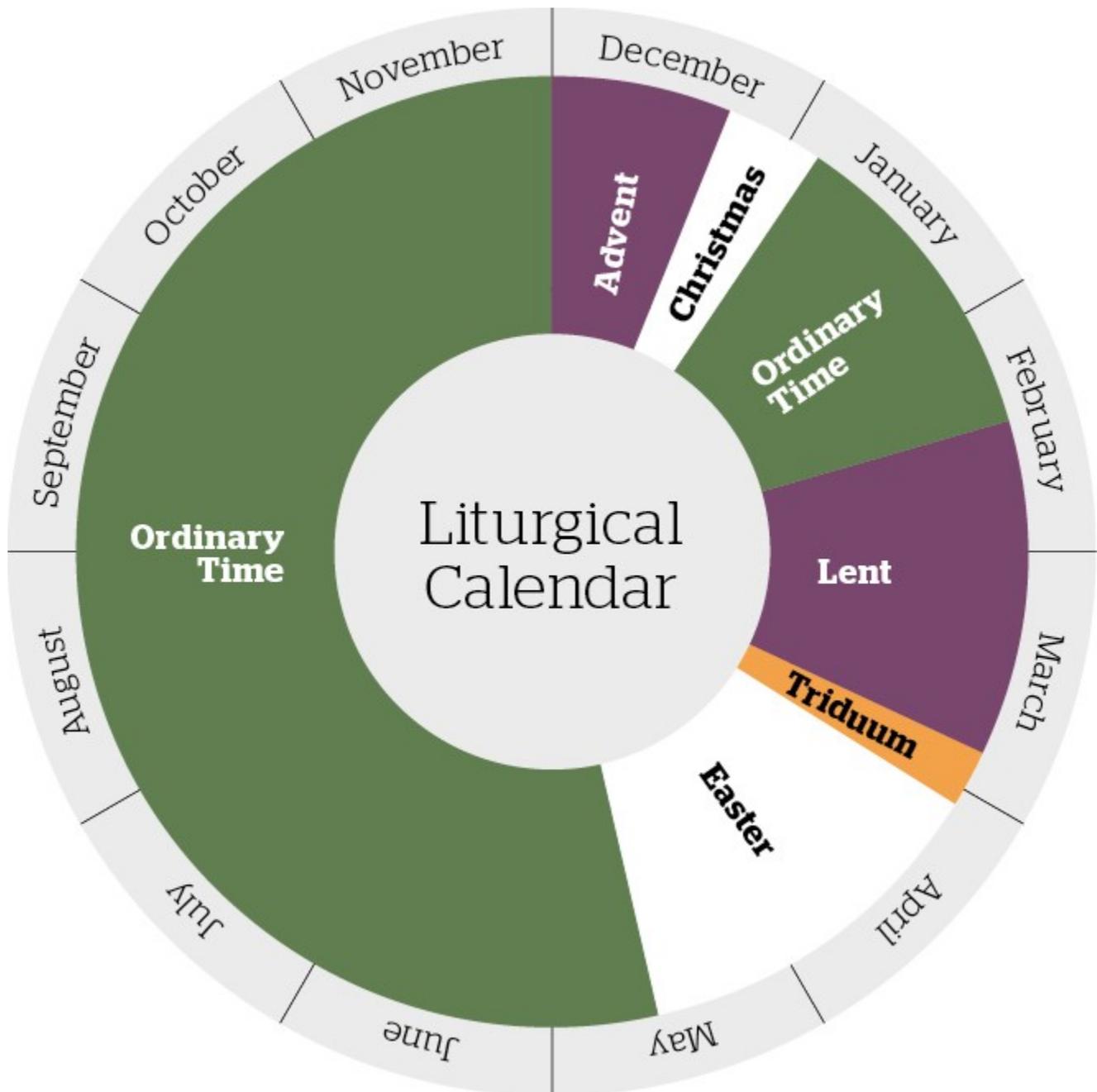


Liturgical Reflections, 2019



The title “Liturgical Reflections 2019” is a kind of misnomer. Reason? As will all other related documents, the new one begins a month beforehand, calendar-wise as commonly understood. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, the current naming will be maintained as it had been since these postings came into existence.

This time around the excerpts are taken from the first readings.

Sometimes reflections contained in documents pertaining to individual books of the Bible are added and are noted as such. At the same time, some of these remarks are altered—perhaps enhanced is a better word—because a new reading of the same biblical texts is bound to produce fresh insights.

2 December, First Sunday of Advent

14) *"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15) In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16) In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."* Jeremiah 33.14-16

The exclamation “behold” or *hineh* is a good way to start of a new liturgical season, something akin to John the Baptist (he’ll appear later) who upon seeing Jesus for the first time exclaims, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” [Jn 1.29].

The purpose of *hineh* is to introduce three references to days, each of which go unspecified but have the sense of coming in the near future. Also they convey a sense of being present already...not in the sense of fullness but partially and with full knowledge that this partialness is essentially the same. The first set of “days” which are coming is followed by a phrase common in Jeremiah as well as other prophets, “says the Lord.” This divine saying and the not-yet-presence of days is the bridge between fullness and partiality. As for the promise, the noun is *davar* which means word-as-expression, a theme permeating the Book of Jeremiah and is akin to the Greek *logos*. *Qum* is the verb used with *davar*, essentially as to rise up. The idea is that this *davar* from the Lord will rise up almost in an organic fashion for the houses of Israel and Judah.

The second “days” is when the Lord will make spring forth a righteous Branch, the verb *tsamach* being the root for the noun *Tsemach*. In other words, the action and completion are one and the same both now and in the “days.” This Branch comes from King David, archetype for all Israel’s kings, the standard by which they are to be judged. Because this Branch is righteous (*tsedaqah*), he will do justice and righteousness (*mishpat* and *tsedeqah*)...extend what’s natural to him...to the land, *‘erets* meaning more than the physical earth but synonymous with the people Israel.

The third “days” deals with the salvation of Judah, *yashah* being the verbal root for the proper name Jesus. Simultaneous with this *yashah* is that Jerusalem and hence the temple there as intimated will dwell securely, the preposition *l-* or “to” prefaced to the noun *betach* or trust.

The concluding sentence speaks of “it” which can refer to Israel, Judah and Jerusalem, all having one name where the Lord is associated with righteousness, *tsedeqah* as is the case with the Branch.¹ Note, however, that this righteousness is collective, belonging to all three and hence designated as “our.”

8 December, Immaculate Conception

9) *But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"* 10) *And he said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."* 11) *He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"* 12) *The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."* 13) *Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"* *The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."* 14) *The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.* 15) *I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* Genesis 3.9-15

The following is taken from **Notations on the Book of Genesis**, also on this homepage.

Here the title “Lord God” vis-a-vis the man, especially in light of the previous verse, assumes a kind of ominous picture of God, almost as a giant compared with the two humans. His act of calling (*qara'*) gives a new sense to this verb which earlier was used to bring various parts of creation into existence. *Qara'* has a negative connotation here, on the threshold of issuing a sentence for the trespass committed by the man and woman. Note that God directs *qara'* to the man as opposed to his wife. The verb also connotes the real reason for God walking in the garden although not necessarily bound up with it or God having apparently perceived something awry in the garden. “Where are you” is poignant in that God knows the man’s whereabouts but asks the question in order to elicit a response.

Sound (*qol*): more specifically as “voice;” cf. vs. 8 where it was associated with God’s walking in the garden. The same verse uses *ruach* for “cool of the day,” so perhaps this sound/voice is a type of wind/spirit which as noted there is an alternate translation of this noun.

Fear and nakedness (*haram*, verb) go hand in hand, the former being triggered by the divine *qol*. Cf. vs. 1 for an alternate use of *haram*: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.” In a sense the hiding which followed fear and the realization of being naked bring out a parallel between the man and the serpent’s

¹Israelites had a single kingdom during the reigns of Solomon and David. The southern region came to be called Judah which consisted of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Jerusalem was their capital.

“subtle” nature. Similarly, nakedness is often associated with vulnerability and a desire to be concealed.

The same verb *chava*’ (to hide) is used as in vs. 8.

In vs. 11 the Lord God asks two questions in rapid succession, almost as if to catch the man off guard and get to the truth of the matter. naked or *harom* as noted earlier. Here the Lord God employs a rhetorical question (“Who told you...?”) as though a third person were present with the man in the garden. Perhaps the intent is to have the man respond in just as quick succession as God did to him. Secondly the Lord God asks the man about eating from the tree. Both he and the man realize the situation, namely, man’s nakedness as a sign of having trespassed the commandment.

In vs. 12 we have the immediate response by the man to the Lord God, that is, a response to the two rhetorically-based questions of the previous verse. The man is accurate here: it was the woman (vs. 6) whom the serpent tempted to eat of the tree’s fruit. However, he made a mistake, a kind of insult, to the Lord God which consists in the words “whom you gave to be with me.”

Note the similarity in sound between the two words, woman and which: ‘*ishah* and ‘*asher*, which heightens the man’s attempt to shift blame away from himself.

In vs. 13 the Lord God addresses the woman after having spoken with the man in vs. 11, the second time in the form of a question which does not intimate a divine lack of knowledge about the situation but to elicit a freely given response. The Lord God has taken the man at his word, that is, that the woman gave him the tree’s fruit to eat. The woman rightly says that the serpent had beguiled (*nasha*’) him, a verb which also connotes lifting up and taking away, the only Old Testament use of the term. “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” [2 Cor 11.3]. The Greek equivalent to *nasha*’ here is *exapatao*, the preposition *ex* (from, out of) prefixed to the verb as an intensification of its meaning.

The tone of vs. 13 hearkens back to the dialogue between the serpent and woman earlier in chapter three. Such beguiling took place in the context of having one’s eyes opened, being like God and knowing good and evil. Contrast the deception of this serpent (*nachash*) with the same bronze (*nachsheth*) serpent noted in the context of 3.1, that is, from Num 21.9. The latter gives life: “So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” [vs. 9].

The beginning of a sentence pronounced against the serpent (vs. 14) continues through the next verse and takes the form of a divine curse (‘*arar*). “Come now, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me” [Num 22.6]. Thus ‘*arar* is somewhat akin to casting a

spell. It is used in conjunction with the preposition *min* (*m-*) or to signify separating from, an intensification of the curse.

In the verse at hand, the divine curse is with respect to two types of animals, tame and wild: 1) cattle or *behemah*, a term which includes (domestic) beasts of burden in general. “The herds of cattle are my lord’s” [Gen 47.18]. Mention of cattle can be taken in the context of a nomadic or semi-nomadic audience which puts great importance on these animals. 2) wild animals or literally, “animals of the field” (*sadeh*). “All that moves in the field is mine” [Ps 50.10]. Perhaps the wildness of these animals anticipates what lies in store for the man and woman outside the tame nature of the garden of Eden.

Belly (*gachon*), the only other reference being Lev 11.42: “Whatever goes on its belly and whatever goes on all fours or whatever has many feet, all the swarming things that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat; for they are an abomination.” Since the serpent is presumably a snake and crawls upon the ground, God bids it to eat dust (*haphar*) for the duration of its lifetime. This noun usually refers to fine dust blown by the wind. “I beat them fine as dust before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets” [Ps 18.42]. *Haphar* is not to be confused with ‘*adam* (man) created in the divine image and likeness, ‘*adam* being associated with the red color of the earth.

In vs. 13 the Lord God puts enmity (‘*eyvah*) not only between the man and woman but in their future offspring or seed (*zereh*). Such enmity is strong, the alternate meaning of which is “enemy.” For another reference with the same connotation in the verse at hand, cf. Num 35.21: “in enmity he struck him down with his hand so that he died.” It is interesting to note that *zereh* as seed here applies to both man and the beast, this term usually being applied to the male (i.e., a mammal as opposed to a reptile) reproductive act.

Bruise (*shuph*), the verbal root of which suggests a gaping upon or laying in wait to make an attack. “If I say, ‘Let only darkness cover me and the light about me be night’” [Ps 139.11]. That is to say, darkness lays in wait for the psalmist much like the serpent. The enmity which God brings to the fore is between the serpent and woman as opposed to one between the woman and man. This act of bruising the woman’s head implies that the serpent lies in wait, for example, in a tree as opposed to laying on the ground. The woman’s bruising of the serpent’s head, most likely its tail, can intimate that this head is hanging from the tree. As for the Book of Revelation, it speaks of the hostility originating in the Garden of Eden in terms of the serpent/dragon (*drakon*) who pursued the woman after she gave birth to a child, 12.13-7.

9 December, Second Sunday of Advent

1) *Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.* 2) *Put on the robe of the righteousness from God; put on your head*

the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting. 3) For God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. 4) For your name will forever be called by God, "Peace of righteousness and glory of godliness." 5) Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east, at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. 6) For they went forth from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. 7) For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up to make level ground so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. 8) The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. 9) For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory with the mercy and righteousness that come from him. Baruch 5.1-9

Stole or garment also can mean equipment, armament as well as any type of dress. It seems to apply to an article of clothing that covers the body in its entirety something akin to a raincoat and is a good noun for the oppressive weight of sorrow and affliction, *penthos* and *kakoseos*, also as mourning and oppression. It weighs down Jerusalem abandoned of her people because according to the RSV, Baruch seems to have been written during the Babylonian captivity. And so Jerusalem is personified and is to do three things. Note that the first two verbs are the same, *enduo* (to put on) which is opposite of the just noted *ekduo* or to put off. *Periballo* is used with the third, literally to cast around:

- 1) Beauty or *euprepeia* which also means comeliness and is from or alternately as beside (*para*) God.
- 2) Robe or *diplois* of righteousness, this being literally a double cloak.
- 3) Diadem or *mitra*, also as headband which belongs to glory of the Everlasting or *Aionios* which is the adjective of the noun *aion* (forever) of vs. 4 also as a period, age, generation or posterity.

Jerusalem is to resist the all too natural temptation of throwing off the yoke of captivity, for that would bring automatic ruin. Instead, she is to wait for God to show his splendor (*lamprotes* also as brilliancy, magnificence) which is not just applicable to herself or Babylon but everywhere. Her new twofold name (peace of righteousness and glory of godliness) is given only when she's devoid of inhabitants, for if they were present, the Lord would be unable to bestow it by reason of their being hard of heart. That hardness is in the process of being softened in their exile.

Jerusalem is to arise—that is, clothed with the three things noted above and with her new twofold name—and look eastward, the verb being *periblepo* or to gaze all around (*peri-*) in that direction. Her children will be seen coming from the east or from Babylon. Note that while vs. 5 has Jerusalem's *periblepo* from the east, she is to see her children also from the west, *eido* being the more common verb. Perhaps those from the west are some who managed to escape being exiled and managed to sustain themselves for the duration.

The way this gathering takes place—from both east and west—is by the word or *rhema* of the Holy One, a noun meaning that which is uttered compared with *logos*, word as

expression. This *rhema* is bound up with God remembering his exiled people. Vs. 6 says that the people had been led into exile without mentioning the Babylonians who did this. However, God will return them carried in glory (*doxa*) which is equivalent to a royal throne. In order to make this return happen as swiftly and as safely (*asphalos* as in vs. 7, literally as without falling down) as possible, the Lord will level mountains and hills as well as filling up valleys, a theme reminiscent of Is 40.4: “Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low.” This, of course, is quoted in Lk 3.4 concerning John the Baptist’s preaching of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, along the way trees will provide shade as God leads Israel with joy, mercy and righteousness which come from him, *para* being used once again or beside him.

16 December, Third Sunday of Advent

14) Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15) The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more. 16) On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. 17) The Lord, your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing 18) as on a day of festival. "I will remove disaster from you so that you will not bear reproach for it. Zephaniah 3.14-18

This passage contains four verbs of exultation, all similar yet with differences:

1) *Ranan* or to sing aloud which connotes emitting a tremulous or strident sound though not especially articulate.

2) *Ruah* or to shout which can apply to sound a trumpet as an alarm.

3) *Samach* or to rejoice, also as to be merry.

4) *Halaz* or to exult which sometimes applies to doing it in the bad sense.

The first as well as third and fourth apply to daughter of Zion whereas the second to Israel, one and the same with different names. The reason: the Lord has removed both judgments and her enemies, the two verbs being *sur* and *panah*. The first involves a turning aside as well as withdrawing whereas the second means to turn away or remove. What brings this about seems to be a sudden realization that the Lord as King of Israel is in the midst of his people. *Qerev* refers to that which is interior or in the middle from which his influence radiates outward as it reduces and then eliminates fear. Note that this *qerev* is associated with the daughter of Zion, Israel and daughter of Jerusalem compared with Zion. All are the same though with subtle distinctions as the four verbs above.

Also this divine *qerev* is associated with “that day” which is similar to the notion of a *kairos* event, almost always not a day commonly understood but a special occasion outside our

common way of thinking. On it any fear will be dispelled because this second *qerev* has the Lord depicted as a warrior bestowing victory.

The Lord-as-warrior will do the following four:

1) Give victory or *yashah* which fundamentally means aid or set free and is the verbal root for the proper name Jesus.

2) Rejoice or *sus* in the sense of being glad along with *simchach*, the verbal root of *samach* or #3 above.

3) Renew or *charash*, fundamentally as to plow or to be deaf, dumb, silent. It's used here with '*ahavah* or love.

4) Exult over or *gyl*, also as to tremble as well as to go in a circle such as in in dance. The noun *rinah* or loud singing can apply to either joy or a mournful cry.

All four take place on a day of festival, *mohed* implying a set time; compare with "that day" of vs. 6, the two being similar. It's associated with the participle *yagah* or to be sorrowful which the RSV deems as "obscure." The cause rests in the fact that the Lord is removing disaster from upon Israel, *cherpah*, contempt or scorn. Note the three occasion of the preposition *hal-*, "upon:" will rejoice, will exult and will remove disaster, all in the future compared with the present tense of the Lord being in her midst, *qerev*. This implies that while already *qerev*, it will require time for realizing this.

23 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent

1) Now you are walled about with a wall; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike upon the cheek the ruler of Israel. 2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. 3) Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel. 4) And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.
Micah 5.1-4

The RSV notes that the opening words are "obscure," possibly a scribal error or the like. Regardless, the scene is one where "you" or the "daughter of Zion" [4.13] is encircled and about to be captured and then enslaved. Amid this impending crisis the Lord singles out Bethlehem called *tsahyr* or small in the sense of being mean or despised, the least place from which one would expect a ruler to come. Further mystery is thrown upon this unknown individual by pretty much calling him eternal which in the context at hand means his lineage goes back to King David. David is the gold standard for all Israel's kings yet completely unknown by anyone there right now. This verse is quoted in Mt 2.6 with respect to the birth of Jesus, interestingly by the wise men to the chief priests and scribes connected with King Herod.

In light of the opening words of the daughter of Zion being besieged, vs. 3 has this mysterious future ruler from Bethlehem give up the people until a certain time. That is, the time when Israel's encirclement seen as a mother in travail has given birth, this part difficult to comprehend. There seems to be a connection between the siege and future return of the people, most likely to Babylon.

Vs. 4 has the yet-to-be-named ruler stand (*hamad*, also as to remain, endure) as well as to feed his flock, this being wrapped up in the verb *rahaḥ*. In other words, he'll assume the familiar role of shepherd. Such a position has two characteristics: in the strength of the Lord and in the majesty of his name, *hoz* and *ga'on*, might or power and magnificence as well as pride, arrogance. Both will result in the people dwelling in security which is rendered by the verb *yashav*, to sit down as well as to abide. While in this restful security, the ruler from obscure Bethlehem will be great throughout the entire world, *'erets* being used. This noun is associated often with the nation of Israel, and with this in mind, Israel extending all over under the leadership of her new king.

25 December, Christmas

1) For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her vindication goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a burning torch. 2) The nations shall see your vindication and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will give. 3) You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4) You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5) For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. Isaiah 62.1-5 (Gospel for Vigil Mass)

This excerpt begins with the Lord's concern for Zion where he refuses to keep silent and be at rest, *chashah* and *shaqat* which entails a period of waiting for the appropriate time to take action. The former implies being still and the latter, to be quiet as well as secure. Both are dependent upon the small word "until" or *had*, suggestive of that time frame with regard to waiting. That is to say, he waits until both Zion's vindication or *tsedaqah* (also as righteousness) and salvation or *yeshuah* go forth. Each will have its respective luminosity: the first will have brightness, *nogah* also as shining splendor and the latter as a burning torch, *lapyd* which implies being a lamp.

Note that the nations will see the vindication and glory of Zion, the just mentioned brightness and burning torch providing the light without which nobody could see. Here's another of *tsedaqah* along with glory or *kavod*. As for this new name, no details are given which for now keeps both the nations and Israel in suspense awaiting the Lord to give it.

That means everyone's attention will be focused upon his mouth; in other words, everyone will be disposed to listen, something sorely lacking in Israel's history which has been documented so well, notably by the prophets.

Everyone is awaiting with great suspense the Lord to speak or to know the new name he will bestow upon Zion. Actually it will be two names in exchange for the former shameful two which will be revealed shortly.

The Lord now begins to unfold this new name which is preceded by the following two:

1) Crown of beauty and royal diadem or *hatarah* and *tsphyrah* are found together in 28.5 only here both are located in God's hand.

2) No longer will Zion be called Forsaken. This will not be the formal title suggesting a profound humiliation before everyone or *Hazuvah*. The verbal root of this noun means to leave in the sense of to desert.

The land or *'erets* (synonymous with the people Israel) won't be called by a second formal name, Desolate or *Shemamah* which implies being laid waste; also as astonishment. To counter these two formal titles, Israel will assume two others, My delight and Married, *Chephets* and *Behulah*. The former implies inclining as to be favorable and the latter, to have dominion over as well as to take a wife. Both are borne out by use of their respective verbal roots being used in the same verse, delight and to be married.

The title Married relative to *'erets* follows the example of a young man marrying a virgin, this correspondence between the Lord and Zion demonstrated by "for" and "as." *Sus* is the verb for rejoice which suggests the image of leaping up and down out of joy. Such joy is emphasized by the preposition *hal-* or upon with respect to the bride and "you."

30 December, Holy Family

11) Listen to me your father, O children and act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety. 2) For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. 3) Whoever honors his father atones for sins, 4) and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. 5) Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. 6) Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother...12) O son, help your father in his old age and do not grieve him as long as he lives; 13) even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him. 14) For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and against your sins it will be credited to you. Sirach 3.1-6 & 12-14

The opening verse of this passage draws a direct correspondence between hearing and doing. The former comes from one's father, head of the household, and doing in accord with what he says, this resulting in being kept safe, *zozo* also as to save or to rescue. The basis for

such parental authority derives from the Lord who honors the role of a father, *doxazo* being the verb which also means to think, imagine or to hold an opinion. Second to the father is, of course, the mother whose right (*krisis*: also as judgment) the Lord confirms over her children, the verb being *stereo* also as to make firm, solid.

Being aware of this twofold authority over him, the child is to honor his father and glorify his mother, *timao* and *doxazo* (just noted). *Timao* is bound up with *exilaskomai* or to make propitiation (for sins) whereas *doxazo* is connected with *apothemaurizo*, to hold or store up, the word “treasures” being included in the verb.

Vs. 5 uses *timao* again, this time with respect to the father which more or less directly has a role in propagating children and the hearing of prayers. Such prayers seem connected intimately with the birth of children, for a father wishes to see his name carried on not just through his sons but those coming after.

Doxazo or to glorify is found in vs. 6 with regard to the father, this verb pertaining to the mother as in vs. 5 and here resulting in the son having a long life. Just as important is the mother who comes next. Here she has a direct connection with the Lord, if you will, by reason of the son obeying the Lord, the verb *eisakoueo* literally as to listen-into, *eis-*. Such listening-into has a direct affect on the mother, that is, it serves to refresh her, *anapauro* which also means to rest or to come to a halt.

Vs. 12 shows a direct appeal by the Lord to the son which corresponds to his relationship with the Lord. In old age the father requires filial support, the verb *antilambano* which means literally to receive instead, to take part in a thing which here obviously is the mother. The remaining three verses continue with exhortations to the son to be of assistance to his father who might be trying by reason of senility. Chief among such help is forbearance and kindness, *sugnome* and *eleemosune*. The former means a feeling with (*sug-*) which is ready to offer excuses where they might be required whereas the latter involves pity or mercy.

The instructions just offered to a son with regard to his parents are meant to fortify him well in advance when they will require help...not just in their declining years but at present when honoring them will prepare the son for future trials.