrats and their armies. In the course of the war, Churches were burned, and the preachers disbanded. Dominic, often alone, continued at the task for years, all the while serving the victims of violence.

Brother Dominic always hoped to be martyred but thought himself unworthy. So, he fled places of honor and drew near to mistreatment, to where people would spit and throw filth at him. Aware of looming ambush, he approached singing in plain view. His courage and faith, however, intimidated assassins.

At Muret, the Catholic force was vastly outnumbered, but they broke through the enemy line, killed the heretical King of Aragon and won a great victory, just as Dominic had foretold.

In 1211, while the war continued, a group of English pilgrims were on their way to Saint James of Compostela in Spain. While crossing the River Garonne, the overloaded boat capsized. Dominic, in a nearby church, heard the cries of bystanders and soldiers. Many of the pilgrims were already underwater. Dominic prostrated himself, prayed and loudly commanded their safety in the Name of Jesus Christ. Immediately, the pilgrims emerged near the shore and were pulled to the riverbank. One of the pilgrims, named Lawrence, would be one of the first members of the Order of Preachers. In another incident, a ferryman demanded payment from Dominic, who then prayed and picked up a coin at his feet. Later, eyewitnesses would testify to these and many other miracles at his canonization process.

At Castres, Dominic was praying in the church. The prior sent one of the canons to fetch him for dinner. Seeing Dominic floating in the air, he returned to tell the prior who went to see for himself. So moved was he by the phenomenon, the prior, Matthew of France, became another of Dominic's first followers. Eventually, a new group of preachers gathered to support his mission.

Peter of Seila gave Dominic large stone buildings at Toulouse, and became his follower. While in this city, the small fraternity attended lectures in theology. Toulouse was the see of Bishop Foulques, who greatly supported the

preachers. In 1215, Dominic accompanied Foulques to Rome for the Lateran Council.

While in Rome for the Council, it is believed that Saint Dominic met Saint Francis of Assisi. Both of them would establish a new kind of religious life, which is mendicant and apostolic. At a later time, one or the other founder got angry at his sons for extravagant buildings and held up the other Order as an example of simplicity. Members of both Orders call both saints "Holy Father." For centuries, it has also been the custom for Friars Preachers to invite a Friar Minor to preach on the feast of Saint Dominic, and vice versa. Pope Innocent III was inspired to approve these new Orders because he saw in a dream one or the other of these saints reaching up to support the tottering Church, lest it fall to ruins. Today in Saint Peter's Basilica, colossal statues of Saints Francis and Dominic flank both sides of the Chair of Saint Peter.

In Rome, Bishop Foulques and Saint Dominic petitioned Pope Innocent III for the right to establish a new Order of Preachers. Until that time, preaching was the proper function of bishops. The bold prospect of having an order whose priests cross diocesan boundaries to preach as needed would be a great privilege, yet clearly the time had come for such a development, and Dominic was worthy of the responsibility. So, the pope told him to return to his brethren, and with them, to choose an existing rule. Hence, after the council, Dominic and his companions chose the Rule of Saint Augustine. To this short monastic rule, constitutions were added. Therefore, the preachers would be generically monastic, yet specifically "friars" not always bound to a particular cloister nor to manual labor. For the friars, even the monastic elements of their life acquired an apostolic thrust; for instance, the Liturgy of the Hours was celebrated more succinctly so they could get on with study and the preaching of truth. Bishop Foulques then gave them charge of three Churches, to each of which priories were added. The first was Saint Romain in the cathedral city of Toulouse, and its priory was a model of simplicity. It was the summer of 1216 and the friars had grown in number to sixteen.

At the same time, Pope Honorius III succeeded Innocent III. Dominic set out, nevertheless, for Rome to complete the foundation. He arrived in September, but did not receive the papal bull of confirmation until December 22, 1216. In a second bull issued the same day, Honorius said, "We, considering that the brethren of the Order will be the champions of the faith and true lights of the world, do confirm the Order in all its lands and possessions present and to come and we take under our protection and government the Order itself, with all its goods and rights."

The pope wanted Dominic to stay at the Lateran for awhile, so Honorius appointed him to be the Master of the Sacred Palace, that is, a theological advisor to the pope, a teacher of the papal court and a censor of books. Since then, the position has traditionally been held by a Friar Preacher. While in the Eternal City, Dominic made pilgrimages to the great Christian shrines.

Once, while praying in the old Saint Peter's Basilica, Saint Dominic saw a vision. The Apostle Peter handed him a staff, and the Apostle Paul handed him a book. Together, they spoke to him, saying, "Go and preach, because you have been chosen by God for this work." Immediately, it seemed to Dominic that he saw all his children preaching two by two throughout the world. From then on, Saint Dominic was often seen on the road carrying a walking stick and the Epistles of Saint Paul. He also carried the Gospel of Saint Matthew, and could recite these Scriptures by heart.

The Founder was allowed to return to Toulouse in May of 1217, but the reunion was short. By August, our Holy Father planned to send his sons far and wide on the feast of the Assumption. They protested because it seemed that their small number would be too diffuse, but Dominic replied, "Do not oppose me, for I know very well what I am doing. The seed will molder if it is hoarded up; it will fructify if it is sown." In time, his prophecy proved true. Instead of dissipating, the Order grew rapidly, and its fruit likewise multiplied.

Consequently, before the great dispersion, the whole Order gathered for the last time at Our Lady of Prouille. The congregation was stunned by the unusual severity of his sermon, for on that day, he had inspired fear in them all. It was probably on that occasion that the brothers professed their vows in his hands; hence the custom of making profession on the Assumption is still common. Coincidentally, Saint Dominic appears today in the painting of the Assumption in Saint John Lateran. When the time had come, he sent most of the friars to the universities at Paris and Bologna. This emphasis on study has always been an integral component of Dominican formation. In fact, many professors soon entered the Order. Dominic, the first "Master" of the Order, sent other friars to Rome and to Spain, while the remainder continued the mission in southern France. About this time, our Father let his beard grow in hopes that he would be allowed to preach among the Tartars and receive martyrdom, but the opportunity never came.

To his brethren, Dominic was exemplary in mortification, doctrine and contemplation. Three times each night, he would whip himself to blood, once for his own salvation, a second time for sinners, and a third for departed souls. Later, other Dominican saints would do the same. Dominic habitually wept for sinners, in the towns he passed, while celebrating Mass, and during his vigils. He was heard crying: O Lord, what will become of sinners? Often on the road, he would either instruct his companions or wander off to pray. His most evident characteristic was that he always spoke to God in prayer or about God to others.

By January 1218, Dominic had walked back to Rome. Around that time, an important canon lawyer, Blessed Reginald of Orleans, wanted to follow Dominic but became bedridden with sickness. Our Lady came to anoint him and to show him the full habit of the Order of Preachers. Reginald recovered and the Order soon adopted the addition to its habit, which was probably the scapular. Saint Dominic too had seen visions of Our Lady. Once he saw Her

in the dormitory sprinkling the brethren with holy water as they slept. Therefore, today, the prior or prioress in every Dominican convent sprinkles the community at night prayers (Compline) during the Hail, Holy Queen (Salve Regina).

Due to the generosity of Pope Honorius, a Dominican priory was established at San Sisto (Pope Saint Sixtus II, Martyr) on the Appian Way. Dominic, having received a revelation from God, called the brethren to the chapter room to announce the proximate deaths of four friars, two physically and two spiritually. Soon thereafter, his prediction proved true, for two men died, and two others left the Order for worldliness.

The community at San Sisto had grown very numerous. One day, Dominic was informed by the procurator that their begging had produced almost no food. He ordered the brethren, nevertheless, to gather at table for their meal. He then prayed and suddenly two young men or angels, looking mysteriously alike, came into the refectory to dispense a portion of bread and wine to each friar. The same procurator told of a similar miracle on another occasion.

Dominic then traveled through France to his Spanish homeland, and then as far as Paris by June of 1219. For a few days, German pilgrims, who traveled on the same road, fed him, so he prayed for the ability to speak their language, and the gift was given to him. Neither language nor locked doors could obstruct him. More than one porter wondered how he got beyond their gates. After establishing houses along the way, Dominic returned to Italy, stopping at Milan, Bologna, Florence and Viterbo. He was in Rome for Christmas.

The pope then asked Dominic to reform and organize the more or less independent nuns of the city. By February of 1220, he gathered many at San Sisto. The diplomacy he exercised to overcome protests and achieve this unfavorable organization must have been inspired. He called Mother Blanche from Prouille to take charge of the monastery. The friars meanwhile moved to the ancient Basilica of Santa Sabina, another donation from the pope. For centuries, the Masters of the Order have managed the Order from there.

Dominic is a saint because of his great charity, not because of his miracles, yet the greatness of his miracles is a sign of his love. Of all his well attested prodigies, the most remarkable are the resuscitations of the dead. Our saintly Father once rescued a workman who was crushed by a fallen wall at San Sisto. Another time, the nephew of a cardinal fell from his horse and suffered mortal injuries. Almost immediately, Dominic celebrated Mass. Hours passed before he raised the man to life, with all his wounds healed. In another case, a woman went to hear Dominic preach at San Marco in Rome, but later she returned home and found her little boy dead. She rushed the child to Dominic who brought him back to life. When the pope expressed his desire to publicize the miracle, Dominic threatened to leave town. People were already clipping bits of his habit for relics.

The first General Chapter of the Order was held in Bologna around Pentecost, 1220. Centuries later, the democratic principles of the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers would influence nations. The Founder recommended that all economic matters be handled by the lay brothers, but the Chapter Fathers voted against him. Dominic preached throughout Italy for a year until the second General Chapter, once again in Bologna. By then, his health was declining, yet he continued to walk from town to town preaching. By mid summer, he had spent his strength. Heaven had warned the "Athlete of Christ" that his life was about to end. His work was bearing fruit. Already the Order had grown to eight provinces: Spain, Provence, France, Lombardy, Rome, Germany, Hungary, and England. By the time he reached Bologna in August, it was very hot and humid.

The heat compounded his fever. He could no longer stand, but refused to be put on a bed. He lay on the floor of a borrowed cell, in a borrowed habit, for he had none of his own. He had bequeathed to his children this testimony: "Have charity one for another; guard humility; make your treasure out of voluntary poverty." He then emphasized poverty, saying, "May my malediction and that of God fall upon him who shall bring possessions into this Order." When asked about burial, he expressed his wish to be "under the feet of the brethren," that is, under the feet of those who bring Good News. He assured them, "Do not weep, my children; I shall be more useful to you where I am now going, than I have ever been in this life."

Near the end, he told the elders, "Till this day, God, in His mercy, has kept my virginity pure and unstained. If you desire this blessed gift of God, hold yourselves apart from everything that can conjure up evil, for it is by watchful care in this that a man is loved by God and revered by man. Be eager in your service of God; strengthen and widen this newborn Order; increase your love of God and your keen observance of the Rule; grow in holiness." Only a few more words were exchanged. After his confession, he directed his sons to begin the Commendation of the Dying. During its recitation, he stretched his arms upward and died. It was Friday, August 6, 1221, about 6 o'clock in the evening: fittingly the Transfiguration, a feast regarding prophets and apostles. Saint Dominic had lived 51 years.

Miracles followed and devotion to the saint grew, so the church building needed to be expanded and Dominic's body moved. Hundreds of people of every rank attended the Translation on May 24, 1233. When the stone covering his remains was lifted, a gentle aroma, like a sweet perfume, filled the air to the delight of all. The sacred relics have since been revered in a sepulcher befitting his glory. Within a year after the Translation of the Body, after collecting depositions and testimonies, Dominic was canonized a saint. His feast is celebrated on the eighth of August.

Memorial of the Passion of Saint John the Baptist

Lectionary: 428/634

(1 Thes 3:7-13)

We have been inspired by you, brothers and sisters, in our every distress and affliction, through your faith. For we now live, if you stand firm in our Teacher, Jesus.

How can we thank our Godparent for you -- for all the joy we feel because of you before our Godparent? Night and day we pray beyond measure to see you in person and to complete your *didache* instruction.¹ Now may our Godparent, and our Teacher Jesus lead us to you, and may our Teacher make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our Godparent at the return of our Teacher Jesus with all his holy ones raised from the dead. Amen.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 90:3-5A, 12-13, 14 AND 17](#)

R. (14) **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

You turn man back to dust,
saying, "Return, O children of men."
For a thousand years in your sight
are as yesterday, now that it is past,
or as a watch of the night.

R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!

R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
prosper the work of our hands for us!
Prosper the work of our hands!

R. **Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

(Mark 6:17-29)

Herod was the one who had John the Baptist arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Herodias harbored a grudge against him
and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so.
Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man,
and kept him in custody.
When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed,
yet he liked to listen to him.
She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday,
gave a banquet for his courtiers,
his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee.
Herodias' own daughter came in
and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests.
The king said to the girl,
"Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you."
He even swore many things to her,
"I will grant you whatever you ask of me,
even to half of my kingdom."
She went out and said to her mother,
"What shall I ask for?"
She replied, "The head of John the Baptist."
The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request,
"I want you to give me at once
on a platter the head of John the Baptist."
The king was deeply distressed,
but because of his oaths and the guests
he did not wish to break his word to her.
So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders
to bring back his head.
He went off and beheaded him in the prison.
He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl.
The girl in turn gave it to her mother.
When his disciples heard about it,
they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, my godparent, for getting me up this morning.
Help to live this day with a song in my heart, not a knot in my stomach.
Make this day *Thank You* for the blessings you give, not *Please* for things I do not need.
Make me calm and confident in working with students, in driving, in homecoming.
Be with me, as you were with Jesus. Amen

Is John the Baptizer, rather than Jesus, the prophet like Moses in
Christian tradition?

Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Lectionary: 636

Trial of Bethlehem

(Micah 5:1-4)

YHWH says: You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who will rule Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore YHWH will give them up, until the time when the pregnant mother shall deliver her child, and the exiles from his household have come back home. YHWH will give him the strength to shepherd his flock in the majestic name of YHWH, his divine patron; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall bring peace.

A Lament

(Ps 13:1-6)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Complaint

- ¹ YHWH, will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
² How long must I bear pain in my soul?
Must I have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Petition

- ³ Consider and answer me, YHWH my divine patron!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
⁴ and my enemy will say: *I have prevailed!*
My foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

Profession of Faith

- ⁵ I trusted in your steadfast love.

Vow

My heart shall celebrate your salvation.
⁶ I will sing to the YHWH,
Because my divine patron has dealt bountifully with me.

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

(Matt 1:1-6+18-23)

...Abraham became the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.
Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.
Perez became the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
Ram the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab became the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.
Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.
Obed became the father of Jesse,
Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.
Solomon became the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asaph.
Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,
Joram the father of Uzziah.
Uzziah became the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amos,
Amos the father of Josiah.
Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers during the Babylonian exile.

After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel the father of Abiud.
Abiud became the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,

Azor the father of Zadok.
Zadok became the father of Achim,
Achim the father of Eliud,
Eliud the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar became the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ...

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention.

Then, behold, the angel of YHWH appeared to him in a dream and said: *Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

All this took place to fulfill what YHWH had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.*

Homily

Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist

Lectionary: 643

(Eph 4:1-13)

I, therefore, the prisoner in our Teacher,² beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Teacher, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Parent of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

⁷ Each of us was given grace according to the measure of our Messiah's.³

⁸Therefore it is said: *When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.*

⁹**NOTE:** When it says: *He ascended*, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of our Messiah, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of 'Abba⁴, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of our Messiah.

A Lament (Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Profession of faith

¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
the firmament proclaims the handiwork of Yahweh.

² Day to day pours forth speech,
night to night declares knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens Yahweh has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
like an athlete joyfully runs a course.

⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
its circuit to the end of them;
nothing is hidden from its heat.

⁷ The instructions of Yahweh are perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Yahweh are sure,

making students wise;
8 the precepts of the Yahweh are right,
making minds rejoice;
the commandment of the Yahweh is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 living morally is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Yahweh are true
completely righteous.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even fine gold in abundance;
sweeter also than honey,
dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
14 Let my mouth's words and my heart's prayer be acceptable to you,
O Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer.

Inauguration of Matthew (Matt 9:9-13)

As Jesus passed by, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him: *Follow me.*

And he got up and followed him.

While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples.

The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

He heard this and said: "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, *I desire mercy, not sacrifice.* I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Homily

'Abba, my godparent, thank you for getting me up this morning,
I want to live today with open hands, not clinched fists.
I want a song in my heart, not a cramp in my stomach.
I want today to say: *Thank you* for all you do for me, not *Please* for things you do not.
I want to hear the words of Jesus: *Young man I say to you: Arise.*

An Interview with Pope Francis
America Magazine (Sept 19, 2013)

Pope Francis said that the Roman Catholic church had grown “obsessed” with preaching about abortion, gay marriage and contraception in his most extensive and revealing interview since he was elected in March.

In his most extensive and revealing interview since he was elected in March, Pope Francis sat for a series of talks in August with a fellow Jesuit, the Rev. Antonio Spadaro, the editor of the leading Jesuit journal in Rome. The pope, formerly a cardinal, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, spoke of the mistakes he feels he made when he became the superior of his Jesuit province in Argentina at the “crazy” young age of 36. He talked about his vision of the church, and why he has chosen not to spend much time talking about abortion, gay marriage and contraception. He explained what he meant by the headline-grabbing remark he made about gay people: “Who am I to judge?” And he said that doubt is essential to finding God.

— LAURIE GOODSTEIN

Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?

I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner.

Why did you become a Jesuit, a member of the Society of Jesus?

Three things in particular struck me about the Society: the missionary spirit, community and discipline. And this is strange, because I am a really, really undisciplined person. But their discipline, the way they manage their time — these things struck me so much.

What did you learn in your early experience as superior of the Jesuit province in Argentina?

My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative. I lived a time of great interior crisis when I was in Cordova. To be sure, I have never been like

Blessed Imelda, but I have never been a right-winger. It was my authoritarian way of making decisions that created problems.

What should the church say to divorced and remarried people, and homosexuals?

In Buenos Aires I used to receive letters from homosexual persons who are “socially wounded” because they tell me that they feel like the church has always condemned them. But the church does not want to do this. During the return flight from Rio de Janeiro, I said that if a homosexual person is of good will and is in search of God, I am no one to judge. By saying this, I said what the catechism says. Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free: it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person.

A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: “Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?” We must always consider the person.

What kind of church do you dream of?

We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that. But when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context. The teaching of the church, for that matter, is clear and I am a son of the church, but it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time.

The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent. The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently ...

We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.

I say this also thinking about the preaching and content of our preaching.

What should be the role of the Vatican’s various departments (or congregations)?

They are instruments of help. In some cases, however, when they are not functioning well, they run the risk of becoming institutions of censorship. It is amazing to see the denunciations for lack of orthodoxy that come to Rome. I think the cases should be investigated by the local bishops’ conferences, which can get valuable assistance from Rome. These cases, in fact, are much better dealt with locally. The Roman congregations are mediators; they are not middlemen or managers.

What should be the role of women in the church?

I am wary of a solution that can be reduced to a kind of “female machismo,” because a woman has a different makeup than a man. But what I hear about the role of women is often inspired by an ideology of machismo. Women are asking deep questions that must be addressed. The church cannot be herself without the woman and her role. The woman is essential for the church. Mary, a woman, is more important than the bishops. I say this because we must not confuse the function with the dignity. We must therefore investigate further the role of women in the church. We have to work harder to develop a profound theology of the woman. Only by making this step will it be possible to better reflect on their function within the church. The feminine genius is needed wherever we make important decisions. The challenge today is this: to think about the specific place of women also in those places where the authority of the church is exercised for various areas of the church.

If encountering God is a journey, then we can make mistakes?

If one has the answers to all the questions — that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt. You must leave room for the Lord, not for our certainties; we must be humble.

... Our life is not given to us like an opera libretto, in which all is written down; but it means going, walking, doing, searching, seeing. ... We must enter into the adventure of the quest for meeting God; we must let God search and encounter us.

... If the Christian is a restorationist, a legalist, if he wants everything clear and safe, then he will find nothing. Tradition and memory of the past must help us to have the courage to open up new areas to God. Those who today always look for disciplinarian solutions, those who long for an exaggerated doctrinal “security,” those who stubbornly try to recover a past that no longer exists — they have a static and inward-directed view of things. In this way, faith becomes an ideology among other ideologies. I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person’s life. God is in everyone’s life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else — God is in this person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

Lectionary: 653

Homily

Thank you 'Abba, for getting me up this morning.
Jesus calling to me: Young man, get up (Luke 7:14).
Thank you today for the song in my heart,
Not a cramp in my stomach.
Thank you for teaching me: Do not be afraid.
Thank you for giving me open hands, not a clenched fist.
Accept this day for Patrice, whom I love with all my heart.

Prayers with beads like the rosary began as a practice by lay people in imitation of the monastic Liturgy of the Hours during which monks prayed the 150 psalms weekly. Ordinary men and women during the medieval period could not read or memorize 150 psalms, so instead they repeated the Hail Mary (Latin: *Ave Maria*) using a cord with knots on it to keep count.

Alanus de Rupe (1428-1475), a Dominican friar, popularized praying the rosary and attributed the devotion to Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221), the founder of his religious order.

START HERE

Some people believe Saint Dominic to be the initiator and promoter of the rosary, and that he had received the rosary from Our Lady. In fact, it was Dominic of Prussia and Alanus de Rupe who were the actual pioneers of the rosary prayer. This happened in the fifteenth century.

Dominic the Carthusian (St. Alban, near Treves, about 1410) promoted a rosary of fifty Hail Marys and 50 Vita Christi clauses. The clauses were references to the life of Christ (e.g., the conception by the Holy Spirit) added to the Aves.

Alain of Roche (or Alanus de Rupe, second half of the fifteenth century, Dominican, Douai/France) established a brotherhood of the rosary (Confraternity of the Psalter of the Glorious Virgin Mary, around 1470) which was instrumental in disseminating the rosary throughout Europe. Jacob Sprenger founded around 1475 an even more famous one in Cologne. Alain's rosary consisted of 150 Aves reflecting the Psalter, and was subdivided in three groups of fifty each, following the three fundamental mysteries of Christ's Incarnation (Joyful mysteries), Passion (sorrowful mysteries), and Resurrection (Glorious mysteries). Alain rejected Dominic's shortened version of the rosary (50 Aves), and likewise, rejected the name "rosary." His name for the rosary prayer was the "New Psalter of the Virgin," highlighting thus that the rosary had 150 Aves, not only fifty, just as the Psalter numbers 150 Psalms and not

fifty. His opposition to the name "rosary" stems from the "vain and worldly" origins of "rosarium," "corona," or "sertum."

The "rosarium" or rosary indeed has pre-Christian origins. Ancient Rome celebrated the "rosalia," a spring festival commemorating the dead. In Greek tradition, the rose was Aphrodite's flower. It reminded one of the blood of the gods. Venus, Aphrodite's Roman counterpart and protector of love, is frequently pictured with a wreath of red and white roses, or holds a rose in her hand. Similarly, from ancient times to the middle ages, the ideal place for romantic encounters were "rose-gardens," that is, gardens protected by a rose hedge. The expression "rose-garden" has a wide variety of meanings, from libertine to more edifying usage. It is, together with "rosenkrantz" (wreath of roses), best known for its role in literature of profane romance (see, e.g., *Roman de Éa Rose*, early, thirteenth century).

It is well-known, however, that the symbolism of the rose has a long history in Christian tradition. The rose was frequently applied to Mary, sometimes to Jesus himself. This is true for patristic texts, (e.g., Ambrose, Sedulius), Latin hymns, and sequences (*De gaudiis B. Mariae*, fifteenth century). Mary is "God's rose-garden" in Latin hymns, whereas Dante lauds her as the "Rose in which the word of God became flesh" (*Paradiso*, 23:73-74). It is in the context of this literature using the symbolism of the rose that we have to search for the origin of the word "rosary," in Latin, *rosarium*. The evolution and usage of the word happened in stages.

The book of Job asks: Why do good people suffer? The book of Jonah (**Jonah 1:1-4:11***)

(Hebrew: *Yonah*) asks: Why do bad people go unpunished? These were burning questions among the people of Judah living in the Diaspora, the non-Jewish worlds of their enemies. These are also the burning questions in the classics of every culture, like *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (1819-91). The book of Jonah is one of the shortest, and one of the most powerful, of these classic struggles.

Again and again, the Hebrews became strangers in strange lands: when the Assyrians destroyed Samaria in 721 b.c.e., when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 b.c.e., and when the Greeks conquered Syria-Palestine in 332 b.c.e. They were outraged that Yahweh had not protected them from their enemies. Jonah is their voice.

Crisis Episode

(Jonah 1:1-3:9*)

A theodicy is a tradition that struggles to reconcile faith in a divine patron, who is good, with a world in which there is evil. Both the book of Job and the book of Jonah are theodicies. They impeach Yahweh for breach of covenant for allowing good people to suffer and bad people to go unpunished.

The genre of the book of Job, however, is a trial. The genre of the book of Jonah, like the book of Ruth, is a parable.

One difference between trials and parables is that trials are conducted in the first person, whereas parables are told in the third person. In the Trial of Israel and Its Covenant Partners (Amos 1:1–2:16*), for example, Amos announces: “Thus says Yahweh: ‘For three counts of breach of covenant, and for four, I will indict Damascus’ ” (Amos 1:3*). In the book of Jonah, however: “Yahweh sent a Great Fish to swallow Jonah. For three days and three nights, Jonah was down in the belly of the Fish, which turned him back toward Yahweh” (Jonah 1:17*).

Another difference between trials and parables is that the characters in trials are all human. In a Trial of Israel (Hos 11:1–11*), Yahweh and the rulers of Israel plead their cases before the divine assembly: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Parables, however, use fable. The fable technique casts nonhuman characters like plants and animals as if they were human characters. The Great Wind (Jonah 1:4*), the Great Fish (Jonah 2:1*), the Plant (Jonah 4:6*), the Worm (Jonah 4:7*), and the East Wind (Jonah 4:8*) all have human attributes in the book of Jonah.

The book of Jonah begins, as all stories begin, when a crisis disturbs the peace. The life of the Faithful Prophet is turned upside down when the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land commissions him to preach against the Great City.

Some language in the opening episode imitates the inaugurations of prophets, for example, “Now the word of Yahweh came.” (Jonah 1:1*). Most language in the opening episode is from parables, for example, “Jonah, son of Amittai,” which was originally heard generically as “the Faithful Prophet.” The other characters in the book of Jonah, like the characters in most parables, are also generic. The protagonist is the “Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land.” Only Jonah addresses this Creator as “Yahweh.”

Jonah’s name is ironic, which is a common literary technique in parables. Irony uses incongruity or anomaly. The audience is aware of the contradiction between the words and actions of a character even though the character is not. Irony often causes such outrage in the audience that it wants to interrupt the action of the story in order to object. Thus, irony gets the audience to take an active part in the story by actually playing a role. In Hebrew the word “Jonah” means a “dove,” a gentle, obedient, and faithful bird. Likewise, the Hebrew words “son of Amittai” also mean “faithful.” The words do not identify Jonah’s father, but Jonah’s character. The audience is aware that Jonah is anything but obedient and faithful.

Jonah’s commission is also a mix of inauguration language and parable language. “Go. . . . Cry out!” is language common in the inauguration of a prophet. “Against Nineveh, the Great City,” however, is generic parable language. The “Great City” represents, not just the city of Nineveh in Assyria, but also all the enemies from whom Yahweh did not protect Judah.

Seven episodes make up the crisis portion of the book of Jonah (Jonah 1:1–3:9*; Fig. 104). Each episode has a report of an action by the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land, and a report of a reaction by the Faithful Prophet. The Creator “sends” for the Faithful Prophet; Jonah “goes down” to get away from his divine patron. The Creator’s relentless pursuit of the Faithful Prophet and Jonah’s repeated reluctance is one of the defining motifs of the parable.

First, the Creator acts by “sending” a word to the Faithful Prophet. Jonah reacts by “going down” from Jerusalem to Joppa, and “going down” from the dock onto the deck of the Sea Dragon.

The Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land acts because: “wickedness has come up before me” (Jonah 1:2*). Just as in a Story of Noah and the Rainbow (Gen 8:21*), where the aroma of Noah’s sacrifice reaches the heavens, so the aroma of Nineveh’s sacrifices also reaches the heavens. The aroma of Noah’s sacrifice is enticing. The aroma of Nineveh’s sacrifice is repulsive. The eyes and nose are the primary senses through which divine patrons communicated with their human protégés. Members of the divine assembly consumed food offerings by gazing at them, or inhaling their aroma, not by putting them in their mouths.

Second, the Creator acts by “sending” a Great Wind to attack the Sea Dragon. The sailors react by praying to their own divine patrons. Jonah reacts by “going down” from the deck into the hold of the ship to sleep. That the sailors are devout, while the prophet is a renegade, is ironic.

Third, the Creator acts by “sending” the captain of the Sea Dragon to wake up the Faithful Prophet. The sailors react by asking the Faithful Prophet: “What’s your story? Because of your crime we are being punished. For whom are you working? From whom are you running? What is your land? Who are your people?” (Jonah 1:8*).

Jonah’s answer is ironic. Jonah says: “I am a Hebrew. . . . I worship Yahweh, the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land” (Jonah 1:9*). He ought to say, “I used to be a Hebrew.” It is obvious to the audience that Jonah is not following Yahweh, but running away from Yahweh. When Jonah proclaims that it is Yahweh who is the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land, the sailors react by praying to Yahweh, and then throwing Jonah “down” from the deck of the Sea Dragon into the sea (Jonah 1:14*).

crisis (Jonah 1:1–3:9*)

Once the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land *sent* the word to Jonah the faithful prophet: “Get up. Go to the Great City of Nineveh. Cry out against its crime reeking to the heavens.” Jonah, however, got up and set out for a godforsaken land at the end of the earth. He went *down* to Joppa, where he found the Sea Dragon bound for the end of the earth. He paid the fare and went *down* on deck with the others for the godforsaken land at the end of the earth.

Then Yahweh *sent* the Great Wind onto the sea. The Great Wind churned up waves, which began to break the Sea Dragon apart. . . . Each cried out to his own divine patron, while together they jettisoned the cargo on board the Sea Dragon to lighten its load. Jonah, however, went *down* below deck into the belly of the ship. He lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

Then Yahweh *sent* the captain to Jonah. “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up. Cry out to your divine patron.” Jonah reluctantly replied: “Will not Yahweh remember us and keep us from drowning?”

Then Yahweh *sent* the Great Wind even more forcefully against the sea. The sailors made a pact with one another. “Throw the dice. Find out for whose crime we are being punished.” They threw the dice and Jonah lost. “What’s your story,” they demanded. “Because of your crime we are being punished.” “For whom are you working?” “From whom are you running?” “Where is your land?” “Who are your people?” So Jonah grudgingly confessed. “I am a Hebrew. I follow Yahweh, the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land.” The sailors were overwhelmed with zeal for Yahweh. “How could you commit such a crime?” they asked as they learned by listening to his story that he was running from Yahweh. “How must we punish you so that this raging sea will settle down around us?” Jonah insisted: “Offer me up. Throw me overboard into the sea and it will settle down. It is punishing you for my crime.” Instead, the sailors rowed, but were not able to return to shore because the sea continued to rage against them. They cried out to Yahweh. “Do not punish us for taking this man’s life. Do not indict us for shedding innocent blood. We are only doing what you, Yahweh, commanded us to do.” Finally, they offered up Jonah and threw him *down* into the raging sea. Zeal for Yahweh overwhelmed the sailors as they began to offer sacrifices and make vows to their new divine patron.

Then Yahweh *sent* the Great Fish to swallow Jonah. For three days and three nights, Jonah was *down* in the belly of the Great Fish, which turned him back toward Yahweh.

Then Yahweh *sent* word to the Great Fish, and it delivered Jonah to the shore. Once again Yahweh *sent* word to Jonah. “Get up. Go to the Great City of Nineveh. Cry out against it as I told you.” This time, Jonah got up and went to Nineveh as Yahweh ordered. For three days Jonah wandered the Great City of Nineveh. It was awesome. On the first day Jonah went into the Great City he cried out: “Nineveh must be turned around in forty days.” Immediately, every citizen of Nineveh put faith in Yahweh and cried out: “Repent.” Powerful and powerless alike wore nothing but burlap. When word reached the great king of Nineveh, he got up, took off his robe, put on burlap and sat down among the beggars in the city’s garbage. He also issued a proclamation for Nineveh: “By order of the great king and the city assembly no human or animal, large or small, will eat or drink anything. Every human and animal will wear nothing but burlap. They will cry out as loud as they can to the Creator of the Heavens, the Sea, and the Land. All the citizens of Nineveh will turn their feet from evil, their hands from violence. Who knows when the Creator of the Heavens, the

Sea, and the Land will turn back, change heart, recall this burning anger so that we will not be annihilated?”

Fourth, the Creator acts by “sending” the Great Fish to swallow the Faithful Prophet. The Great Fish reacts by taking Jonah “down” into its belly. It is ironic that the nonhuman creatures in the story such as the Great Wind, the Great Fish, the Plant, and the Worm are obedient to their Creator, while Jonah, the Faithful Prophet, is not.

Fifth, the Creator acts by “sending” the words of a lament to the Faithful Prophet. The Great Fish reacts by taking Jonah “down” into the heart of the sea. For three days, the Great Fish physically forces Jonah to prostrate himself before Yahweh.

Jonah is not only physically forced into the position to pray, but he is also given the words of the prayer as well. The audience, like the daughters of Jerusalem in the Song of Solomon, or like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in the book of Job, pleads with Jonah to join in the words of its lament (Jonah 2:3–9*; Fig. 105). While he is in the belly of the Great Fish, Jonah can hear the words of this lament, composed of excerpts from the book of Psalms, with which the audience is coaxing him to turn back to Yahweh (Ps 30:1–12*; 32:1–11*).

Jonah’s descent brings him at last to the fetal position in the belly of the Great Fish at the womb of the earth. “You cast me into the deep. You cast me into the sea. Judge River engulfed me. Breakers and billows washed over my head. Abyss smothered me. of No Return’ was tattooed on my forehead. I went down at the base of the mountains, the earth disappeared behind me forever.” What is on Jonah’s forehead is his destination. The lament does not refer to seaweed wrapping itself around the head of Jonah as he drowns, but rather that Jonah has been marked for delivery to the Sea of No Return, as far away as possible from where Yahweh lives.

Sixth, the Creator acts by “sending” a word to the Great Fish. The Great Fish reacts by dropping Jonah “down” on the beach of Assyria. The Great Fish is not vomiting, but giving birth. The Creator is giving Jonah a second chance. He is reborn.

Seventh, the Creator acts by “sending” a word to the Faithful Prophet. Finally, Jonah reluctantly accepts his commission, and walks through Nineveh for three days preaching: “Nineveh must be turned around in forty days.”

Hyperbole is the technique of making an extravagant exaggeration, which is also characteristic of parables. Although Nineveh, at its peak, covered some two thousand acres, it is an exaggeration or hyperbole to say it would take a three-day journey to cross it (Jonah 3:3*; Esth 1:1–8*; Jdt 1:1–6*; Song 6:8–9*).

Feast of Saint Luke, Evangelist

Lectionary: 661

A Letter

(2 Tim 4:10-17)

Beloved:

Demas, enamored of the present world, deserted me and went to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Luke is the only one with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is helpful to me in the ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, the papyrus rolls, and especially the parchments.

Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm; our divine patron⁵ will repay him according to his deeds. You too be on guard against him, for he has strongly resisted our preaching.

At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them! But our Teacher⁶ stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all peoples⁷ might hear it.

A Hymn

(Ps 145:1-21)

PRAISE. OF DAVID.

Call to worship

- ¹ Extol my divine patron and ruler,
 bless the name of Yahweh for ever and ever.
- ² Bless Yahweh every day,
 Praise the name of Yahweh for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised;
 the greatness of Yahweh is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall laud your works to another,
 and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
 and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,

and I will declare your greatness.

⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Profession of faith

⁸ Yahweh is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ Yahweh is good to all,
the compassion of Yahweh is over all creation.

Call to worship

¹⁰ All your works shall give thanks to you, Yahweh,
and all your faithful shall bless you.

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,

¹² to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Yahweh is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.

¹⁴ Yahweh upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.

¹⁶ You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷ Yahweh is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.

¹⁸ Yahweh is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.

²⁰ Yahweh watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

Call to worship

²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of Yahweh,
and all flesh will bless his holy name for ever and ever.

An Inauguration of the 72 Disciples

(Luke 10:1-9)

Our Teacher ⁸ Jesus inaugurated 72 disciples and sent them ahead of him – two by two -- to every village and place he intended to visit.

Commission

Jesus commissioned the 72 disciples: *The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.*

Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.

Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say: Peace to this household. If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

*Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves payment. Do not move from a poor household to a rich household. Whatever village you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them: The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.*⁹

Homily

Jesus inaugurates the 72 disciples like Yahweh inaugurates Moses.

The protagonist in the Inauguration of Moses is Yahweh, who recruits Moses to deliver the Hebrews and pioneer a new world (Exod 2:23–4:31). Moses is the antagonist whom Yahweh must convince to become a prophet.¹⁰

Inauguration stories open with theophanies. Theophanies allow candidates to encounter Yahweh. Images of Yahweh were forbidden in ancient Israel (Deut 5:8–10). Theophanies reveal the presence of Yahweh without technically violating the prohibition. Candidates sense more than they actually see. When they do see something it is either the fire or lightning -- Yahweh's weapon, or the cloud of dust churned up by his war chariot, or a divine messenger (Exod 3:2; Judg 13:6). Here a messenger appears to Moses (Exod 3:2) before Yahweh speaks (Exod 3:6).

Candidates respond to theophanies by investigating them. The burning bush attracts the attention of Moses, who then turns aside to look at the great sight (Exod 3:3*). This first episode in the inauguration records Yahweh's successful contact with the candidate. The relationship between Yahweh and the candidate is like a game of tag. Yahweh is "it," and the candidate does not want to be caught. Yahweh ambushes the candidate with a lure such as the burning bush, which seems harmless enough and attracts the curiosity of the candidate. Once the candidate gets close enough, Yahweh tags him with the greeting. Yahweh usually addresses the candidate formally by calling his name twice. As Moses approaches the burning bush, Yahweh greets him with "Moses! Moses!"

Once he hears his name, Moses realizes he is in the presence of Yahweh, and responds to the greeting with the formula: "Here I am" (Exod 3:4*). Like soldiers or students answering to their names in a roll call, candidates answer: "Present!" Their words are sometimes accompanied by a gesture of humiliation. Those who see Yahweh must remain forever in the presence of Yahweh by dying. Death here is not a punishment, but a passage from the human plane to the divine plane. Humans pass from one plane to the other only in birth and death. Through the womb from which they are born, and the tomb where they are buried, humans leave and return to the divine plane. The position in which both the fetus and the cadaver begin their journeys is fetal. In its mother's womb, a fetus tucks its knees against its chest, and in the graves of many Neolithic period cultures the bodies of the dead are arranged in the same position. Therefore, candidates often prostrate themselves on the earth with their chests tight against their knees, ready to leave the human plane for the divine. The fetal position is an ancient human gesture of humiliation or *kenosis*, and it is a prayer posture for Muslims today. The term *kenosis* is Greek for "emptying." Whether coming into the world or going out of the world, the proper posture for the journey is the fetal position. The *kenosis* demonstrates candidates' complete lack of ambition, and argues that the exercise of power by prophets in their communities is not the result of a selfish quest for power, but a response to a call from Yahweh.

With the formula "Fear not!" Yahweh postpones candidates' deaths, so that they can carry out a divine mission. When candidates prostrate, their human lives come to an end. When they stand and return to the human community to carry out a divine mission, they do so not simply as members of that community, but as prophets sent by the divine assembly. The inauguration of a prophet is a rite of passage. Sometimes, instead of using the fear-not formula, Yahweh simply teaches candidates how to act in the presence of the divine assembly. Here Yahweh instructs Moses to remove his sandals (Exod 3:5*). Members of the divine assembly were holy. Holiness in the world of the Bible is like radioactivity. Both physically alter humans unless they take proper precautions, therefore, the community quarantines, ostracizes, or executes those whom, like Moses, the presence of Yahweh transforms. If

candidates follow the protocol in which Yahweh instructs them, then they can return safely to the human community without threatening it with holiness.

When fathers of households entered a sanctuary, they covered their genitals (Exod 28:42*) and they removed their sandals (Exod 3:5*). Sandals were not only footwear, but also the uniform of landowners (1 Kgs 21:16–17*). Buyers walked off their land in sandals, which then became the movable title to that land. Sandals were a symbol of power over land. Genitals were a symbol of power over children. No symbols of reproduction or land ownership were displayed before Yahweh, who alone blessed the Hebrews with land and children. Human parenthood and land ownership were only by proxy. Wearing sandals onto the holy ground of a sanctuary would be tantamount to challenging Yahweh.

Having greeted and briefed candidates, Yahweh then commissions them to carry out a divine mission. A command (Exod 3:8–10*), decalogue (Deut 5:6–21*), or covenant is the standard commission. Candidates respond to the commission by demurring. It would be arrogant for candidates to accept their commissions without first declining on the basis that they are not worthy to fulfill a divine task.

Yahweh responds to candidates' demurrals with a talisman. Talismans are offensive weapons. Amulets are defensive weapons that protect candidates from their enemies. This talisman serves as a passport certifying the validity of their mission, and as a weapon against their enemies. The talisman that Yahweh gives Moses is the promise: "I will be with you" (Exod 3:12*). The mission is a divine mission, and it will be accomplished not by means of the talents and skills of Moses, but only by Yahweh.

Almost ignoring the talisman offered, Moses asks for a name. Yahweh refuses (Exod 3:13–14*). Although the response "I am, who am" has been an incentive for generations of reflections, it was not originally meant to be a key to the nature of God as the source of being or the cause of all being. The response tells Moses nothing. "I am, who am" is a nonsense riddle like "name-sname." Outside the Bible, the name "Yahweh" appears on ostraca from Arad after 700–600 b.c.e. The place-name "Bet Yahweh" appears in Egyptian lists dated to Amenophis III (1417–1379 b.c.e.) and Ramses II (1304–1237 b.c.e.). Archaeologists have identified Bet Yahweh with Qurayyah, a site in Late Bronze period Midian, today found forty-five miles northwest of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia; fifteen miles west-southwest of Bir Ibn Hirmas; and forty miles from Mudawwara, Jordan. A name is power. Those who give names or call names have power over those who answer to their names. Owners name their animals. Parents name their children. Many husbands still name their wives. Moses' request is inappropriate because if he knows the divine name, then he can call or control Yahweh. Thus, Yahweh's response simply continues Moses' protocol lesson. No human, not even a prophet, should ask for power over Yahweh.

Memorial of Saints John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, Priests, and Companions, Martyrs

Lectionary: 662

Homily

Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.
I want to believe -- like Abraham -- that you will keep your promises to me.
I want to be what you want me to be, not what I -- like the foolish farmer -- have stored up to be.
I want to be forgiving -- like John -- not judging.

YHWH's covenant with Abraham, Paul teaches, is not an historic event in the past, but still relevant for the followers of Jesus in the present.

Luke's teachings on detachment are echoed in the teachings of the Buddha. *Viveka* and *viraaga* are the two Pali words for *detachment*. Physical detachment--poverty (Pali: *kaaya-viveka*) promotes mental detachment—coveting possessions (Pali: *citta-viveka*), and eliminating desire for possessions (Pali: *upadhi-viveka*)--the root of suffering.

Kaaya-viveka, as a chosen way of life, was not uncommon during the time of the Buddha. To withdraw from the household life, renounce possessions, and adopt a solitary mendicancy was a recognized path. The formation of the Buddhist monastic Sangha was grounded in the belief that going out from home to homelessness (*agaarasmaa anagaariya.m pabbajati*) could aid concentrated spiritual effort. Yet to equate the renunciation which the Buddha encouraged with a physical withdrawal which either punished the body or completely rejected human contact would be a mistake.

The Buddha made it clear that the detachment of a noble disciple (*ariyasaavaka*) — the detachment connected with the path — was not essentially a physical act of withdrawal, let alone austerity. *Kaaya-viveka* was valuable only if seen as a means to the inner purging and mental transformation connected with the destruction of craving. This is illustrated in the Udumbarika Siihanaada Sutta in which the Buddha claims that the asceticism of a recluse who clings to solitude could lead to pride, carelessness, attention-seeking, and hypocrisy, if not linked to the cultivation of moral virtues and the effort to gain insight through meditation (D Sutta No. 25).

Also known as Canadian Martyrs; Isaac Jogues and Companions; Jesuit Martyrs of North America; Martyrs of New France.
Memorial: 19 October; 26 September (Canada)

The eight North American martyrs, also known as the Candian Martyrs, the Jesuit Martyrs of North America or the Martyrs of France, included six priests and two lay brothers. They were heroic members of the Society of Jesus who were martyred in North America in order to bring the Faith that is necessary for salvation to the Huron, the Iroquois and the Mohawk Indians. Five of the eight North American martyrs were put to death in what is now Canada, and three of them in New York State. There is a shrine to the United States' martyrs at Auriesville in New York, and there is a shrine to the Canadian martyrs at Fort Saint Mary near Midland, Ontario. The names of the eight North American martyrs are:

Saint Rene Goupil, a lay brother martyred in 1642 in New York State,
Saint Isaac Jogues, a priest,
Saint John de Lalande, a lay brother, martyred in 1646 in New York State,
Saint Anthony Daniel, a priest, martyred in Canada in 1648,
Saint John de Brebeuf,
Saint Charles Garnier,
Saint Noel Chabanel and
Saint Gabriel Lalemant, all priests, and all martyred in Canada in 1649.

Saint Isaac Jogues, after thirteen months' imprisonment by the Mohawks, had several fingers cut off of his hand. He went back to Europe, but returned again to North America and was killed by tomahawk blows at Ossernenon, now called Auriesville, in New York State. Saint John de Brebeuf declared before he died, "I have a strong desire to suffer for Jesus Christ." He was tortured terribly, and a burning torch was put into his mouth, which strangled him.

Saint Rene Goupil, thirty-five, was the youngest of the martyrs, and cried "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" as he died. Saint Noel Chabanel was thirty-six, and Saint Isaac Jogues and Saint Gabriel Lalemant were thirty-nine. The oldest of the eight North American martyrs, Saint John de Brebeuf, was fifty-six when the Indians killed him.

They were canonized June 29 of 1930 by Pope Pius XI. Their memorial is October 19, and Spetember 26 in Canada.

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Lectionary 666

Reading I

[Eph 2:19-22](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You are no longer strangers and sojourners,
but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones
and members of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.
Through him the whole structure is held together
and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord;
in him you also are being built together
into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

A Lament

(Ps 19:1-13)

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

Profession of faith

- ¹ The heavens tell the glory of our divine patron;
the firmament proclaims the handiwork of Yahweh.
² One day tells the stories to another,
One night hands on its traditions to the next.¹¹
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.

- In the heavens Yahweh has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,¹²
like an athlete joyfully runs a course.
⁶ Sunrise is from the end of the heavens,
its circuit to the end of them;
nothing is hidden from its heat.

- ⁷ The instructions of Yahweh are perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Yahweh are sure,
making students wise;
⁸ the precepts of the Yahweh are right,
making minds rejoice;
the commandment of the Yahweh is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹ living morally is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Yahweh are true
completely righteous.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even fine gold in abundance;
sweeter also than honey,
dripping fresh from the comb.

Petition

¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³ Keep back your slave¹³ also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let my mouth's words and my heart's prayer be acceptable to you,
O Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer.¹⁴

Gospel

[Lk 6:12-16](#)

Jesus went up to the mountain to pray,
and he spent the night in prayer to God.
When day came, he called his disciples to himself,
and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles:
Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew,
James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew,
Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus,
Simon who was called a Zealot,
and Judas the son of James,
and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Homily

Although some cite renown Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) as saying: *...read the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other*, the Barth Center cannot find the exact quotation. Nonetheless, *Time* (May 31, 1963) notes: *...he advised young theologians: to take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible. Newspapers, he says, are so important that: I always pray for the sick, the poor, journalists, authorities of the state and the church - in that order. Journalists form public opinion. They hold terribly important positions. Nevertheless, a theologian should never be formed by the world around him - either East or West. He should make his vocation to show both East and West that they can live without a clash. Where the peace of God is proclaimed, there is peace on*

Solemnity of All Saints

Lectionary: 667

(Rev 7:2-14)

²I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the life-giving¹⁵ God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea: ³*Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.*

⁴Then I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000,¹⁶ sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel: ⁵From the tribe of Judah 12,000 sealed; from the tribe of Reuben; 12,000 from the tribe of Gad 12,000; ⁶from the tribe of Asher 12,000; from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000; from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, ⁷from the tribe of Simeon 12,000; from the tribe of Levi 12,000; from the tribe of Issachar 12,000; ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun; 12,000; from the tribe of Joseph 12,000; from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 sealed.

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice: *Our divine patron who is seated on the throne and the Lamb have delivered us!*¹⁷

¹¹All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God: ¹² *Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our divine patron for ever and ever! Amen.*'

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me: *Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?*

¹⁴I answered: *Father, only you know.*¹⁸

Then he said: *They who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

A Pilgrimage Hymn

(Ps 24: 1-10)

Of David. A Psalm.

Creation story

¹ The earth is Yahweh's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;

² for Yahweh has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

³ Who shall ascend the mountain¹⁹ of Yahweh?
Who shall stand in Holy Place of Yahweh?

⁴ Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
who do not swear deceitfully.

⁵ They will receive blessing from Yahweh,
and vindication from the divine patron of their salvation.

⁶ Such is the company of those who seek Yahweh,
who seek the face of the divine patron of Jacob.

Selah

Call to worship

⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
Open, O ancient doors!
that the Glorious Ruler²⁰ may come in.

⁸ Who is the Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, strong and mighty,
Yahweh, mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
Open, O ancient doors!
that the Glorious Ruler may come in.

¹⁰ Who is this Glorious Ruler?
Yahweh, chief of the divine warriors,²¹
Yahweh is the Glorious Ruler.

Selah

Reading 21 [JN 3:1-3](#)

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;

what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.

Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure,
as he is pure.

(Matt 5:1-12)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had
sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven."

Homily

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed

Lectionary: 668

(Wis 3:1-9)

The souls of the just are in the hand of our divine patron, and no torment shall touch them.

They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.

Before the living they appear to be punished, yet the hope of the dead is full of immortality -- chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because our divine patron trained them and found them worthy to serve the divine assembly.

As gold in the furnace, our divine patron refined the dead, and as sacrificial offerings our divine patron called them as companions. On the day of Yahweh, the dead shall burn like sparks through tinder. They shall judge and rule all the peoples of the earth, and Yahweh shall be their ruler forever. Those who trust in Yahweh shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with Yahweh in love because grace and mercy are with the holy ones, and Yahweh cares for the elect.

A Hymn

(Ps 23:1-6)

creation story

When Yahweh is shepherd of my household, I shall not want.

Yahweh grazes its sheep in green pastures;

Yahweh leads them to still waters;

Yahweh restores my life.

Yahweh leads the sheep in right paths

For the sake of the name of Yahweh.

Even though the sheep walk in the valley of darkness,

I fear no evil;

For Yahweh is always with me;

Your rod and your staff protect me.

You prepare a table before me;

You set a table in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My bowl overflows.
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
All the days of my life;
My household shall dwell in the house of Yahweh
My whole life long.

(Rom 5:5-11)

Brothers and sisters:

Hope does not disappoint, because the love of 'Abba has been poured out into our hearts through the holy spirit given to us.

Our Messiah, while we were still helpless, died, at the appointed time, for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. 'Abba proves love for us because, while we were still sinners, our Messiah died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by the blood of our Messiah, will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to 'Abba through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of 'Abba through our Teacher and Messiah, Jesus, through who has reconciled us to 'Abba.

Or ROM 6:3-9

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him.

(John 6:37-40)

Jesus taught the crowds:

Everyone whom²² the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.

The will of the One Who Sent Me is that I should not lose anyone whom he gave me, but that I should raise them from the dead on the last day. This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.

Homily

Most hymns have two components. There is a call to worship and a creation story. There are, however, hymns in which the call to worship is repeated like an antiphon or chorus throughout the creation story (Ps 66), or at the beginning and the end of the creation story (Ps 136). There are also hymns that have only a call to worship, and no creation story (Ps 150:1-6), or a creation story and no call to worship (Ps 23).

Perhaps the most often prayed psalm in the Bible today is a Hymn to Yahweh as a Shepherd (Ps 23:1-6). This hymn is a powerful reminder that Yahweh is a companion whose ...*goodness and kindness* (Ps 23:6) are close at hand, not just in good times, but at all times. The hymn also reminds those who sing it that human life is both a challenge -- ...*valley of darkness* (Ps 23:4) -- and a paradise -- ...*green pastures* (Ps 23:1). Human life is neither all bad nor all good.

Those who sing the hymn are not a herd of sheep, but the fathers of the households. The hymn is not a fable, which casts nonhuman characters like plants and animals as if they were humans. It is missing one important characteristic of fable, which is satire. The standard fable technique not only gives plants and animals human qualities, but also develops its plot as a quarrel or dispute. Although fables were very popular in Egypt and Mesopotamia, only a few appear in the Bible. A Trial of Jotham (Judg 9:8-15) casts the Hebrews as trees in search of a ruler. Their candidates are an olive tree, a fig tree, a grapevine, and a thorn bush (Deut 8:8). The fable is a satirical portrayal of monarchs as being as useless as thorn bushes. No tree with any socially redeeming value, like the olive, the fig, or the grape, would consider becoming a monarch in Israel. The fable technique is simply too rare in the

Bible, and virtually unparalleled in the book of Psalms, to assume that it appears in this hymn.

The fathers celebrate Yahweh as a contract herder whose household faithfully fulfills the covenant that it has negotiated to care for the sheep, even when they are being grazed, out of sight, at their dry-season pastures. The Bible regularly describes Israel's relationship with Yahweh as a covenant.

The hymn catalogs the same kind of responsibilities described in the covenants between households and shepherds that archaeologists have recovered at Larsa and Nuzi.

Larsa was a Middle Bronze period (2000–1550 b.c.e.) city in southern Mesopotamia. It was located near Ash Shatrah on the Euphrates River about 200 miles south of Baghdad. Nuzi is a Late Bronze-period city (1550–1200 b.c.e.) near Kirkuk, about 150 miles north of Baghdad.

Yahweh is a faithful herder who does not run at the first sign of trouble, but remains with the sheep. Yahweh skillfully grazes the hungry animals and ...*restores life*. Yahweh knows ...*the right paths* from the village to pasture and water during the dry season. Yahweh knows how to feed the hungry.

The hymn also celebrates Yahweh for knowing how to protect the animals from harm. Unlike Abel, whom Cain accuses of getting lost and therefore not being worthy of the name *shepherd*, Yahweh does not wander off (Gen 4:9–10). The ...*valley of darkness* through which Yahweh leads the animals describes the dangers that can lead to the loss of herd animals. As long as Yahweh is the herder, the sheep are safe. They ... *dwell in the house of Yahweh*, not because they are in the Jerusalem Temple, but because they are members of the household for whom Yahweh herds.

Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop

Lectionary: 670

Homily

On December 25, 1559, Giovanni Angelo Medici, Charles Borromeo's uncle, was elected Pope Pius IV. On January 13, 1560 Pius appointed him to the papal cabinet as a *protonotary apostolic*, and then created him a cardinal,

governor of the Papal States and guardian of the Franciscan, Carmelite and Knights of Malta orders.

To some extent the Counter-Reformation was the Catholic effort to preserve Church unity after the Protestant Reformation inspired the *Ninety-five Theses* (1517) of Martin Luther. Fundamentally, however, the Counter-Reformation continued a movement within Catholicism itself, which had appeared well before the end of the 15th century. The Counter Reformation inspired new forms of religious life like the Jesuits, as well as new spiritualities designed by Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and Charles Borromeo. It also inspired baroque art and missionary expansion beyond Europe.

As a force within the Counter Reformation, Borromeo voluntarily rejected the privilege and wealth of his ecclesiastical status in order to live without material distractions. *When we remove all obstacles to his presence he will come, at any hour and moment, to dwell spiritually in our hearts*, he counseled. Nonetheless, despite the witness of his personal life of simplicity, when he was canonized, the Vatican which Borromeo sought to simplify, authorized his official portrait painted with the saint in all his pompous ecclesiastical regalia.

Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome

Lectionary 671

(Ezek 47:1-12)

Ezek 47:1-12

Water Flowing from the Temple

47Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. ²Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate that faces towards the east; and the water was coming out on the south side.

3 Going on eastwards with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. 4Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. 5Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. 6He said to me, 'Mortal, have you seen this?'

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. 7As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on one side and on the other. 8He said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. 9Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. 10People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. 11But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. 12On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.'

A Hymn (Ps 46:1-11)

To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamoah. A Song.

Creation story

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Selah

- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the City of Our Divine Patron,
the holy dwelling ²³of the Most High.
- 5 Our divine patron is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;

Our divine patron will help it when the morning dawns.
6 The peoples are in an uproar, states totter;
Yahweh speaks²⁴, the earth melts.
7 The Commander of the Divine Warriors²⁵ is with us;
the divine patron of Jacob is our refuge.

Selah

8 Come, behold the works of Yahweh;
see what desolations Yahweh has brought on the earth.
9 Yahweh makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
Yahweh breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
Yahweh burns the shields with fire.
10 'Be still, and know that I am your divine patron!
I am exalted among all peoples,
I am exalted in the earth.'
11 The Commander of the Divine Warriors is with us;
the divine patron of Jacob is our refuge.

Selah

Reading II

[1 Cor 3:9c-11, 16-17](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You are God's building.

According to the grace of God given to me,
like a wise master builder I laid a foundation,
and another is building upon it.

But each one must be careful how he builds upon it,
for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there,
namely, Jesus Christ.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God,
and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God's temple,
God will destroy that person;
for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.

Gospel

[Jn 2:13-22](#)

Since the Passover of the Jews was near,
Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves,
as well as the money-changers seated there.

He made a whip out of cords
and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen,
and spilled the coins of the money-changers
and overturned their tables,

and to those who sold doves he said,

"Take these out of here,
and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

His disciples recalled the words of Scripture,
Zeal for your house will consume me.

At this the Jews answered and said to him,
"What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered and said to them,

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews said,

"This temple has been under construction for forty-six years,
and you will raise it up in three days?"

But he was speaking about the temple of his Body.

Therefore, when he was raised from the dead,
his disciples remembered that he had said this,
and they came to believe the Scripture
and the word Jesus had spoken.

Homily

The Lateran Church, not the Church of St. Peter, is the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome. Dedicated as Holy Savior Church by Pope Sylvester in 324, it was renamed for John the Baptizer, because converts in the diocese were all baptized here. Pope Sergio III (904-911) officially added John the Baptist, and Pope Lucius (1144-1145) added John the Evangelist as patrons of the church. Catholics celebrate the Lateran Church as *the mother of all Catholic churches*.

After the *Edict of Milan* (313) which allowed Christians freedom to practice their religion, Emperor Constantine gave Pope Melchiade (311-314) the palace of the Laterani family for his residence. Parts of the complex were used as a church and a baptistery. Popes lived here until 1309 when Clement V moved to Avignon (France). John XXII, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Innocent VI, Urban V and Gregory XI all lived in Avignon, not Rome. Martin Luther condemned this relocation of the papal residence as a *Babylonian Captivity of the Popes* whom he indicted for being addicted to material prosperity and subservient to the French emperor. The Council of Constance (1417) officially ended the schism between Rome and Avignon.

Popes were crowned at the Lateran Church until the return from Avignon. In their absence the Lateran Church had fallen into disrepair, so they moved to the Vatican near the pilgrimage Church of St. Peter's. Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) hired architect Domenico Fontana to replace all the original buildings except the private chapel of the popes and its magnificent frescoes with a Late Renaissance church. Later, Pope Innocent X (1644-1655) hired Baroque architect Francesco Borromini to rebuild the Lateran's interior. Finally, Pope Clement XII (1730-1740) hired Alessandro Galilei to design a new façade for the church.



Memorial of Saint Leo the Great, pope and doctor of the Church

Lectionary 672
November 10

A Hymn

(Wis 1:1-7)

Love justice, you who are stewards of the earth.
Think of Yahweh in goodness,
Seek your divine patron in integrity of heart.
Yahweh is found by those who do not put their divine patron to the test.
Yahweh is manifest to those who do not disbelieve their divine patron.
Foolishness separates humans from their Godparent.
Divine power, put to the proof, rebukes fools.
Into a soul that plots evil, wisdom enters not;
The Wise Woman does not dwell in the body of a sinner.
The Holy Spirit abandons liars;
The Teacher of Discipline withdraws fools;
She confronts injustice.
The Wise Woman is kind;
Yet she challenges blasphemers.
Our Godparent witnesses the inmost self of humans.
Yahweh knows the human heart;
Our divine patron hears to everything humans say.
The Holy Spirit fills the world.
Yahweh is everywhere.
Our divine patron hears everything humans say.

A Lament

(Ps 139:1-24)

A song-poem dedicated to David, our ruler

Profession of faith

- ¹ Yahweh, you have searched me and known me.
² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
³ You search out my path
and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, Yahweh, you know it completely.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Declaration of Innocence

- ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

it is so high that I cannot attain it.
7 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Profession of faith

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you palpated me²⁶ in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, my divine patron!
How vast is the sum of them!
18 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Petition

19 O that you would kill the wicked, my divine patron,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—
20 those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil!
21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Yahweh?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.

- ²³ Search me, my divine patron, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
²⁴ See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Gospel

[Lk 17:1-6](#)

Jesus said to his disciples,
"Things that cause sin will inevitably occur,
but woe to the one through whom they occur.
It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck
and he be thrown into the sea
than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.
Be on your guard!
If your brother sins, rebuke him;
and if he repents, forgive him.
And if he wrongs you seven times in one day
and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am sorry,'
you should forgive him."

And the Apostles said to Yahweh, "Increase our faith."
Yahweh replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,
'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Homily

Father of Jesus, you sent the Holy Spirit to teach us to be sincere – to tell the truth, Let me speak today as Jesus spoke – with honesty, not cynicism. I pray to you with Jesus – who rescued us from sin, and from death. Amen

Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, Bishop

Lectionary: 673

(Wis 1:1-7)

Love justice, you who judge the earth;
think of the Lord in goodness,
and seek him in integrity of heart;
Because he is found by those who test him not,
and he manifests himself to those who do not disbelieve him.
For perverse counsels separate a man from God,
and his power, put to the proof, rebukes the foolhardy;
Because into a soul that plots evil, wisdom enters not,
nor dwells she in a body under debt of sin.
For the holy Spirit of discipline flees deceit
and withdraws from senseless counsels;
and when injustice occurs it is rebuked.
For wisdom is a kindly spirit,
yet she acquits not the blasphemer of his guilty lips;
Because God is the witness of his inmost self
and the sure observer of his heart
and the listener to his tongue.
For the Spirit of the Lord fills the world,
is all-embracing, and knows what man says.

A Lament

(Ps 139:1-24)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

Profession of faith

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³ You search out my path
and my lying down,
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⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
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¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
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intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
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The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,
‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

Homily

How interesting that on Veterans’ Day (Nov 11), the Church would celebrate a soldier who was a pacifist, when the Church more often supports war than it works for peace!

Martin of Tours (316-397) was a conscientious objector who wanted to be a monk; a monk who was maneuvered into being a bishop; a bishop who fought paganism as well as pleaded for mercy to heretics.

Born of pagan parents in what is now Hungary and raised in Italy, this son of a veteran was forced at the age of 15 to serve in the army. He became a Christian catechumen and was baptized at 18. It was said that he lived more like a monk than a soldier. At 23, he refused a war bonus and told his commander: *I have served you as a soldier; now let me serve Christ. Give the bounty to those who are going to fight. But I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight.* After great difficulties, he was discharged and went to be a disciple of Hilary of Poitiers (January 13).

Martin was ordained an exorcist and worked with great zeal against the Arians. He became a monk, living first at Milan and later on a small island. When Hilary was restored to his see after exile, Martin returned to France and established what may have been the first French monastery near Poitiers. He lived there for 10 years, forming his disciples and preaching throughout the countryside.

The people of Tours demanded that he become their bishop. He was drawn to that city by a ruse—the need of a sick person—and was brought to the church, where he reluctantly allowed himself to be consecrated bishop. Some of the consecrating bishops thought his rumpled appearance and unkempt hair indicated that he was not dignified enough for the office.

Along with Ambrose (December 7), Martin denounced the Roman emperors Gratian and Magnus Maximus for putting Priscillian, a Gnostic Christian from Spain, on trial in a military tribunal. He indicted the emperors for simply wanting to confiscate Priscillian's churches and other financial resources. Martin also denounced Bishop Ithacius for carrying out the verdict of the tribunal, and executing Priscillian. Because Martin temporarily prevailed upon the emperor to spare the life of Priscillian and pleaded with the bishops of Spain to stop persecuting Priscillian's followers, Martin himself was accused of being a Gnostic.

Memorial of Saint Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr

Lectionary: 674

November 12

Homily

In 1595, when John Kunsevich (1580-1623) -- Josaphat became his monastic name -- was young, the Orthodox bishop of Brest-Litovsk in Belarus and five other bishops representing millions of Ruthenian Orthodox Christians, sought reunion with Rome. Josaphat dedicated his life to the cause.

Born in Ukraine, Josaphat became a Basilian monk and soon became a popular preacher and ascetic. He was ordained bishop of Vitebsk. Most monks opposed reunion with Rome. By synods, catechetical instruction, reform of the clergy and personal example, however, Josaphat succeeded in convincing many to support reunion.

Josaphat's opponents indicted him for having *gone Latin*. Eventually they entrapped and murdered him. Catholics recovered his body and buried it in the Basilica of St. Peter. He was the first saint of the Eastern Church to be canonized by Rome.

Memorial of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, Virgin

Lectionary: 675

Homily

Frances Cabrini (1850-1917) was born premature in Lombardy. She was the 10th of 11 children. Frances' father read stories of missionaries to the family from the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. Their stories of the missions in China made a particularly strong impression on Frances who wanted to go there as a missionary. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was at its peak when Frances was young, and it provided a spiritual foundation to the work of the missions.

In 1868, Frances received her teacher's certificate and returned to her hometown where she taught until she founded a religious community with five other women to care for the House of Providence orphanage for girls in 1874.

Italian immigrants faced many hardships in the United States. Persecuted by outsiders, they were also discriminated against by their own church. Bishop Scalabrini asked Frances to go to New York to work with them. She had planned to go to China as a missionary. She sought an audience with Pope Leo XIII and posed her dilemma; his response was: *Not to the East, but to the West.*

On Palm Sunday of 1890, in a new world, another culture, without contacts, not knowing the language, Frances opened her first orphanage. In 1892, her sisters opened a school and an orphanage in New Orleans. She continued to open schools, orphanages and hospitals in Chicago, Scranton, Newark, Denver, Santa Monica and Seattle. In 1909 Frances became a U.S. citizen.

On December 22, 1917, at age 67, Frances died in her sisters' hospital in Chicago working on a Christmas project for neighborhood children.

Memorial of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, religious

Lectionary: 678

November 17

Homily

Shortly after their marriage, Elizabeth and Ludwig made a journey to [Hungary](#); Ludwig was often after this employed by the [Emperor Frederick II](#), to whom he was much attached, in the affairs of the empire. In the spring of 1226, when floods, famine, and the pest wrought havoc in [Thuringia](#), Ludwig was in Italy attending the Diet at [Cremona](#) on behalf of the emperor and the empire. Under these circumstances Elizabeth assumed control of affairs, distributed alms in all parts of the territory of her husband, giving even state robes and ornaments to the poor. In order to care personally for the unfortunate she built below the Wartburg a hospital with twenty-eight beds and visited the inmates daily to attend to their wants; at the same time she aided nine hundred poor daily. It is this period of her life that has preserved Elizabeth's fame to posterity as the gentle and charitable chételaine of the Wartburg. Ludwig on his return confirmed all she had done. The next year (1227) he started with the [Emperor Frederick II](#) on a [crusade](#) to Palestine but died, 11 September of the same year at Otranto, from the pest. The news did not reach Elizabeth until October, just after she had given birth to her third child. On hearing the tidings Elizabeth, who was only twenty years old, cried out: "The world with all its joys is now dead to me."

The fact that in 1221 the followers of [St. Francis of Assisi](#) (d. 1226) made their first permanent settlement in [Germany](#) was one of great importance in the later career of Elizabeth. Brother Rodeger, one of the first [Germans](#) whom the provincial for [Germany](#), Caesarius of Speier, received into the order, was for a time the spiritual instructor of Elizabeth at the Wartburg; in his teachings he unfolded to her the ideals of St. Francis, and these strongly appealed to her. With the aid of Elizabeth the [Franciscans](#) in 1225 founded a monastery in Eisenach; Brother Rodeger, as his fellow-companion in the order, Jordanus, reports, instructed Elizabeth, to observe, according to her state of life, chastity, humility, patience, the exercise of prayer, and charity. Her position prevented the attainment of the other ideal of St. Francis, voluntary and complete poverty. Various remarks of Elizabeth to her female attendants make it clear how ardently she desired the life of poverty. After a while the post Brother Rodeger had filled was assumed by Master Conrad of Marburg, who belonged to no order, but was a very ascetic and, it must be acknowledged, a somewhat rough and very severe man. He was well known as a preacher of the [crusade](#) and also as an inquisitor or judge in cases of heresy. On account of the latter activity he has been more severely judged than is just; at the present day, however, the estimate of him is a fairer one. [Pope Gregory IX](#), who wrote at times to Elizabeth, recommended her himself to the God-fearing preacher. Conrad treated Elizabeth with inexorable severity, even using corporal means of correction; nevertheless, he brought her with a firm hand by the road of self-mortification to sanctity, and after her death was very active in her canonization. Although he forbade her to follow St. Francis in complete poverty as a beggar, yet, on the other hand, by the command to keep her dower she was enabled to perform works of charity and tenderness.

Memorial of Saint Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

Lectionary: 681

November 22

Homily

<p>Thank you, 'Abba, for waking me up this morning. Thank you for the song in my heart. Where has the church which so inspired me gone? Where is the vision which JFK saw today?</p>
--

Saint Cecilia is said to have heard heavenly music inside her heart when she was forced to marry the pagan, Valerian. A wealth of music, art and festivals in honor of St. Cecilia has grown from this little bit of information from her biography. She is the acclaimed patron saint of music, especially church music, as well as that of musicians, composers, instrument makers and poets. The name Cecilia means blind and so, although we don't know if she herself couldn't see, she is also the Catholic patron saint of the blind.

It is believed that St. Cecilia was born in the 2nd or 3rd century A.D., although the dates of her birth and martyrdom are unknown. A religious romance telling the love story of Saint Cecilia and Valerian appeared in Greece during the 4th century A.D., and there is a biography of St Cecilia dating from the 5th century A.D. She is purported to have been the daughter of a wealthy Roman family, a Christian from birth, who was promised in marriage to a pagan named Valerian. Cecilia, however, had vowed her virginity to God, and wore sackcloth, fasted and prayed in hopes of keeping this promise. Saint Cecilia disclosed her wishes to her husband on their wedding night. She told Valerian that an angel watched over her to guard her purity. He wanted to see the angel, so St. Cecilia sent him to Pope Urban(223-230). Accounts of how and when Valerian saw the angel vary, but one states that he was baptized by the Pope, and, upon his return to Saint Cecilia, they were both given heavenly crowns by an angel. Another version recounts that Tibertius, Valerian's brother, sees the crowns and he too is converted.

The two brothers then make it their mission to bury Christian martyrs put to death by the prefect of the city. In turn, they were brought in front of the prefect and sentenced to death by the sword. Cecilia, in the meantime, continued to make many conversions, and prepared to have her home preserved as a church at her death.

Finally, she too was arrested and brought before the prefect. He ruled that she should die by suffocation in the baths. Saint Cecilia was locked into the bathhouse and the fires vigorously stoked. She remained there for a day and a night but was still alive when the soldiers opened the doors. She was then ordered beheaded, but the executioner, after striking three times without severing St Cecilia's head, ran away, leaving her badly wounded. St. Cecilia hung onto life for three days after the mortal blows, preaching all the while. She made many more conversions and people came to soak up her flowing blood with sponges and cloths. There exists in Rome a church in St. Cecilia's honor that dates from about the fifth century. Her relics were believed to have been found by Pope Paschal I in 821 A.D., in the cemetery of St. Celestas. These remains were exhumed in 1599, when Cardinal Paul Emilius Sfondrati rebuilt the church of St. Cecilia, and said to be incorrupt.

St. Cecilia's following flourished during the Middle Ages in Europe. Songs were sung in her name, poetry was written, paintings with St. Cecilia as the subject were created, and her feast day, on November 22 was happily celebrated. She continued to be a popular topic for the arts well into the 18th century. Hans Memling, in 1470, painted St. Cecilia playing the organ at the mystical marriage of Catherine of Alexandria. In 1584 she was named patroness of the academy of music founded in Rome. Raphael painted her at Bologna, Rubens at Berlin and Domenichino in Paris. Chaucer commemorates her in his Second Nun's Tale and Handel set John Dryden's "Ode to Saint Ceclia" to music in 1736. Never was so much made of such a tiny bit of pseudo-biographical information. St. Cecilia, said to have heard heavenly music at one moment of her life, became the patroness of all western music. Even the Andrews sisters, in 1941, recorded a song, "The Shrine of St. Cecilia."

Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Lectionary: 688
December 7

Homily

Ambrose was governor of Northern Italy, with capital at Milan. When the bishop of Milan died, the city was evenly divided between Arian Catholics and Athanasian Catholics.

The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus and the Father are both divine. Arian Catholics taught that Jesus was created by the Father.

Ambrose appealed to the crowd for order and good will on both sides. He ended up – against his will -- being elected bishop. Although he was not baptized, Simplician, a priest of Rome, became his teacher and spiritual director. Ambrose gave away his wealth, committed himself to live simply.

Ambrose embraced the teaching of Athanasius on the equality of Jesus and the Father, which continued to divide Catholics. The government and the army were Arian. Emperor Justinian ordered him to turn his cathedral over to the Arian clergy so that her soldiers could worship there. Ambrose refused. He barricaded himself and his congregation in the church, and led them in singing antiphonal hymns he had composed. He was an early composer of Christian hymns with rhyme and accent meter – Ambrosian chant. The soldiers did not attack, and instead joined the congregation singing.

Ambrose was largely responsible for the conversion of St. Augustine. The hymn *Te Deum Laudamus* ("We praise Thee, O God") was long thought to have been composed by Ambrose in thanksgiving for that conversion. The current opinion is that Ambrose did not write it, but that he may well have written the Creed known as the Athanasian Creed. On the negative side, many Christians will regret his contribution to increased preoccupation with the relics of martyrs. He died 4 April 397, but (because this date so often falls in Holy Week or Easter Week) he is commonly remembered on the anniversary of his consecration as bishop, 7 December.

Ambrose is regarded as one of the Eight Great Doctors (=Teachers) of the Undivided Church. The list includes four Latin (Western) Doctors (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Pope Gregory the Great), and four Greek (Eastern) Doctors (Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nazianzus -- not to be confused with Gregory of Nyssa, the brother of Basil).



Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Patronal Feast Day of the United States of America

Lectionary: 689

December 8

(Gen 3:9-20)

Reading 1 [GN 3:9-15, 20](#)

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree,
the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?”
He answered, “I heard you in the garden;
but I was afraid, because I was naked,
so I hid myself.”
Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked?
You have eaten, then,
from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!”
The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me
she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.”
The LORD God then asked the woman,
“Why did you do such a thing?”
The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:
“Because you have done this, you shall be banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;
on your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike at your head,
while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve,
because she became the mother of all the living.

A Hymn (Ps 98:1-9)



3100-2890 BCE

Call to worship

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Creation story

Our divine patron has done marvelous things.

The right hand and the holy arm of Yahweh are victorious.²⁸

²Yahweh has achieved victory;

Yahweh has revealed vindication in the sight of all peoples.

³Yahweh is unconditionally loving and faithful to the household of Jacob.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our divine patron.

Call to worship

⁴**Make a joyful noise** to Yahweh, all the earth;

Break forth into joyous song

Sing hymns.

⁵**Sing hymns** to Yahweh with the lyre –

with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶ with trumpets and horns –

Make a joyful noise before Yahweh, who rules over us.

⁷Let the seas and all that fills it **roar** –

The world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the oceans **clap their hands;**

Let the mountains **sing** together for joy ⁹at the presence of Yahweh,

creation story

Yahweh is coming to judge the earth.

Our divine patron will judge the world with righteousness,
Our divine patron will judge the peoples with equity.

Reading 2 [EPH 1:3-6, 11-12](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,
as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world,
to be holy and without blemish before him.
In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ,
in accord with the favor of his will,
for the praise of the glory of his grace
that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we were also chosen,
destined in accord with the purpose of the One
who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will,
so that we might exist for the praise of his glory,
we who first hoped in Christ.

Alleluia [SEE LK 1:28](#)

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel [LK 1:26-38](#)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, he said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,

and you shall name him Jesus.
 He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
 and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,
 and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
 and of his Kingdom there will be no end.”
 But Mary said to the angel,
 “How can this be,
 since I have no relations with a man?”
 And the angel said to her in reply,
 “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
 and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
 Therefore the child to be born
 will be called holy, the Son of God.
 And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
 has also conceived a son in her old age,
 and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
 for nothing will be impossible for God.”
 Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
 May it be done to me according to your word.”
 Then the angel departed from her.

Homily

Thank you 'Abba, for waking me up this morning.
 Remind me to live today to say Thank you for all I have received, not Please for what I have want
 Thank you for the students you continue to let me teach ... to guide
 Like Mary, let my life be Yes to bring your son into your world.

Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers (Gen 2:25–4:2*)

The Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers opens with a sophisticated pun that is almost erased when it is translated as: “and the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25*) and “the snake was more crafty than any other wild animal” (Gen 3:1*). In Hebrew the verses are joined by a play on the words “naked” (Gen 2:25*) and “cunning” (Gen 3:1*). “The man and the woman have no clothes” (Hebrew: *'arummim*) and the snake has “no rivals” (Hebrew: *arum*). Both words contain the same three Hebrew letters: *ayin*, *resh*, and *mem*. By describing the man and the woman as naked, storytellers indicate that they are not yet ordinary human beings. They are still people primeval, more divine than human (Gilg 2:28). The snake in this story is also hardly an ordinary reptile. It talks. The talking snake (Gen 3:1*) and the teaching tree (Gen 3:6–7*) are examples of fable that gives plants and animals anthropomorphic or human characteristics. Even though the extraordinary title “more subtle than any other wild animal that Yahweh, our Creator, had made” (Gen 3:1*) identifies the snake as a

creature, it still plays the role of a member of the divine assembly, just as the Satan does in the book of Job (Job 1:1–2:13*).

The divine assembly was analogous to the village or city assembly in the world of the Bible. The fathers of the households made up the village or city assembly. The divine assembly was made up of Yahweh and advisers like the Heavens and the Earth, the Sun and the Moon. Both judicial bodies met at a threshold to resolve a crisis that put land and children at risk. The village assembly met at the threshing floor where the grain harvest was processed. The city assembly met at the gates. The divine assembly convened at the beginning of each new year at a sanctuary. Sometimes a member of the divine assembly, like the snake in the Stories of Adam and Eve or the Satan in the book of Job, opened the hearing. Sometimes, prophets filed a lawsuit against monarchs who did not fulfill their covenant obligations to Yahweh. Here the snake wants to know whether the woman can conceive a child, and the man can grow a harvest.

Sometime after 300 B.C.E., both biblical and nonbiblical traditions began identifying the snake as the devil, and the woman as seductive (Wis 2:24*; Rev 12:9*; 20:2*). The best-known Christian interpretation of these stories considers them to be stories about sin or original sin, which tell how God created a perfect world for humans in the Stories of the Heavens and the Earth and in the first three Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4–24*). Nonetheless, in the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers, they sinned (Genesis 3), setting in motion a chain reaction of sins in the Stories of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4–5), which eventually destroyed God's once-perfect world in the Flood Stories (Genesis 6–11). Subsequently, every human born into this now imperfect world was born sinful or alienated from God, even without having personally sinned. To re-create a perfect world, God introduced religion in the Stories of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 11:27–25:18*). Now, humans could overcome their alienation from God by entering this religion and rejecting the radical sinfulness of the world around them.

Neither the Hebrew Bible nor the Gospels refer to original sin. Furthermore, the first reference to the woman as evil does not appear until after 180 B.C.E. in the book of Sirach (Sir 25:21–26*) from the Septuagint used by Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt (Fig. 10). It was never part of the Hebrew Bible used by Jews in Syria-Palestine. The *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses*, which were popular nonbiblical books in the Jewish community around 100 B.C.E., share Sirach's portrayal. By 100 C.E., the New Testament had canonized the image of Eve as the mother of sin and death, and after 382 C.E. Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible distributed it throughout the Christian world.

The original-sin reading of the Stories of Adam and Eve developed from a commentary by Augustine on the letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:20–28*) and the Letter to the Romans (Rom 5:12–23*). Augustine (354–430) was a bishop near the ancient city of Carthage in Tunisia, North Africa. He became an influential teacher in the early Christian church. The Council of Trent (1542–63) in Italy adopted his commentary as the official teaching of the church.

Prior to Augustine, readings of the Stories of Adam and Eve indicated that human beings were free to choose good or evil. Augustine stressed that human beings were slaves to sin. For Augustine the emancipation of human beings from sin required not only faith and baptism, but a commitment to a life of celibacy and self-sacrifice. Augustine's teaching is quite negative, but its corollaries are quite positive, which may account for its enduring popularity. Everyone is free to accept or reject God, who does not impose

*Do not be ensnared by a woman's beauty,
Do not desire a woman's possessions.*

*There is quarreling, disobedience, and a loss of face,
When a wife supports her husband.*

*A dejected mind, a gloomy face,
A broken heart are caused by a bad wife.*

*Powerless hands and weak knees are the result of a wife,
Who does not make her husband happy.*

*From a woman, sin had its beginning,
Because of a woman, we all die.*

*Allow water no outlet,
Give a bad wife no voice.*

*If your wife does not obey,
Divorce her.*

Figure 10 Teaching on Women (Sir 25:21–26*)

grace or salvation on anyone. Augustine's interpretation was more than theological reflection; it was a constitution for the political order of his day. Government, for Augustine, was an indispensable defense against the forces that sin unleashed in human nature. Augustine drafted the concordat that united the church and the Roman Empire and has served as the basis for all subsequent societies with an established religion.

Although biblical scholars generally concurred with Augustine's commentary, some noted it was anomalous. For many the story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers still introduces discordant elements into the worldview of the Bible. A wily snake entices, the woman disobeys, and the man passively follows suit. Eve is a criminal. She is created after Adam, from Adam, as Adam's helper and named by Adam. She is seduced by the snake and then seduces Adam. The sad legacy of this long tradition of interpretation is the gruesome theological anthropology that views women as condemned by God to agonizing deliveries of their children as a sentence for seducing men to whom they are intellectually and morally inferior.

A reassessment of Augustine's reading is taking place in more than one area of study today. There are scholars of classical antiquity researching Graeco-Roman attitudes toward sexuality, moral freedom, and human value in Augustine's world. There are feminist scholars working to reduce the impact of sexism on the interpretation of women's roles in the Bible. Compelling arguments for revising Augustine are also emerging from the world of the Bible itself, where snakes and women appear more often as teachers than as tempters.

Snake characters are not just adversaries, they are also helpers. Both are wise. As adversaries snakes take away life; as helpers they renew it. Adversary snakes trick protagonists into trading away their youth. Helpers teach them the secret of eternal youth. In the Stories of Adapa from Mesopotamia, Gishzida, the snake who guards the gate to the divine plane, is a helper. It tells Adapa the priest to eat and drink the Bread and Water of Life in order to become immortal. In

the Stories of Gilgamesh from Mesopotamia, the snake that tricks Gilgamesh out of the plant that would make him immortal is an adversary.

The snake in the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers is more a helper than an adversary (Fig. 11). It is more informed and questioning than malicious. It is subtle or cunning like a sage pondering the age-old questions of life and death. The snake knows the decree of Yahweh. It walks in the garden just as Yahweh walks in the garden. Neither the man nor the woman fear the snake when they meet, but talk quite openly.

The snake and the woman speak of delicate subjects, using socially acceptable metaphors. “Eating” and “knowing” are euphemisms for “having sexual intercourse” and “conceiving a child.” In Semitic languages vocabulary for sexual intercourse, learning, eating, farming, fighting, and sacrificing overlap (Gilg i 4:16; Song of Solomon). Therefore, when the snake asks the woman: “Did Yahweh, our Creator, say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?” it means: “Are you fertile?” When it says: “when you eat of it your eyes will be opened . . . knowing good and evil,” it means: “You will become fertile.” Just as the word “life” is ambivalent in the discussion between the woman and the snake, so is the word “death.” The woman will not be summarily executed for eating of the fruit of the tree. Instead the woman will labor and, eventually, die in exchange for the ability to bear children. The snake and the woman discuss whether humans should be mortal or immortal, fertile or infertile. The snake does not offer immortality to the man and the woman. They are already immortal when the story begins. The snake does not steal immortality from them. It simply convinces them to exchange their immortality for fertility by pointing out that the wise know that human life, which is good, requires suffering, which is bad. The snake teaches the man and the woman that they must labor to have children and a harvest.

The man and the woman in this story share in Yahweh’s work of making them fully human. There is tension between Yahweh and the people primeval. The tension leads to changes, but it is too simple to reduce that tension to raw human disobedience. Truly human life results not simply from a grand divine plan, but from the interaction, the cooperation, the tension between Yahweh the Godparent and the first creatures. People

sterility affidavit (Gen 2:25–3:5*)

When the man and the woman had no clothes and no shame,

When the snake had no rivals among the creatures of Yahweh,
Our Creator.

The snake asked:

“Did Yahweh, Our Creator, say: “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?”

“We may eat fruit from Eden’s trees,”
The woman answered.

“But anyone who touches the Tree shall die,”
The woman explained.

“No one shall die!”
The snake argued.

“What Yahweh, Our Creator, knows is:
Anyone eating shall have her eyes opened.

“What Yahweh, Our Creator, knows,
She shall know.

“What is good,
What is bad!”

cosmogony (Gen 3:6*)

Then woman saw that the Tree was good for food,
Pleasing to the eyes, desirable for gaining wisdom.

So, she picked its fruit,
She ate its fruit.

She gave its fruit to the man, her partner,
The man ate its fruit. . . .

Figure 11 Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers (Gen 2:25–4:2*)

primeval become human not because of their disobedience, but because of their intimacy with and imitation of their creator. The tensions lead to the creation of a world in which Adam and Eve can have children, who can herd and farm the land.

The snake chooses to speak with the woman not because she is gullible, but because women play a more important role than men in human reproduction, which is the subject of the conversation. Storytellers also take advantage of at least two other motifs by having the snake and the woman speak with one another. With only a slight change in pronunciation, the same word can mean either “a female snake” or “Eve.” The pun emphasizes the reciprocity between the snake who understands fertility and the woman who must decide whether or not to become fertile. The selection of the woman to teach the man how to have intercourse in the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers is parallel to the commissioning of the Wise Woman by the divine assembly in the Stories of Gilgamesh to teach the *enkidu* how to have intercourse.

In contrast to the remarkably universal postbiblical interpretation of Eve as evil, biblical storytellers portrayed Eve as intelligent, moral, and selfless. Eve shows her intelligence in the accuracy with which she quotes Yahweh’s decree. She shows her moral integrity in the strictness with which she interprets the decree, by extending it from a prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree to touching it. She shows her selflessness in making the choice to bear children, even though it demands labor. On the basis of her discussion with the snake about the quality of their life primeval, she decides to lay down her life in order to create life. The woman is willing to create and to die, and so, by implication, is the man. The woman goes to the man, not to seduce him, but because she has discovered his role in the technique of sexual intercourse by which she can conceive a child.

The covenant with which the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers concludes is commonly read as a criminal sentence (Gen 3:13–19*). Consequently, humans

today often consider the labor of having a child or working a field to be a divine punishment for sin. There is certainly legal language in the tradition, but there is no need to impose a criminal character on the story as a whole. The syntax and legal anthropology do not definitively identify the words in the covenant as a prescriptive and promulgated law, or an adjudicatory judgment and court verdict. None of the technical terms for crime or sin are applied to actions of the snake, the woman, or the man, and only the snake and the soil are cursed. The man and the woman are not cursed. Finally, a divine judge like Yahweh here is more of a creator of a new world than a magistrate who rewards and punishes (Fig. 12).

The intention of the story is not to punish, but to persuade listeners that the blessings of fertility are worth the labor. By farming and childbearing the man and the woman, and subsequently all humans, imitate Yahweh, even though human creativity demands labor and divine creativity does not. Labor marks humans as different from Yahweh, not disobedient to Yahweh. For humans, the ecstasy of giving life to another human being in birth or to the earth in farming demands the agony of labor. Yahweh here is more a midwife than a judge. Midwives do not impose labor pain upon mothers as a sentence for conceiving a child. They interpret labor pain and all the consequences of parenthood.

By teaching the man and the woman how to become human, the snake establishes an ongoing relationship with the man and the woman. Snakes became reminders of the labor that human creativity demands. The story explains why snakes crawl and why they strike at humans. These explanations teach simple lessons. Crawling reminds snakes that they must continue to tutor humans in the cost of fertility, and snake bites remind humans that they must labor to have a child and bring in a harvest. Like all learning,

first covenant (Gen 3:7*+3:22–4:2*)

*The eyes of both were opened,
They realized they had no clothes.*

*They wove fig leaves together,
They made clothes for themselves.*

second covenant (Gen 3:8–21*)

*Finally Yahweh, Our Creator, moved into Eden as gently
as a breeze.
The Man and the Woman hid in the trees.*

*“Man! Woman! Where are you?”
Yahweh, Our Creator, called out.*

*“I heard you in Eden and I was afraid.
I was naked, so I hid.”*

*“How did you know you are naked?”
Yahweh, Our Creator, asked.*

*“You have eaten from the forbidden tree!”
Yahweh, Our Creator, charged.*

*“The Woman,
The partner you gave me—*

*“Gave me the fruit
and I ate!” the Man answered in his defense.*

*“Why did you do such a thing?”
Yahweh, Our Creator, continued.*

*“The Snake tricked me into eating the fruit.”
The Woman answered in her defense.*

*So Yahweh, Our Creator, decreed: **Snake!** Because
you have done this,
You shall have no companions—cattle or beasts.*

*You shall crawl on your belly,
You shall eat dirt all the days of your life.*

*You and the Woman will be enemies,
Your children will kill her children.*

*Her child will stomp on your head,
Your child will strike at his heel.*

*Your instinct will be to strike at humans,
Even though they will master you (Gen 3:16b*).*

***Woman!** (Gen 3:16a*): Your labor in childbirth will be excruciating,
You shall birth your children in pain.*

***Man!** Because you obeyed the Woman,
Because you ate the forbidden fruit*

*You will curse the soil,
You will labor to eat all the days of your life.*

*The soil shall only produce thorns and thistles,
You shall be forced to eat wild plants.*

*You shall earn your bread by the sweat of your brow,
You shall return to the soil from which you come.*

*You are soil,
You shall return to the soil.*

*The Man named the Woman “Eve,”
He called her “Mother of All the Living.”*

*Yahweh gave the Man and the Woman leather,
Our Creator clothed them in rawhide. . . .*

Figure 12 Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers (cont.) (Gen 2:25–4:2*)

crawling and snake bites are painful, but something can be learned from the pain. Such etiologies by no means struggle with the profound questions that are the main subject of creation stories. Nonetheless, they teach how to turn human curiosity into a learning experience. Therefore, Yahweh reminds the snake that the task of teaching the people primeval how to become fertile and mortal is far from easy and far from over.

The woman's choice to create has consequences for her relationship to her children. She will be able to give birth, but not without labor. If the woman actually made a choice, why does she seemingly deny it (Gen 3:13*)? Refusing to take responsibility for the choice may be a demur. She has acted courageously, but it would be inappropriate for her to brag about what she has done. So, she simply says it was nothing. The woman's response to Yahweh may also reflect a basic human question about life: "Did humans freely choose to become fertile and mortal or were they tricked?" The woman's response raises the question to which these stories provide an answer. They want their audiences to regard fertility as a freely chosen blessing and to embrace the asceticism of laying down their lives by childbearing and farming.

Another objection to the characterization of Eve as having made a heroic choice is the long-standing tradition of interpretation that emphasizes the negative consequences which her actions have on her relationship to her man (Gen 3:14–16*). As it now stands, the woman seems sentenced to be subordinate to the man. But originally this consequence may have applied to the snake, not to the woman. A parallel from the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:7*) may provide a clue both to the original meaning and to the position of the words: "and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16*).

Crawling snakes are not tortured or humiliated; they are on the hunt. Snakes crawl in the dust like warriors to ambush humans who are creatures of dust. Both the *robets*-snake in the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:7*) and the *nahash*-snake in the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:14*) lurk at doorways to strike out at those who enter and leave. The nouns are synonymous and their verbs are identical (Hebrew: *teshuqat*). Rather than consider one verb to refer to the woman's urge to have sexual intercourse with her husband, and the other to refer to the instinct of the *robets*-snake to strike at anyone who threatens it, it would be better to read both verbs as referring to a snake's instinct to strike. Just as one snake stalks Cain, the other stalks Eve's children. Snakes are sentenced to continue these engagements, even though humans continue to crush their heads with their heels. Therefore, instead of instructing the woman that "your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you," Yahweh instructs the *nahash*-snake: "your instinct will be to strike at humans, even though they will master you" (Gen 3:16b*). Yahweh's only instruction to the woman is: "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children" (Gen 3:16a*). There is still no evidence in the tradition of the text that shows when this part of the verse was detached from Yahweh's instruction of the snake and attached to the instruction of the woman. Yet, as more and more negative characterizations of the woman in this story became standard, it is easy enough to understand why the transposition may have taken place.

The man's choice to create has consequences for his relationship to the land. He will be able to bring in a harvest, but not without labor. The Stories of Adam and Eve begin with a sterility affidavit that clearly observes that the essentials for agriculture are missing, but the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers tells only her story. Yet, storytellers assume that the

man goes through a similar process of discovery to become fertile. His story now appears in the Stories of Cain and Abel.

Many interpreters end the Stories of Adam and Eve with the words: “after he drove the man out he placed on the east side of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24*). Standard creation stories, however, never end one world without inaugurating another. Therefore, it is more likely that this story ends, not with the closing of the old world of Eden, but with the opening of a new world of the East. The work that Yahweh began in the Story of the *'Adam* as a Farmer is completed only when Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel (Gen 4:2*). In the Story of the *'Adam* as a Farmer, only Yahweh farms; the *'adam* simply tends (Gen 2:15*), whereas in the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers, the man actually farms (Gen 3:23*).

In its conclusion, the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers celebrates Eve in the much the same way that the Stories of Atrahasis celebrate Nintu-Mami (Fig. 13). Both women carry the title “Mother of All” (Atra 1:245–246; Gen 3:20*). Nintu-Mami gives birth to seven sets of twins. Eve gives birth to two sons. Nintu-Mami celebrates her delivery by singing: “You commanded me a task, I have completed it” (Atra 1:237–238). Eve sings to celebrate her sons: “With the help of Yahweh, as my midwife, I have given birth!” (Gen 4:1*). She names her dominant son “Cain,” because he is “Strong as Iron.” She names her recessive son “Abel,” because he is “Fragile as a Breath of Air” (Eccl 1:14*). In many ways, Eve’s hymn summarizes what the Stories of Adam and Eve teach. She is as delighted that she has learned how to use her power to create as the man was delighted in Yahweh’s creation of her (Gen 2:23*). She sees the successful birth of a child as a divine work.

The Stories of Adam and Eve are part of an ancient quest to understand human life. As others have done, and will continue to do, these wonderful stories ask: “Does immortality or creativity better define human life?” The search of the Stories of Adam and Eve for an answer is positive and inspiring, not cynical or complaining. These stories ponder both the life of Yahweh and the life of the people primeval to better understand human life. Yahweh is immortal and fertile. Yahweh lives forever and Yahweh creates. The people primeval are immortal, but infertile. The *'adam*, the man, and the woman live forever, but cannot create. Ordinary humans like Adam and Eve are mortal, but can create. The tellers of the Stories of Adam and Eve were not utopian dreamers. Their investigation of the assets and liabilities of both immortality and fertility is brutally realistic. The immortal life of the people primeval was certainly enjoyable, but not completely satisfying. Human creativity is godlike, but painful. Childbirth is agonizing and farming exhausting. Nonetheless, the stories conclude that humans are most like God when they create, not when they live forever.

Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr

Lectionary: 692

December 13

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Lectionary: 693

December 14

Homily²⁹

Feast of the Holy Innocents, martyrs

Lectionary: 698

December 28

(John 1:5—2:2)

Beloved:

This is the message that we have heard from Jesus Christ and proclaim to you:

God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

If we say, “We have fellowship with him,”

while we continue to walk in darkness,

we lie and do not act in truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light,

then we have fellowship with one another,

and the Blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

If we say, “We are without sin,”

we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just

and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar,

and his word is not in us.

My children, I am writing this to you

so that you may not commit sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous one.

He is expiation for our sins,

and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.

A Lament

(Ps 124:1-8)

A Pilgrimage Lament Dedicated to David³⁰

Testimony

¹ If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side

Vow

— let Israel now say —

Testimony

² if it had not been Yahweh, who was on our side,
 When our enemies attacked us,
³ then they would have swallowed us up alive,
 When their anger was kindled against us;
⁴ then the flood would have swept us away,
 The torrent would have gone over us;
⁵ then over us would have gone the raging waters.

Vow

⁶ Let Israel bless Yahweh!

Testimony

Who has not given us as prey to their teeth.
⁷ We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
 we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of Yahweh,
 who made heaven and earth.

Gospel[MT 2:13-18](#)

When the magi had departed, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt,
and stay there until I tell you.
Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”
Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night

and departed for Egypt.
He stayed there until the death of Herod,
that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled,
Out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi,
he became furious.
He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity
two years old and under,
in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.
Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be consoled,
since they were no more.*

Homily

Some laments in the book of Psalms lack a complaint or a petition, and have only a vow. These laments have been labeled “songs of thanksgiving.” One psalm with such a vow is preserved in part two of the book of Psalms. This numbered psalm in the Bible today actually combines two psalms: a hymn (Ps 66:1–12*) and a lament (Ps 66:13–20*).¹ The pilgrimage here (Ps 124) fulfills a vow which the mourners made as a petition to Yahweh for deliverance.
