

Liturgical Reflections 2010

This document begins with the new liturgical year, 29 November 2009.

29 November, First Sunday of Advent

Today's Gospel (Lk 21:25-28 & 34-6) is very much like that of the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mk 13:24-32). This similarity keeps in line with the observation made under that entry, namely, that the end and beginning of any given liturgical year has the same theme. If, for example, a blind person were to listen only to the readings and be unaware of everything else, he would hard pressed to discern a transition from one year to the next. This is an important feature to keep in mind as we commence a new liturgical cycle, the sameness yet difference between the two spans of time. The sameness precludes perceiving liturgical time as a never-ending repetition of cycles...rather, time advances not so much in linear fashion but spirals upward toward a divine goal. Also it suggests Jesus' words about the kingdom of heaven coming without visible signs, different from the dramatic cosmic description we have today.

As for the signs (*semeion*) in the sun, moon and stars, nothing is said about them, except that people will be terrified at them. In addition to this, disturbances in the oceans will induce perplexity or *aporia*. This term fundamentally means difficulty in passage, of being cramped in a tight space with barely enough wriggle room to get through. While in that confined space the sea's roaring (vs. 25) will be all the more terrifying. Note that such unspecified signs pertain to the world (*oikoumene*) or inhabited...“housed”...places on the earth compared with the physical dimension of the planet as a whole.

In addition to the signs in the heavenly bodies the “powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Here is a partial quote from the prophet Haggai which reads in full: “and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land” (2:6). Verse seven continues with the same shaking applied to “all nations.” This latter shaking is to obtain “the treasures of all nations” which continues (and concludes) with one purpose: “I will fill this house with splendor.” Here “house” is reminiscent of the *oikoumene* noted above and for Haggai, represents the temple in Jerusalem. As for the divine splendor, the Hebrew word is *kavod* which alternately means glory. Thus the entire universe is shaken, not just the earth, in order that the Lord may lavish his benefits upon this temple. While these events are taken generally as pertaining to the end of times, the last judgment and so forth, in a few days something similar occurs at the death of Jesus: “and there was darkness over the whole land...the sun's light failed.” (23:44-5). Here the temple's curtain was torn in two which allowed for a manifestation of divine *kavod*, different from that of the temple and proper to Jesus himself.

Immediately after the powers of heaven had been shaken Jesus says that people “will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” That is to say, he will focus his presence similar to what the Lord had done in Haggai, his *kavod* filling the Jerusalem temple. Now redemption is nigh, *apolutrosis* being the Greek term, or the payment of a ransom.

Today's Gospel skips the parable of a fig tree (vss. 29-33) and continues with Jesus encouraging his listeners not to be weighed down by life's cares, *bareo* being the verb which stands in contrast with his earlier words to “raise your heads.” Even though Jesus cautions about this relative to persons who are intoxicated, etc., nevertheless “that day” will come as a snare “upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth.” These words differ from the sense of *oikoumene*, the “housed” part of the earth and are broader. Certainly not all persons will be pre-occupied with drunkenness nor with life's concerns, yet all will be subject to becoming ensnared. The way to escape such ensnarement is to “watch at all times,” *agrupneo*, a verb which can apply to the experience of a sleepless night. *Kairos* is the term for “time,” the well-known biblical word for a special occasion compared with *chronos* or conventional time. Thus to remain watchful...sleepless...seems to apply not during regular time but to special occasions, and the Gospel warning about the Son of man's coming is one such occasion. The admonition to watch at all times...at all *kairoi*...is meant for his listeners to “escape all these things that will take place.” Escape suggests moving from one place to another yet here it means standing before the Son of man, standing before him “coming in a cloud with power and great glory” as noted earlier in vs. 26.

6 December, Second Sunday of Advent

Today's Gospel (Lk 3.1-6) doesn't begin with the birth of Christ nor with the preparation of his baptism while John the Baptist is in the desert, all vital material for the narrative's beginning. Instead, we have a precise time with respect to John's preaching: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar..." John (as well as Jesus) are fully grown men, not infants, here at the beginning of a new liturgical year. The former is attaining the end of his ministry and the latter is about to begin his. Here's an example of how the Church freely moves in an order of time different from the secular one. You'd think she would start with the birth of Jesus, but no. The Church sets that aside for Christmas proper and focuses upon what temporally speaking is closer to the end of Jesus' life or his three year period of ministry. Such a focus serves to make the transition of the previous liturgical year to the new one. That transition, as had been noted, saw that the end of one year was barely distinguishable from the beginning of another.

"The word of God came to John in the wilderness." We could take this as John already in the wilderness to whom the word...*logos*...came. No information is provided as to what had brought John there in the first place. One gets the impression that he entered the desert almost as soon as he came from the womb of his mother, Elisabeth. Nothing is said of John from his birth until the unspecified time of his withdrawal nor how he was motivated to do this. Compare John with Jesus after his baptism who was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit as opposed to the *logos* as in Lk 4.1-13. As soon as the *logos* came to John he left the desert and "went into all the region about the Jordan" (vs.3). This divine *logos* bade John to preach a baptism of repentance, of *metanoia*, for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke portrays the Baptist in terms of a voice, not a person, crying in the wilderness as taken from Is 40.3-5. Actually, these verses comprise the essence of today's Gospel. The passage in Hebrew differs in some degree from the Greek and sums up the Gospel's message: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Luke's version runs as "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." As for the Hebrew, two roads are mentioned instead of one. From Luke we get the impression that there is one "way" from which a number of "paths" derive. Also the Hebrew text gives us two different types of waste places, *midbar* and *haravah*. As for the former, it derives from the common verbal root *davar*, "to speak." This is consistent with John being in a deserted place and to whom the *logos* had come, in the place-of-speaking. It connotes the traditional place of withdrawal both for temptation and preparation to fulfill promises made by God. Within this *midbar* a "highway" or *derek* is to be constructed, the most common word for such a passage. As for the latter or *haravah*, it suggests a sterile place, not so much the divine environment associated with *midbar*. Within this *haravah* is to be made straight a "highway" or *meslah*, implying a passageway raised up or on an embankment. So if we follow the verse of Isaiah, we have two types of passage in two types of desolate places, a double track, if you will.

The remaining verses from Isaiah describe valleys and hills being filled and raised, in other words, making the way through which both *derek* and *meslah* are to run. The purpose of both is summed up by revelation of the "glory (*kavod*) of the Lord." Once the *midbar* and *haravah* have their roads laid out on a flat surface, only then can this divine *kavod* make itself be known. One can assume that John, having been in the wilderness before he heard the divine *logos*, lived there among an environment of valley and hills, not this flat plain. It was this *logos* that effected the transformation of both *midbar* and *haravah* into a place suitable...flat enough...for God's *kavod* to become manifest.

8 December, Immaculate Conception

Earlier notations on today's Gospel (Lk 1.26-38) relative to this feast have applied to various aspects of the Virgin Mary's response to the angel Gabriel. Because the Gospel for today always remains the same, the reflections here will examine the the person of Daniel. Only two previous references to him are in the Bible, Dan 8.16 & 9.21, where he is not identified specifically as an angel:

"Gabriel, make this man (Daniel) understand the vision." The person who so commands Gabriel is not clearly

specified but takes place in a vision as “one having the appearance of a man.” Next Daniel hears a man's voice, equally unspecified as to his identity, on the banks of a river commanding Gabriel to understand the vision. The vision at hand was one that had just been revealed (vss. 9-14), namely, a little horn which became greater. It is one of several in the Book of Daniel associated with rather difficult, if not bizarre, imagery and as pertaining to a vision “for the time of the end (*qets*.)” This Hebrew word can apply to a prophetic end as well as destruction, usually the two being associated. Next Daniel falls into a “deep sleep” (*radam*), a verb which connotes snoring heavily. In other words Gabriel's act of speaking causes Daniel to fall into this state, an image with some humorous overtones. This is the same verb used to describe the sleep God brings upon Adam in order to create Eve: “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man” (Gen 2.21). As for Daniel, as soon as he experiences this *radam* Gabriel awakens him to know “what shall be at the latter end of the indignation.” The indignation is God's response to the little horn which had exalted itself and overthrew the sanctuary for the burnt offering.

The second reference to Gabriel in the Book of Daniel runs as follows: “While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.” As with the first verse, the one at hand refers not so much as to a vision but to Israel not having kept the divine ordinances. Here Gabriel comes to Daniel “while he (that is, I) was speaking in prayer,” namely, confessing his sins and those of Israel (cf. vs. 20). Gabriel reassures Daniel that he is “greatly beloved,” *chamad* being the verbal root which implies desire and covetousness.

Such is the Gabriel of the Book of Daniel who in Luke assumes the role of an angel, *aggelos*, or messenger, not unlike his earlier role with respect to the prophet. Note that Gabriel does not reveal his name to Mary, just the message he brought from God. However, chances are that Mary, a devote Israelite, was familiar with the Book of Daniel and the person of Gabriel relative to the visions described there. No small wonder that “she was greatly troubled” (vs. 29) when this angelic being addressed her. The Greek verb *diatarasso* means being thrown into confusion or perplexity...not unlike the prophet Daniel and his confrontation with Gabriel. This verb has the preposition *dia* (through) prefaced to *tarasso*, “to stir up trouble.” That is to say *dia* serves to intensify its meaning and thoroughness of action as in the case of Mary. Furthermore, Mary “considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.” Would it be like Gabriel's to Daniel causing him to fall into a deep sleep (*radam*) with the possibility of not waking up? And if she awoke, to what would she awake to? As for Mary, her considering...as the verb *dialogizomai* intimates...is a desire to balance all that was said and to come up with a resolution. Note again the preposition *dia* prefaced to *logizomai* (to count, reckon), an intensification of what was going on in her mind. Gabriel foresaw this which was why he said “Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.” Similar words were said by Gabriel to Daniel as noted above, that is, “for you are greatly beloved.” He continues immediately with, “consider the word and understand the vision,” words equally applicable to Mary.

13 December, Third Sunday of Advent

Today's Gospel (Lk 3.10-18) continues with the response from those persons listening to the proclamation of John the Baptist which we heard last week. Keep in mind that we have John and Jesus (the latter who has not made an appearance yet is close at hand) as fully grown men, the former at the end of his career and the latter at the beginning of his, however brief, temporally speaking. Such is a fundamental theme of Advent, the weeks prior to Christmas, when Jesus is born. The Church has no problem at all switching from one temporal event to another or going from one end of the scale to the other. Liturgical or sacred time works freely from and within chronological time.

“What then shall we do?” The whole-hearted response of the multitudes to John's preaching of repentance. During last year's liturgical cycle Ordinary Time centered in large part around Mark's Gospel. There we encountered the term *ocholos* for multitudes which acted as a kind of Greek chorus highlighting the action and works of the principal characters. In the case at hand, John's response to those who approached him for baptism was nothing special, really, just basic common sense principles of right human behavior.

While people were approaching John they were all “in expectation” or *prosdoxao*. The preposition *pros* (in the

direction towards which) highlights the tension on the banks of the Jordan River. Nothing is stated clearly about the people discussing their *prosdokao* among each other. Instead, Luke says that “all men questioned in their hearts,” that is, privately and not openly. The verb here is *dialogizomai*, literally to reckon through (*dia*). It's yet another example of how a small preposition (*dia*: through) changes the meaning of a word and gives it something extra critical for a deeper appreciation of the context lying beyond translation. The sense we get is that the people were weighing thoroughly what John meant to them, more specifically, whether he was the Christ. They had a notion of the Christ from their tradition. John doesn't come out clearly and deny he is the Christ. Instead, he emphasizes his role of baptizer compared with “he who is mightier than I.” This mightier person John doesn't say is the Christ, but he will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” It isn't clear whether the people, devout Jews as they might be, had any clear notion about the Holy Spirit let along the Christ. John adds that this mightier person will baptize not just with the Spirit but with fire. There is no record of Jesus doing thus though John could be intimating the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost several years later. In other words, John could have in mind the end of Jesus' ministry and its significance here before Jesus even comes on the scene. If so, we have yet another example of Scripture's freedom from chronological time which is neither an abuse nor disdain of it but a sign of freedom from its circular, compulsive nature of wanting to returning back on itself.

20 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent

This year we're fortunate in that we have almost one full week of this last Sunday of Advent. Today's Gospel (Lk 1.39-45) presents us with Mary's visit to her cousin, Elisabeth, who is also pregnant, that is, with John the Baptist. Upon reaching the house, the babe in Elisabeth's womb “leaped for joy,” *skirtao* being the Greek verb. The classical usage of *skirtao* refers to gusts of wind as well as the bounding of lambs as found in several biblical references, once of which is Ps 114.14 (Septuagint): “The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.” There is a parallel image to that John's *skirtao* but with quite a differ sense as found in Gen 25.22: “The children struggled (*skirtao*) together within her.” This refers to the two yet unborn Isaac and Esau within Rebekah's womb, a struggle destined to continue throughout their lives. The relationship between John and Jesus, however, was the exact opposite.

The unborn infants in the persons of their mothers prefigures their meeting much later in their lives on the banks of the Jordan River when Jesus came to be baptized by John. Chronologically, this meeting occurs three years before Jesus' death and even a much shorter time before John's beheading. From the womb John recognized Jesus, an awareness that breached the two intervening walls or the two wombs of the respective mothers. When he matured, one can only speculate what Elisabeth may have taught John in his youth about his cousin. The same may be applied to Mary talking about John with Jesus, not to mention future visits when the two youths may have met. Though the Gospels are silent on this, the probability of such meetings must be high. Also the discussions among Mary and Elizabeth as to their respective sons must have been quite interesting. To complicate the matter, we could bring in their husbands as well, Joseph and Zechariah. One can only imagine what they must have talked about. Yet again, there's the real possibility that Mary may not have visited her cousin and the youth John. That would mean taking Jesus along with here and having the two, Jesus and John, meet well before their destined encounter. But any visit among them was well within possibility as far as distance goes; the two cousins were relatively close, as intimated by Mary when she undertook the journey during her pregnancy, not a wise thing to do.

Although John and Jesus must have known about their respective homes, it seems they had a tacit agreement apart from that of their mothers...one born in the wombs of their mothers...that they would not meet in them until towards what turned out to be late in the lives of both. This physical proximity to Jesus without meeting him could have been too much for John to bear. Thus it may have had a role of driving him into the wilderness, to put a necessary distance between both which enabled John to recognized Jesus among the many who approached him for baptism. As for John's departure for the desert, no specific time is given for it, presumably early in his life. Surely his mother Elisabeth and his father Zechariah would have encouraged him. After all, Zechariah was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (vs. 67) and prophesied about Jesus in vss. 68-70 in what has become known as the Benedictus. These words of blessing, uttered at John's birth, must have had just an important impact upon him as during that *skirtao* when he was unborn.

25 December, Christmas

There are three Gospel readings for today: Midnight Mass, Dawn Mass and Mass during the day. The entry here will concern the Mass for Midnight (Lk 2.1-14), just about the only time a feast day is celebrated with the exception of Easter where according to ancient tradition, Mass ends at dawn.

The familiarity of the Christmas scene can make it more difficult to retain freshness. One way of overcoming this obstacle is by attentiveness to the Gospel's opening words, "In those days." Quite a few significant documents in human history begin in such a manner, by locating the event about to be recounted within a specific time, one quite different from the present one. "In those days" is an ideal way for opening a classical text especially when the Gospel is being read aloud in public. These words grab your attention at the get-go, get you out of the present, and throw back to another era. It expands upon this by speaking about the milieu in which the action is to take place, namely, under the reign of Caesar Augustus. Thus we have the first Roman emperor at one end of the Mediterranean and the birth of an obscure baby at the other end in Israel. Between these two geographical points much was to happen that would transform the world.

The census decreed by August was for "all the world" or *oikoumene*, more specifically, the inhabited world as opposed to the physical planet itself. *Oikoumene* furthermore denotes the Roman Empire; surely there was knowledge of people living beyond its borders, but those areas weren't considered civilized or up to the standards of Rome. And so when it came time for registering for this census...of putting one's name down as belonging to a particular place within this *oikoumene*...we have Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. It was an awkward time, for Mary gave birth to Jesus there. This intimates that she had to come to register despite her advanced pregnancy. Because a census is to determine the number of inhabitants within a given area, the newly born Jesus would have been numbered as well. However, nothing is said of this. In other words, Jesus may or may not have been registered in the Roman census.

At the birth of Jesus we see shepherds out in the field watching over their flocks. Although they too presumably had to register for the census, perhaps their more mobile, vagrant way of living enabled them to escape detection. If authorities moved into their area, easily they could have slipped away, even outside the borders of the empire itself. In a way, such shepherds are outside the bounds of *oikoumene*, hovering around its edges, moving in and out according to their own needs and those of their flocks. It was to such semi-migratory people the "angel of the Lord" first appeared, not those within the *oikoumene* proper. As noted above, we haven't information whether Jesus was born in time for being registered. If not, he would have an ambiguous part within this political entity called *oikoumene*. His being born in a manger, not in an inn, made him even more susceptible of not being registered. Thus there is a real chance Jesus was equivalent to a slave or worse, with no legality in the eyes of the current government. However, in the end this worked to Jesus' advantage. No small wonder that much later when dragged before Pilate Jesus could say that "my kingdom is not of this world," that it does not belong to this *oikoumene* which clearly is of this world. It should be noted that Jesus uses the word *kosmos* for world. Although *kosmos* has a more appealing connotation (it can refer to a decoration, good behavior and decency), it can apply to government, that agency which presides over *oikoumene*.

27 December, The Holy Family

Today is the last Sunday of the regular calendar year, an incidental fact when it comes to liturgical time which operates on a wholly different perception of reality. As for time, today's Gospel (Lk 2.41-52) jumps ahead some twelve years from Jesus' birth almost in a matter-of-fact way; the previous event (circumcision) seems to have happened just yesterday and John's preaching which follows next in chapter three similarly seems to take place the next day. Such is the flexibility and freedom from chronological, linear time that the Church presents to us. This sense of time mingled with eternity isn't explained (in fact, it could never be explained adequately) but given in an indirect fashion which enables us to acquire it after a number of passes through several liturgical years. If we happen to miss something in one go-around, another comes along to help us.

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover." Such are the opening words of the Gospel. Their ascent to Jerusalem means that this is the twelfth time Joseph and Mary had made the trip since Jesus was born, so Jesus, despite being so young, had some familiarity with the yearly pilgrimage. During this trip, the family, along with many others going to celebrate Passover, sang the Songs of Ascent or Psalms 120-134. For example, Ps 122 opens with, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" All are sung some distance from the destination, Jerusalem, to which the pilgrims "lifted up their eyes to the hills" (Ps 121.1). The city may or may not have been within their sight, but the pilgrims knew they were headed in the right direction by their continuous ascent.

This yearly custom was inculcated into Jesus for those ascents recorded during his ministry. Though other ascents are not recorded, namely, between him being twelve years old and prior to being baptized by John, without a doubt they had a formative influence upon him. During subsequent "ascents," it is certain that Jesus recalled his earlier experience of teaching in the temple. So if Jesus had taught once in the temple while he was twelve years old, why couldn't he have continued teaching during subsequent visits, all the way up to the time he began his formal ministry? You can't help but wonder what Jesus had been teaching at this age and if he continued it for some years to come, what did it consist of? This period of time would cover the years from thirteen to approximately thirty when Jesus was baptized by John. There is no question that over those years some notoriety about his erudition must have sprung up among the Jewish elders. Also word travels quickly, and chances are that John the Baptist heard about this unusual young man's reputation even in the desert. Since it had grown for a number of years, Jesus' repute must have enabled John to recognize him more easily among the crowd at the Jordan River. The Gospel's closing words, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man," can apply to the ongoing, accumulative teaching year by year in the Jerusalem temple.

1 January, Solemnity of the Mother of God

Although today's feast is quite new and is a fine one to begin the calendar year, nevertheless the Church's focus always has been and always will be upon another mode of time often noted in this document. For the Church, the new year begins around the end of November and is not commemorated by the succession of numbers such as today, the first day of the year 2010. When you compare the calendar one with the beginning of liturgical year you get not so much a sense of time's passage but the deepening of a mystery, that of Christ within the world and realm of human activity. Thus one could with some justification call a given liturgical year a Book of Revelation, that is, a Book of *Apokalupsis* or a living book of uncovering, the uncovering of all the mysteries of Jesus Christ. If you don't get everything you want from a given feast day or Sunday, it comes round next year, often with a deeper understanding.

Today's Gospel (Lk 2.16-21) is within the general Christmas context of Jesus' birth, the discovery of the baby by the shepherds. As noted under the entry for Christmas day, these folks lived on the margins of society, a fact which may have enabled them to escape being registered for the census which was taking place at that time. The same might apply to Jesus himself; he may or may not have been registered making him pretty much an outcast and devoid of legitimacy as far as Rome is concerned. The shepherds went immediately to Bethlehem at the angel's behest. It turned out that these semi-migratory people were the first ones to make Jesus' birth public.

"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened," *rhema* being the Greek noun for "thing." *Rhema* is akin to word being the subject of speech or that which was communicated to them by the angels. Thus they saw that which was heard (*rhema*), and that turned out to be the incarnate *Logos*. This *rhema* is that "which the Lord has made known to us" or made known to them by the angels. Having seen Jesus lying in the manger, the "made known the saying (*rhema* again) which had been told them concerning the child." That is to say, the shepherds, the semi-migratory people known for living among their sheep day and night, transmitted the *rhema* they first heard to others. The response? "All who heard it (the *rhema*) wondered at what the shepherds had told them."

Right after this excited announcement by the shepherds we have Mary expressing wonder in a two-fold

manner: "(she) kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." That is to say, she protected (*suntereo: sun* or with & *tereo*, to guard or guarded-with) all the things or *rhema* which not only the shepherds announced but what had been announced to them by the angel, the first *rhema*. Secondly, Mary was "pondering" the *rhema* in her heart, *sumballo* being the verb which means literally a casting-together. *Sumballo* is quite vivid and reveals considerable mental activity as to the *rhema* of the shepherds. Once things had quieted down, the shepherds returned...no specific place is given but presumably their earlier positions before having come to Bethlehem. Here their glorifying and praising God is recounted as taking place among themselves, not other persons. One wonders what these shepherds did later on. Did they continue with their semi-migratory life in the fields? Did they visit the holy family at a late time to see how they were doing? Did they keep track of Jesus as he grew older? Any account as to this is not given but left to the imagination. However, surely their lives had been changed permanently.

3 January, Epiphany

Like most "fixed" feast days, this one has the same Gospel occurring each year (Mt 2.1-12) which deals with the visit of the wise men or Magi. The word "behold" (*idou*) in the first verse is intended to grab attention of the listeners more so than as with readers of the Gospel. It sets the stage for introducing the Magi who came from the East, the direction to-which *idou* summons our attention. Then as now that direction signifies a world (most likely Persia) completely outside the *oikoumene* or inhabited world mentioned in the entry for Christmas day. That *oikoumene* looked westward or to Rome and Greece, the two chief poles around which Mediterranean civilization revolved from which our Western heritage had emerged. That is to say, "from the east" pertains to civilizations like Persia, India and beyond well outside the *oikoumene* even though East and West were in contact to some degree. Because the East is so vast and little known, this area implies mystery, usually of a religious-mystical sort, let alone a chief threat to the Roman *oikoumene*. It is no small wonder that Herod, a puppet of Rome, "was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." The last thing he wanted was an invasion from that direction.

The Magi saw the star in the East or in their native land which remains unspecified even though the word "Magi" suggests Persia. Instead of detracting from the narrative, this unknown land lends mystery to the Gospel, for the Magi headed back home to them after having brought gifts to the Christ child. A star is visible at night which means that the Magi traveled by night, a dangerous time to be out and about compared with the day. Their journey is reminiscent of Ex 13.21: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud...and by night in a pillar of fire...that they may travel by day and by night." With this verse in mind, perhaps the star acted as a pillar for day and night.

It is interesting to observe that while the star-as-pillar guided the Magi westward to Jerusalem, it was Herod who dispatched them to Bethlehem. His knowledge of that place, informed by a desire to kill the Christ child, nevertheless brought the three men from the capitol to the town where Jesus had been born. And so Herod falls under the star's guidance even if he were unaware of it. Herod summoned the Magi secretly because as noted in the first paragraph, he was troubled...not just Herod but all Jerusalem. This secretiveness had a political end, namely, to keep the people quiet and not attract attention to the Magi when they left for Bethlehem. If the people followed the Magi, chances are they would have followed them not just to Bethlehem but further to the East. That is perhaps why the Magi "departed to their own country by another way," to avoid being followed by the crowds from Jerusalem. Their departure (to Persia, for example) would have been a major threat not just to Herod's power but to that of Rome itself. Since their destination lay eastward, the Magi could have headed either north or south or even west, a ship on the Mediterranean, a much more circuitous route either north towards Greece or south towards Egypt. As for the "other way," no star is guiding the Magi...they were too occupied rejoicing with their discovery of the Christ child...nor do we hear from them again.

10 January, Baptism of the Lord

Last Sunday was Epiphany when the Magi came to the baby Jesus. Today or one week later we take a quantum leap forward in time to the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he was approximately thirty years old.

And so, Epiphany represents the end of the Christmas season which comprises the overwhelming bulk of Jesus' life. Actually, the Christmas season goes into a lower gear, more so than that of Easter, because as the liturgy proclaims on the feast of the Presentation (2 February), it is fulfilled. This ability to jump forward (and sometimes backward) in time is noted in other entries. To the modern reader it can be disconcerting yet instructive in that the Church is not so much concerned with the chronological succession of events but with the significance of Jesus, his words and deeds as they apply across the restrictions of space and time. This point is brought home further by keeping in mind the constricting locale of Israel under Rome, that so much kairos-related events occurred in such a small territory.

Today's Gospel (Lk 3.15-6 & 21-22) brings us to the banks of the Jordan River with John the Baptist awaiting the arrival of Jesus Christ. In many ways Jesus' appearance begins the liturgical year or better, those deeds, words and events which the Church incorporates into Ordinary Time, the bulk of her liturgical year. Parts of this Gospel were used in the Third Sunday of Advent, so keep that in mind while reading this entry. Thus the opening words "the people were filled with expectation" can apply now and throughout the rest of this liturgical duration. *Prosdokao* is the verb expressing this expectation, the preposition *pros* (direction towards-which) emphasizing what the people wished for. However, this expectation isn't spelled out; it is to be understood in light of John's earlier preaching (Lk 3.3-14) where he presented himself as a voice crying in the wilderness. The *prosdokao* of the people is taken in the same breathe, as it were, as their questioning, *dialogizomai* (to reckon through, *dia-*).

The object of *prosdokao* and *dialogizomai* is whether or not John the Baptism was the Christ. That means the people had some notion of the Christ, the anointed one. Luke's Gospel first mentions the Christ in 2.11: "for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." This was communicated by the angels to the shepherds who, in turn, passed on the message...the *rhema* (as noted in the 13 December entry)...to other people. Thus Christ was revealed by angels to shepherds, more or less outcasts of society. That the people around John the Baptist knew about the Christ testifies to the staying power of the shepherds' *rhema* from the angels some thirty years after the event. Since John recognized Jesus while both in the womb, chances are there must have a convergence of sorts between the people having received the angelic/shepherd *rhema* and John's recollection of the prenatal event.

Luke's account has no dramatic arrival of Jesus to be baptized by John. The context reads as follows: "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized." One gets the impression that Jesus was there among the people, almost unrecognizable, while the same people were wondering whether John was the Christ or not. Jesus never says anything in this regard but goes ahead with his own baptism. Even John's earlier words ("He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire") aren't manifest at this event. That will wait until later on in Jesus' ministry. And so when Jesus came from the Jordan he departed with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to which no response is recorded by the people present.

17 January, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today we are back in Ordinary Time or more precisely, the last time being before two weeks before the First Sunday of Advent. Depending upon when Ash Wednesday falls (this year it's 17 February), the beginning of Ordinary Time is relatively brief before we enter the prolonged span of Lent-Easter-Pentecost. Here in 2010 this comprises the time from 17 February through 12 June, Immaculate Heart of Mary being the very tail end. Elsewhere I have noted this large segment of time reaches its full completion on the Immaculate Heart of Mary which was added to the calendar much later. Because this period lies at the heart of the liturgical cycle and comprises a considerable bulk of the calendar year, the few Sundays we have before Ash Wednesday appear a bit awkward in that we're conscious of Ash Wednesday looming up ahead. Furthermore, they are experienced in the shadow of the Christmas season which almost overlaps into Ash Wednesday in mid February. Actually, the feast of the Presentation on 2 February is when Christmas comes to an official close. Thus the beginning of Ordinary Time which extends to the Presentation is unlike that Ordinary Time which follows the Lent-Easter-Pentecost cycle which seems to have a life of its own.

Today's Gospel deals with the miracle of Cana (Jn 2.1-11) which traditionally the Church has seen as part and

parcel of the Christmas season. And so this season, usually associated with the birth of Jesus, comprises a much larger dimension of time than that event. It is noted often in this document that the Church works on another level than the temporal one, moving from the birth of Jesus to the beginning of his ministry, all this within a few weeks. She skips the temporal part of Jesus' life which consists of some thirty years, the bulk of his life. A sharp reminder of this is the feast of St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents occurring right after Christmas. This reminds us that the Church's focus is upon the few short weeks of the birth of Jesus and his three years ministry...all quite limited when you come down to it, temporally speaking. Even though this three year period is familiar to us as documented by a given liturgical cycle, it is set against the background of Jesus' life of which nothing is recorded.

The opening verse of the Gospel intimates its theme: "the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage." In other words, Mary seemed to have priority as far as her invitation whereas Jesus, similarly invited, is mentioned pretty much as anyone else on the guest list. Later when the wine ran out, Jesus says to Mary that his hour has not yet come. This hour or *hora* is well known among readers of John's Gospel as being a *kairos* or special event. It seems that *hora* differs from *kairos* as being more specific to Jesus and his mission whereas *kairos* is applicable to special times in the lives of people. Insertion of *hora* this early in the story shows that from here onwards everything will be dominated by it, and that *hora* is Christ's death. "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son" (Jn 17.1). Mary's response to her son's statement, seemingly out of place during a wedding celebration, may be taken as both acknowledgment of this *hora* or a polite way of complying to her son as well as the guests...in other words, it can be a way of changing the subject from an embarrassing situation to a matter requiring immediate attention.

As for the wine Jesus had changed from water, it was contained in stone jars "for the Jewish rites of purification." Thus the wine served at the wedding...and such wine was introduced not at the celebration's beginning but somewhere well after that...was taken from these jars. Unknown to the guests, the wine from containers regarding purification could be taken as a way Jesus wished all the wedding participants to become clean. John notes that Jesus' disciples were also invited to the wedding, so these newly appointed apostles must have had some connection with the wedding party. This is not surprising, given the tight-knit nature of society in those days. Note that the water had been changed into wine and served from the jars of purification, the disciples believed in him. In other words, they saw the implication not only of water changed into wine but were aware that the wedding participants had been purified albeit unknowingly. This would, of course, include the unmentioned bride and bridegroom. Perhaps over time this purification may have had a positive effect on all the people, and some of them may have joined Jesus' disciples or were more keenly aware of his later words and deeds right up to his crucifixion and resurrection.

24 January, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

It should be noted that we have just three more Sundays in Ordinary Time before Ash Wednesday before it resumes on 13 June. Therefore the time between now and Ash Wednesday is starting to loom more largely in our minds.

The first four verses of today's Gospel (Lk 1.1-4; 4.14-21) are taken from its beginning, whereas the rest jumps ahead to chapter four when Jesus commenced his public ministry. Luke is careful to say that his intent is two-fold: 1) to compile or set in order (*anataxso*) a narrative or *diegesis* of "what had been accomplished among us" or more accurately, what had been fulfilled (*plerophoreo*). Note too the preposition *en* for "among," "in us," most likely the seminal Christian community. 2) to write an orderly account or a *kathexis* which is *akribos*, accurate (vs. 3). And so Luke takes pains to combine elements he had heard from eyewitness and ministers of the word before setting them down in ink. The Greek for minister is *huperetes*, literally an under-rower or an under-seaman. We find this term again as the synagogue attendant in 4.20. Both the narrative and account are written in order to supplement or fulfill "the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." Such information was received orally, *katecheo* literally meaning to sound something into one's ears, in order to make it register in one's mind. And so Luke combines the very best of oral tradition with his sophisticated Greek style.

Jumping ahead to chapter four, we have Jesus who “returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.” When this occurred, a report or *pheme* went out; no indication is given as to who started it, just that it spread. *Pheme* means a voice from heaven in the sense of an oracle or divinization, so word about Jesus spread with rapidity and fervor about someone possessed by a god. If such was the case, the only natural human response was glory and adoration: “being glorified by all.” Compare this with the shepherds of 2.17: “and when they saw it, they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child.” As noted above, *rhema* translates as “saying.” By comparison, *pheme* derives from the verb *phemi*, to declare or make known. Thus *pheme*, with its connotations of being an oracle from heaven, may be taken as a fuller proclamation or fleshing out of the shepherds’ *rhema*. Both *rhema* and *pheme* relate to the spoken word.

Next, Jesus comes to Nazareth where he had been raised and went to the local synagogue “as his custom was.” Even at this early stage of Jesus’ ministry he had established a Sabbath day custom by which he was recognized. Still, it doesn’t seem out of the ordinary for a Jew to attend synagogue on the Sabbath; perhaps there was something different about the way Jesus did this, an unrecorded fact. On the occasion when Jesus came into the synagogue, he was given the prophet Isaiah to read. He did not choose it on his own but was handed it; the identity of the person who gave the scroll isn’t given, most likely the attendant or *huperetes* mentioned in vs. 20 after Jesus finished. Since Isaiah was handed to him, the Gospel implies that automatically he went for those words foreshadowing his ministry, Is 61.1 & 2; 58.6. This is a fairly restricted portion of a book containing sixty-six chapters and therefore could have comprised several scrolls. After having read these verses, he closed the book (actually a scroll), returned it to the attendant and sat down. Each gesture in and by itself is highly dramatic, and taken together produce a riveting scene. No small wonder that the people’s response was to fix their eyes upon him. The Greek verb here is revealing of this three fold gesture: *atenizo* or literally to look without blinking one’s eyes or to stare. It is the same verb used in reference to Stephen while he was being stoned: “(Stephen) gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God” (Acts 7.55).

At first those in attendance were favorable to Jesus (“and all spoke well of him”), not unlike vs. 15 earlier when people had glorified him. It was only later...not recounted in this Sunday’s Gospel...that people rose up against Jesus when he expounded upon his ministry. There Jesus does not quote nor allude to the prophet Isaiah which appeared to have gone over favorably. The references that got him into disrepute came from Second Book of Kings. Perhaps if Jesus had expounded more upon the Isaiah verses his message would have been more palatable for the audience. Nevertheless, by shifting to the prophet Elijah in an attempt to say that his message was intended not just for Jews but for Gentiles, did the hostility emerge. As for the attendant who originally handed Jesus the scroll and who presumably had greater knowledge of the scriptures, one can only imagine what went through his mind. Did he, like the shepherds above, take Jesus’ quotations from Isaiah as a *rhema* and later proclaim it? Or did he amplify it into a *pheme*...an oracle...when Jesus first made his presence known in Galilee? Then again, did he join the crowd in attempting to cast Jesus off the brow of the hill (4.29)?

31 January, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today’s Gospel (Lk 4.21-30) continues from last Sunday and still may be considered as at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. In this passage again we find Jesus in his home synagogue after having expounded upon the prophet Isaiah relative to his mission. Note the three-fold enthusiastic response of the audience: 1) spoke well or *martureo*, to give witness 2) wondered or *thaumazo* (it can also express admiration), the object being Jesus’ words. The intensity of wonder/admiration is brought out by the preposition *epe*, which reads literally as “wondered upon the graciousness of his words.” 3) The eyes of those in the synagogue were fixed upon Jesus, *atenizo*, as noted regarding last Sunday’s Gospel, or with the intensity of unblinking, staring eyes.

Up to this point Jesus has had a favorable response from members of his hometown synagogue with respect to his use of the prophet Isaiah even if they knew him to be Joseph’s son. Acknowledgment of one’s lineage is quite common in ancient societies and important for self-identity, so its mention here isn’t necessarily pejorative. Jesus himself doesn’t attribute being Joseph’s son but does not object when it come from others. This designation gave Jesus an opportunity to bring up his earlier healings in Capernaum, namely, that the same should be expected at home. Note that Jesus initiated this, not the Jews. However, the shift from Jesus’ mission vis-a-vis Isaiah, favorably received, to “the days of Elijah” suddenly provoke the audience to hostility. In

fact, this hostility may have been latent all along, just waiting for the slightest remark to bring it into the open. The reason was a sore point among the Jews: Elijah ministered to a non-Israelite and even restored her son from death. Another remark by Jesus angered the crowd, the cure of the leper Naaman (cf. 2Kg 5.1-19). This second case is even worse, Naaman being commander of the Syrian army and therefore openly hostile to Israel.

Compare the three-fold favorable response noted in the first paragraph with the one after Jesus spoke well about these two non-Israelites, "all in the synagogue were filled with wrath," *thumos* being the noun which refers to the heart being the seat of anger as well as desire. Somehow one gets the impression that the synagogue attendant or *huperetes* noted last week, the one to whom Jesus handed the scroll, did not join the frenzied crowd but remained in the synagogue much like Mary pondering the words of Jesus relative not only to Isaiah but to the widow and Naaman. The *huperetes* or under-rower even may have assisted Jesus' escape from the brow of the hill mentioned in the next paragraph.

This *thumos* reached a boiling point when the people led Jesus to the brow of a hill in an attempt to throw him off. However, Jesus manages to escape: "but passing through (*dierchomai*) the midst (*dia mesou*) of them he went away." The details of this escape aren't present directly yet speak much about Jesus. His was not so much an escape as an evaporation which the two prepositions *dia* indicate: as prefaced to the verb and as used with respect to *mesos*, middle. This second *dia* intimates that Jesus did not go this way or that way around his assailants. He advanced right through them to the other side or away from the cliff. This almost casual evasion from near death is carried over to the next verse, 31: "And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath." There the audience accepted Jesus favorably much as his hometown citizens. However, nothing is said of what Jesus taught in Capernaum; perhaps he may have considered his provocative words sufficient and could now move to a new stage of his ministry.

7 February, Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"While the people pressed upon him." Such are the opening words of today's Gospel (Lk 5.1-11) where Jesus has his back up against the lake of Gennesaret as well as being pressed by the crowd on the shore. One could imagine this crowd gradually pushing Jesus closer and closer to the shoreline. He could go no further unless he got into a boat which was the case. Note that the people were eager to "hear the word (*logos*) of God." Back in 4.36 we have mention of this *logos* but with respect to having cleansed a man with an unclean spirit: "What is this *logos*? With authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And so the crowd may have wanted to see more examples of this *logos* in action or with respect to healing, not so much as wanting to listen to Jesus discourse on various things, however sublime. As for the teaching, Jesus did it off shore from a boat; no details as to its contents are given. Simon was with Jesus in the boat whose job apparently was to stabilize it, keep from drifting and pointing toward the shore while Jesus taught. Again, nothing is said of Simon here except that after having finished teaching, Jesus asked him to fish in deeper waters. It would come as no surprise that the crowd did not disperse but wanted to see what happened. They were not disappointed, for certainly they could see that the men were taking in a huge catch of fish.

Once Simon, James and John had finishing bringing in the large catch of fish, Jesus said that they would be "catching men." The verb is *zograo*, literally, to take alive, which alters from hauling in fish. Here the aim is to take men alive, if you will, or better, give them life in the Holy Spirit. Just prior to having caught so many fish we saw Jesus preaching to the crowd, so the parallel between the two instances, the two instances of "taking alive," was striking. As noted in the first paragraph, Simon alone is described as being in the boat with Jesus. Most likely James and John were further out on the lake fishing, so reference to just these three men is made concerning *zograo*, taking men alive.

Upon returning to shore, Simon, James and John "left everything and followed him." Such are the concluding words of today's Gospel. Surely this "everything" they abandoned was the superabundance of fish, a significant sum of money for fishermen. Chances are they could care less about who got the catch. One can imagine easily that these men began their *zograo*...taking men alive...as soon as they reached shore. This they did first by watching Jesus cure the sick and dealing with the Pharisees (vs. 17). The vivid image of *zograo* must have heightened the attention of the three as they began no so much ministering to people (nothing if recorded yet

of that) but by simply observing Jesus interact so at a later time they could do likewise.

14 February, Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today is the last Sunday of Ordinary Time until we meet it again 115 days later on 13 June as the Eleventh Sunday. Technically speaking, only less than two weeks ago we finished the Christmas season with the Presentation on 2 February. Thus from the Presentation until the day before Ash Wednesday (Mardi Gras) or for two full weeks we have the rare opportunity of enjoying an interval, of being situated between two major liturgical seasons. Because such times are relatively uncommon, they are to be treasured in order to appreciate the difference between them. In addition, there's a sense of renewal not unlike the feeling towards the end of Ordinary Time just prior to Advent. In many ways, this sense is more mature because we've come through one major liturgical bulk of time, Advent-Christmas, so are prepared for something better.

Today's Gospel (Lk 6.17; 20-26) has four blessings given "on a level place" compared with Matthew's account on the Mount. In addition to these blessings, Jesus presents four "woes" (*ouai*) to counter them. Jesus gives both blessings and woes after having cured a number of people, and they appear directed to his disciples only. Note the words "he lifted his eyes on his disciples" before uttering the blessings. The Greek text has for "on" the preposition *eis* or "into" as though Jesus were gazing intently at the twelve. The four blessings run as follows:

- 1) Being poor is equated with possessing the kingdom of God.
- 2) Being hungry means that it will be satisfied. However, nothing is said about this hunger, whether it's for food or for spiritual blessings. The verb for "satisfied" is quite vivid, *chrotazo* or to fatten cattle as for the slaughter.
- 3) Weeping now will be transformed into laughing. The cause for laughing isn't given, but the verb *gelaio* can also mean to deride, as deriding those persons who had caused the weeping.
- 4) Blessedness is equated with being hated "because of the Son of man," this being the longest of the four blessings. In addition to rejoicing, Jesus bids his disciples to "leap for joy" or *skirtao*, similar to the gamboling of newly born lambs. *Skirtao* was noted in the entry under Fourth Sunday of Advent (above) or the leaping of John the Baptist in his mother's womb when she met Mary pregnant with Jesus. The reason for *skirtao* is not to take delight in pain received for its own sake but for standing up to the truth which has its roots in prophetic tradition. Echo of this is found in 2 Chron 36.15-16: "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but the kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy." The Hebrew for "remedy" is *marpe'* which is derived from healing. In other words, not receiving the prophets prevents the people from being healed, something that would be fulfilled with the disciples in their ministry.

The four "woes" apply to those who are rich, are now full, now laugh and when men are speaking well of you (i.e., the disciples). Jesus had experienced this positive response in the synagogue, of being spoken well of, when he expounded on Isaiah. However, the people turned against him when shortly afterwards he spoke of the widow in the days of Elijah and the healing of Naaman, head of the Syrian army. Chances are Jesus wanted to remind the disciples of this recent experience, that they would experience the same later on: "for so their fathers did to the false prophets." The example of these two non-Israelites serve as an example to the disciples when they started their ministry to the Gentiles as opposed to native Israelites. Perhaps insinuated by Jesus' experience in the synagogue is an escape from the crowds along the pattern set by Jesus: "but passing through (*dierchomai*) the midst (*dia mesou*) of them he went away." Here we have two instances of the preposition *dia* or through: one prefaced to the verb and the other in reference to "midst." Although the disciples may not follow this example literally, they will be able to effect it later with help from the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.

17 February, Ash Wednesday

As often remarked in this document (and this includes other years), today commences the most important liturgical season of the entire year. It runs to Holy Week and Easter after which it shifts gears to the time-

after-Easter or time until Pentecost. Traditionally Lent has been considered as belonging to this world and the time after Easter as belonging to the next, a theme dear to the early Church which has been modified yet retains valid today. However, in later centuries the Church had added the feasts of Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart followed the next day by the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And so from today until this last “modern” feast day on 12 June, 115 days are given that we may reflect upon the most important teachings of the Church. That’s a significant chunk of time from the conventional calendar containing 365 days.

Today’s Gospel (Mt 6.1-6; 16-18) sets the tone for Lent, that is, praying and giving alms, both effected in secret. The phrase “in secret” or *en to krupto* occurs four times, so obviously Jesus is communicating something important here. Now jump way ahead to the Gospel at the very end of our 115 day cycle, Lk 2.22-36. Even better, let’s narrow down Simeon’s words to Mary, “and a sword will pierce through your own soul that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” Let’s place this Gospel or more specifically, this particular verse, here at the beginning of our 115 day liturgical cycle. The intent isn’t to displace the Gospel proper for Ash Wednesday but to show its ultimate goal. Actually, both Gospels have to deal with the revelation of human thoughts. Therefore starting today we could keep the Gospel from Luke before our eyes throughout the coming 115 days and see where it leads, if it helps illuminate other scriptural passages as we move on to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

As the last paragraph says, the Greek phrase *en to krupto* or “in secret” occurs four times in today’s Gospel and dominates Lent as we set forth on our 115 day journey. Accompanying us, however (*en to krupto*, if it may be put that way) are Simeon’s words about a sword piercing Mary’s heart. *Rhomphaia* is neither a dagger nor a short Roman sword but a huge two-handed one, very intimidating. Just as intimidating is the sizeable soldier required to wield it. The goal isn’t to wound Mary either physically or spiritually but that “thoughts...may be revealed.” No small wonder such a potent weapon is required to crack these thoughts wide open. Thus our special liturgical time of 115 days is one of paradoxes, of alternation between “in secret” and the revealing of hearts...both done under the shadow not so much of the cross but of the two-handed *rhomphaia*.

21 February, First Sunday of Lent

In many ways Lent starts this Sunday with the Gospel recounting Jesus’ temptation (Lk 4.1-13). The four days from Ash Wednesday through Saturday serve as a kind of introduction, that is, preparing us for the season that has begun. Chapter three of Luke’s Gospel concludes with the genealogy of Jesus Christ and prior to that, his baptism. The lengthy lineage delineated between vss. 23 and 38 starts with Jesus’ immediate relations and works backwards all the way back to Adam. On the other hand, chapter four opens with “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit.” That is to say, the Holy Spirit is his heavenly counterpart to the human genealogy concluding with the first man, Adam. And so the human and divine balance each other without one dominating the other. Vs. 1 mentions the Spirit a second time: “and was led by the Spirit.” Luke says that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the same Spirit. The Greek has led in (*en*) the Spirit. Being full is one thing and being led or guided is another. The second mention of the Spirit pertains to Jesus being led into the wilderness for forty days. One gets the impression that once in the wilderness, the Spirit left him and Jesus had to find the Spirit within (“full of the Holy Spirit”).

“And the devil took him up.” No explicit mention of where this “up” might be. It could be on a mountain or up as in a vision. The second appears more plausible because the devil “showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.” The Greek noun *stigma* means a spot or the quickest perceptible moment of time, that is to say, a concentrated moment when time stands still and encompasses everything, not unlike a description of the present moment. Surely all the world’s kingdoms weren’t visible from a mountain no matter how high it was, so this *stigma* seems to be the vantage point from which Jesus could view them. Note that Jesus did not effect this *stigma* but the devil. A similar *stigma* seems to take place on the Mount of Transfiguration in next Sunday’s Gospel.

Jesus didn’t stay in the wilderness the entire forty days and nights because the devil took him to Jerusalem. Then again, this journey to Jerusalem could have occurred within that *stigma* or infinitely small yet

concentrated period of time. The ensuing dialogue with the devil also could have occurred within this *stigma*. The same applies with the devil assaulting Jesus with “every temptation.” Normally to be tempted implies a lengthy process synonymous with Jesus being in the wilderness forty days and nights. One could say almost that this span of time, often symbolic as preparation for ministry (cf. Moses on Mount Sinai, for example), was similarly a *stigma*. The *stigma* of the wilderness may also tie in with Jesus being “full of the Holy Spirit” as well. Since Lent consists of forty days, it too is a kind of *stigma*. The same may apply to any given stretch of liturgical time which as a whole functions as a *stigma* compared with the relative blandness of chronological time.

Finally, to counter this infinitely concentrated stigma we have mention of “an opportune time” or opportune *kairos* when the devil will meet Jesus again. This well-know Greek noun refers to an event, not one bound up with chronological time. While a *kairos* is under way, it may be as concentrated as a *stigma* yet differs from it by reason of having special significance, a contact between the divine and human. In the Gospel under consideration, there is no special mention of the devil coming in a *kairos* though implied is the passion and death of Jesus. Anyway, these are suspenseful words which hover in the background throughout the remaining Gospel.

28 February, Second Sunday of Lent

Traditionally, the feast of the Transfiguration (Lk 9.28-36) comes toward the beginning of Lent to serve as an encouragement for the duration of these forty days as well as to remind us of Christ’s divinity before his passion and death. This remains a valid point despite 2,000 of tradition and reflection upon the significance of Jesus Christ, his deeds and relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit. During Lent the Church rolls out her Big Guns, that is, assembles a formidable array of the best scriptural readings she has to offer. Within this short span of forty days when this array is spread out before us, the concluding words to John’s Gospel come to mind: “Were every one of them (what Jesus had done) to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” The measurement of the world is *chronos* as opposed to *kairos* which has the capacity to contain everything within a small point...that *stigma* of last Sunday’s Gospel...so John’s words hold true without exaggeration. John speaks like this, most likely having in mind the distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*, with respect to Jesus’ deeds. If he did mention his words, perhaps the universe itself would be too small to contain them, again, no exaggeration, for the universe, like the *kosmos* (that reality is contained within this word), is measured in terms of *chronos*, not *kairos*.

“And went up on the mountain to pray.” This occurs eight days after the words of vs. 27, “there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.” Some aspects of this beholding of the divine kingdom is about to occur on the mountain. By now the a practice of Jesus going apart to pray was familiar to the disciples, only this time it’s on an unspecified mountain. Peter, John and James were singled out to accompany Jesus, so chances are they didn’t think much of ascending with him. Then again, they may have had an inkling that something more was in store for them all by going up a mountain. On this occasion things turned out to be quite different, for “the appearance (*eidōs*) of his countenance was altered (*heteron*).”

Heteron is an adjective modifying *eidōs* which can also translate as form, that which is seen, a figure. It applies to Jesus’ *prosōpon* or face, not his entire body as sometimes commonly perceived. Also nothing is said about this alteration being associated with any type of brightness. Thus it is left to the reader what type of alteration this may have been, keeping in mind the relationship Moses and Elijah had with God. On the other hand, such a *heteron eidōs* was necessary to hold conversation with Moses and Elijah, two chief representatives of the Old Testament...perhaps not for Jesus but for the benefit of these two men. This may have been the first contact Moses and Elijah had with Jesus; the former was familiar with his *heteron eidōs* because after he had conversed with God, “the skin of (his) face shone” [Ex 34.35]. Even though the conversation seemed to have been brief, we can say that it occurred within a stigma, noted in last Sunday’s entry, or barely measurable point where space and time are concentrated. That means the conversation could have lasted indefinitely.

The topic of conversation within this supposed *stigma* was Jesus’ coming *exodos* or departure (Exodus), yet to be fulfilled. Note the location of the Exodus pertaining to Jesus, the one about to be fulfilled, namely Jerusalem, as opposed to Egypt. Egypt was the place from which the Israelites left under the guidance of Moses. As it turned out much later on, Jerusalem became the ultimate the goal of their Exodus or what became the capitol

of the Promised Land. Thus Jesus takes that goal and makes it a point of departure, surely a fact Moses and Elijah must have known in spirit, especially the former. As for Elijah, he was taken up into heaven on a fiery chariot whereas Moses experienced death. While this conversation was transpiring, Peter and the others “were heavy with sleep.” This can be taken as being uninterested to such a degree that they nodded off. However, it can be understood as a sleep effected by Jesus’ garment which became “dazzling white,” the verb being *exastrapto*, “to flash as with lightning.” This is a vivid, even frightening verb, so exposure to it, even within the infinitely small and concentrated point of a *stigma*, was sufficient to dull the senses and make one fall asleep. At first, one may wonder how anyone could nod off when confronted with *exastrapto*. However, the sleep of the three disciples was more of a stupor not unlike death when confronted with the revealed divinity of Jesus Christ. Note that the men awoke on their own accord, not being prodded by Jesus nor his two illustrious companions. The verse here says that they “saw his glory” (not that of Moses nor of Elijah) which was possible only after they had witnessed the alteration of Jesus’ face.

Even though the “men were parting from him,” Peter asked Jesus permission to build three booths. That is to say, he was aware fully of their departure yet wanted booths made for them. Although Peter had fallen asleep, he wanted in on the conversation Jesus had with the two men. At this point “a cloud came and overshadowed them” and despite their fear, they entered. That is to say, after exposure to the alteration of Jesus’ face, his raiment flashing like lightning and finally his glory, only within the darkness of this cloud the Father acknowledged Jesus as his son or “chosen one.” Such an image, of course, is associated with Moses who entered the cloud on top of Mt. Sinai.

7 March, Third Sunday of Lent

“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Words of Jesus from today’s Gospel (Lk 13:1-9) when asked about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. The verb here is *metanoëo* from which we get the well known term *metanoia*. Jesus proceeds to give an example, different from the one brought to him for comment or when the tower in Siloam fell and killed eighteen people. Obviously they weren’t guilty because of this calamity, yet the incident reveals an inclination to attribute any misfortune to the workings of fate and hence to the claim of determinism. Determinism isn’t wholly unattractive. In fact, it can be a convenient way to avoid responsibility, something to hide behind instead of taking responsibility. We get the latter sense from science which seems to lay out the innumerable conditions which direct every aspect of our behavior, including free will. On a deeper level determinism is satisfying to adopt because we enjoy being under the control of a force larger than ourselves, especially one that asks no questions. Usually the elements which comprise a deterministic outlook are familiar so we can submit to them readily. The only requirement...and this is much more common than believed...is complete submission. Submission to determinism is quite different from *metanoia*. Instead of the familiar elements that go into deterministic behavior, those of *metanoia* are unfamiliar and unknown to us making it in a real sense an adventurous undertaking.

The noun *metanoia* has as its base *noos* (sometimes taken as *nous*) which means mind, perception, intent. It has the preposition *meta* as a preface which means after, with. In other words, *meta* signifies something that has taken place after the action or gesture belonging to the noun (or verb) to which it is attached. Thus it indicates that action is in the past to one degree or another. Not only that, the other meaning of *meta* as with can signify that something accompanies the noun or verb’s action, that it does not act in isolation. And so to adopt *metanoia* as encouraged by Jesus is more radical than first imagined, even by the person who takes it freely. Jesus offers the gesture of *metanoia* yet doesn’t spell it out. Actually, he can’t because the outcome is unknown by the person who goes ahead and does it. In the final analysis, *metanoia* is more challenging and bold than submitting to a deterministic outlook on life.

The Gospel switches gears with a parable concerning a man who planted a fig tree. After three years without bearing fruit, the vineyard owner wishes to cut it down yet relents when the worker asks to wait apply another year’s worth of intense cultivation. Apparently the owner respected his worker’s observation because he concurred. Actually nothing is said of this immediately though it’s implied after you’ve read this short parable. The three years of unfruitfulness followed by one more year of grace or a reprieve is implied. This added time

is the last one after which the tree will be cut down, so it forms a threat of sorts. Perhaps the worker had in mind the tower of Siloam or had a relative among the eighteen killed when it fell. If the tower had one more year during which it could have been shored up, if you will, like fertilizing the fig tree, it might not have fallen and killed those people. In short, both examples offer some insight into the nature of *metanoia* even though the two parts of today's Gospel don't have a direct connection. In conclusion, the reader is to a certain degree left hanging...left in suspense...in light of the tower of Siloam and the fig tree to examine his own life and undergo *metanoia* instead of being chained to determinism.

14 March, Fourth Sunday of Lent

Today's Gospel (Lk 15:13; 11-32) is that of the prodigal son who "gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country." Given what we hear later of the father in this parable (servants, etc), the son who decided to set out came from a family that was well off. In other words, he must have taken along considerable resources not just for the journey but for settling down. No motive is given why this younger son decided to leave, not even that he was angry with his father nor jealous of his brother. Chances are it was youthful impetuosity, to be free not only from his father's authority but from that of his elder brother. He may have heard more than once in other contexts the words, "Son, you are always with me," namely, what the father says later to the elder brother. This loving statement reflects preference for the first-born son, a preference well known in ancient societies, and that may have irked the younger brother over an extended period of time. As for the two brothers, certainly an age gap exists but no indication is given as to how great this difference might be. Nothing is said of the mother either before the son leaves or when he returns.

Several elements of this parable may be paralleled with Joseph in Egypt and his relationship with his brothers who came there to reside. After all, they were desperate and sought relief from the famine, not having a clue as to Joseph being so highly placed and responsible for Egypt's survival. The points of comparison are: "a great famine in that country," the younger brother who says "I perish here with hunger" which is reminiscent of the seven lean years following the seven years of plenty (it affected Palestine just as much as Egypt) and finally, the younger brother's return to the father which is a kind of exodus from the "far country" in which he was living as a hired servant feeding the swine, again like the Israelites being enslaved to the Egyptians.

Before the younger brother returned home he rehearsed what he would say to his father: "I have sinned against heaven and before you." Even though he uttered such words in the distant land, we could say that the father heard it from a distance. This is borne out by the father who "ran and embraced him and kissed him," all this while "he was yet at a distance." The same adjective (*makros*) is used to express distance in the "far country" and "at a distance." So the father, in his exceptional ability to see, beheld his son in that "far country" to which he ran. To the elder brother this might have been an act of folly as reckless as the departure of his younger brother. That's why this parable is more about the elder brother, of how he responded with disgust at them both.

When the young brother returned from the "far country" to which he father ran, as it were, we see the elder one "in the field." That means he was nearby all the time as indicated by the words, "and drew near to the house." Chances are that while in the nearby field he heard the "music and dancing" which got his attention. Note that this brother returned home only upon hearing this; nothing is said about him being at home while his father ran "at a distance" to meet his long-lost brother. Also, the brother did not ask his father what was going on in the house; instead, he asked "one of the servants." When the father saw his elder son angry at the merry-making he "came out and entreated him." That is to say, he did not have to run far to meet him since they were in the same general area compared with the prodigal son. Another reason (though not stated explicitly) for the elder brother's anger could have been that he may have interpreted this unsettling event as something that could happen in the near future. That is to say, that the elder brother could have been thinking about the possible loss of his birth right to his long-lost brother. Here a certain parallel may be drawn with Jacob and Esau. Esau was the elder brother who sold his birth right for a bowl of soup, thereby forfeiting it to Jacob. Perhaps the elder brother may have had this story fresh in his mind, quite probable, for people at the time knew by heart stories related to their religious heritage and the force they exerted in their lives. The only difference—and this is a major one—is that the father's love for both sons was very different

from that of Isaac toward his two sons. All one has to do is compare their responses.

21 March, Fifth Sunday of Lent

Today's Gospel (Jn 8.1-11) switches from Luke to John and returns to Luke's account of the Passion next Sunday, Palm Sunday. Apparently it was omitted in many ancient manuscripts and did not belong originally to John's Gospel, hence its omission from the Greek text. The Gospel begins right after an incident when Nicodemus sticks up for Jesus before the authorities who wanted to arrest him. When Nicodemus says that the law allows an accused person a hearing, the officers responded sarcastically, "you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." That sets the stage for chapter eight when "Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." Nothing is said about what he did there though chances are it was a place for him to get away and reflect. We see Jesus return there after the Last Supper, the place of his betrayal and arrest. Then early in the morning Jesus came to the temple followed by a large crowd. Such a large group of people at this time of day is unusual, especially when it comes to teaching, so it must not have escaped the authorities' attention. The fact that so many gathered at daybreak means they rose much earlier to make their way to the temple area, that's how powerful Jesus' preaching was for them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in adultery and asked Jesus' opinion as how to handle the situation. The most striking feature of this Gospel is not what Jesus had said but his gesture of writing on the ground. What Jesus had written is not the point; it's the image of him bending down to the ground out of direct eye contact of those wanting him to concur in stoning the woman. It must have been stunning for this woman as well, a very tense moment when everyone did not know what would happen. Since there were plenty of people present who gathered to hear Jesus teach, they too must have been present, adding to the drama. As for the woman accused of adultery, her name is not given nor do we have further explicit information about her. Also it is interesting to speculate what her husband and the man with whom she had sexual relations must have thought. Perhaps they were hidden in the background somewhere watching the outcome.

After this incident, John's Gospel begins in the Greek text with Jesus saying, "I am the light of the world." Actually, vs. 12 begins with "Again Jesus spoke to them." The audience could have been those gathered early in the morning in the temple or even the dispersed scribes and Pharisees. While chances are the latter had left, a few may have lingered in the temple area to see what Jesus would do. This is borne out by the Pharisees saying to Jesus "You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true." In the ensuing exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees we can imagine the woman caught in adultery somewhere in the vicinity. After her experience of having been pardoned she must have had a unique view on what transpired there.

28 March Palm Sunday

Today begins Holy Week, the most solemn week of the Church's liturgical calendar where time literally stands still for those persons who give themselves over to participation in each of the mysteries. Upon their completion, it's like having awoken from a dream...but one which you wish would keep on going. The only difference is that to which you awake isn't reality you discover but the dream itself. The mood of the disciples depicted on the road to Emmaus on the afternoon of Easter Sunday sums it up for us. This mood is set by the disciples inviting Jesus to stay with them which he did. After the meal their eyes were opened and the hearts of the disciples were burning within them [cf. Lk 24.30-32].

As for this year's account of the Passion, we have that of Luke [22.14-23.56]. The same format below will be followed with next week's Triduum, that is to say, notations for Palm Sunday will center upon references to time or key moments on which the drama hinges. These central turning points, even though some may appear obscure, serve to slow down our sense of the passage of time which may be described as transforming the usual flow of *chronos* into that of timeless *kairos*. Such is their effect when taken as a whole. They lift us up from the ordinary flow of events much like the disciples being with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration. With this in mind, the sequence runs as follows:

-22.14. "And when the hour came, he sat at table." Although *hora* is the word for hour and has obvious chronological associations, it can be taken as a specific moment within a *kairos* or an event. Here it comes seemingly independent of what Jesus wishes, almost larger than him and those around him.

-22.18: "From now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Again, the coming of God's kingdom seems independent of Jesus, that it has a mind of its own and comes when and where it wishes, like the blowing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3.8).

-22.22: "For the Son of man goes as it has been determined." Yet another statement of an event in progress which includes Jesus yet, as it were, is larger than him. The Greek verb for "determined" is *horizo*, to mark off as a boundary.

-22.29: "And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom." The verb here is *diatithemi*, to place separately, arrange, set in order. The preposition *dia* as through suggests a thoroughness of this assigning process which took place in the relationship between Father and Son before it manifested itself among the disciples...a *kairos* event spilling over into *chronos*, temporal existence.

-22.34: "The cock will not crow this day until you three times deny that you know me." The time Jesus speaks about concerning Peter is that of pre-dawn or first crack of light. The darkness is a good atmosphere for denying Jesus compared with the full light of day. The pre-dawn time as bordering between full night and full day heightens the sense of denial.

-22.37: "This scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors;' for what is written about me has its fulfillment." The verb "fulfill" is *teleo* or to complete in the sense of bring to an end or perfection. Reference to this fulfillment is Is 53.12 which runs in full as "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." In short, an abeyance or tension existed between utterance of that verse by Isaiah and Jesus just before his Passion.

-22.45: "And when he rose from prayer." After having asked the Father to remove the cup he is about to drink yet asks that the Father's will be done, not his, Jesus finds his disciples asleep or more accurately and vividly, "sleeping for sorrow." They fell asleep "a stone's throw" away from Jesus as he had prayed.

-22.49: "When those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?'" Reference is to Jesus' disciples who could intimate his coming betrayal at the approach of the crowd.

-22.53: "But this is your hour and the power of darkness." Another reference to *hora* or "hour," the first one being in 22.14 relative to the beginning of the Last Supper. Here *hora* is closely associated with the "power (*exousia*) of darkness" or the better, the authority which darkness is about to exert. It begins its fulfillment in the next verse, "Then they seized him and led him away."

-22.60: "And immediately while he was still speaking, the cock crowed." *Parachrema* for "immediately" which suggests a being at or around (*para*) the affair at hand (*chrema*). I.e., the simultaneity of speaking with the crowing of the cock.

-22.69: "But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Though no explicit reference to the Old Testament is given by way of fulfillment, this sentence is a kind of paraphrase of Ps 110.1, "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" At this juncture we find Jesus sitting...passive to events yet not dominated by them...while he awaits the Lord to place his enemies under him.

-23.5: "He stirs up the people...from Galilee even to this place." *Hode* is an adverb for "this place" which alternately means to in this wise, thus. Therefore *hode* can have a temporal meaning as well as spacial one.

-23.12: "And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day." The occasion for this dubious friendship stemmed from the abuse Herod showed toward Jesus. Luke has no account of Pilate scourging Jesus; Herod treated him "with contempt" or *exoutheneo*, literally, thought nothing of him which necessarily doesn't imply scourging as with other Gospel accounts.

-23.30: "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us;' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" Reference is to Hos 10.8 which reads in full, "The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall grow up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and to the hills, 'Fall on us.'" This verse intimates cessation of sacrifice to the Lord upon the altars.

-23.33: "When they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him." The preposition *epi* (upon) is used for "to the place," intimating that they had to ascend it.

-23.34: "And they cast lots to divide his garments." Reference to Ps 22.18, "they divide my garments among

them, and for my raiment they cast lots.”

-23.43: “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Paradise was a Jewish word for the abode of the dead prior to resurrection.

-23.44: “And there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” I.e., this darkness was between noon and 3pm, the brightest time of the day. Compare with the plague of darkness in Egypt: the Egyptians experienced “a darkness to be felt” [Ex 10.21] while the Israelites had light. However, this time the Israelites experienced darkness at the heart of their capitol, Jerusalem.

-23.54. “It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.” I.e., the day before the Sabbath. The Greek verb for “was beginning” is *epiphosko*, literally meaning to draw toward the dawn. This movement toward daylight beginnings at the previous day’s sunset and moves throughout the ensuing night.

-23.56. “On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.” Reference is to Ex 20.10, “But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.” Although Jesus’ followers obeyed the Sabbath, certainly they enjoyed no rest or *esuchazo*. However, this concluding verse of the Passion is an important introduction to the Resurrection accounts to follow.

1-3 April, Triduum

Because the four days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday comprise the most sacred time of the Church’s liturgical year, this entry considers them as a unit instead of separately. “Triduum” stands for three days which essentially does not include Holy Saturday. However that is the most unique day of the year insofar as no liturgy is celebrated, a way of imitating Christ in the tomb. St. John’s Gospel allows us to follow this sequence from Thursday through Sunday, our guide which knits the four days together. From the point of view of chronological time, four days are very short. However, for those participating in the sacred mysteries, this short time is in truth a *kairos* event when our awareness of time slows down to almost a standstill and allows us to ponder events that yet have to be exhausted (cf. the concluding verse below, Jn 21.25).

In the First Sunday of Lent the Greek noun *stigma* was commented upon, that is, when Jesus was in the desert forty days and nights: “And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” [Lk 4.5]. *Stigma* is the word for “moment” and *chronos* is “time.” That is to say, within this span of forty days *stigma* serves to stretch the fabric of time and space, thereby allowing an indefinite number of significant events to be effected. With this in mind, we can view the Triduum as a *stigma*, indeed, the *stigma* par excellence. After all, what transpires here is unpacked throughout the rest of the liturgical cycle, and even that isn’t enough which is why a number of passes on this cycle are required to get insight into just one given feast day.

The *chronos*-logical sequence of the Triduum has an outline of events moving from the Last Supper and on through Easter. Within it we as participants in the mysteries can stretch its rather small temporal fabric and discover numerous *stigma* which have meaning outside both their limitations and ours. References are made relative to specific times and places both physical and trans-temporal. In some instances quotes pertaining to the coming and going of both Son and Holy Spirit are made. These chapters have a number of such references, too much for insertion here, a fact to be aware of. And so the sequence runs as follows beginning with chapter thirteen of John’s Gospel and going to its conclusion:

-13.1. “Now before the feast of the Passover.” Here Jesus “knew that his hour (*hora*) had come to depart out of this world.” Compare this time with the *hora* which may be taken as a particular instance within the *kairos* event now transpiring. Vss. 13.1 through 14.31 take place during the Last Supper. As noted in 14.31 relative to *enteuthen* (hence), it appears that events took place after the Last Supper though it is not specified.

-13.18. “That the scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’” Reference is to Ps 41.9. The verse reads in full as follows: “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” Here is the first of several instances when scripture is fulfilled, a past even finding fulfillment in the present.

-13.19. “I tell you this now (i.e., reference to Ps 41.9) before it takes place that when it does take place you may

believe that I am he.”

-13.30. “So after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out. And it was night.” The time when Judas departed Jesus and the disciples, night being a symbol of Jesus’ betrayal and Judas’ fate.

-13.31. “When he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of man glorified.’” A juxtaposition between “night” and “now.”

-13.33. “Yet a little while I am with you.” *Mikron* is used for “little while.”

-13.36. “Where are you going?” *Pou* is the word for where which, unknown to the disciples, is not located in *chronos*. However, Jesus does say that Peter will follow afterward, *husteron*.

-14.3. “When I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” *Ean* is “when,” *topos* is “place” and *hopou* is “where.”

-14.16. “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” Here Jesus is the first Counselor and the Holy Spirit is the second Counselor. Arrival of the second Counselor is yet to happen.

-14.17. “For he dwells with you.” A contradiction of sorts; the second Counselor is already present within the disciples without them know it, this while having been with the first Counselor for several years.

-14.19. “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also.” *Mikron* is used for “little while” as in 13.31 above. Jesus says that because he lives, the disciples will live as well (future tense). Thus living in the present and living in the future belong to two different realities.

-14.20. “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” *Hemera* is the word for “day” which is the equivalent to living outside *chrono*-logical time. There Jesus, the Father and disciples will be “in” each other.

-14.23. “And we will come to him and make our home with him.” That is, conditioned upon whether a person loves Jesus or has *agape* for him. Thus *agape*, coming and making home are linked.

-14.25. “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.” The preposition *para* for “with” (you) is found numerous times throughout this chapter and others pertinent to Jesus’ last discourse. Here as in most *para* implies Jesus being alongside those who share in his *agape*.

-14.26. “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things.” Here the Counselor is mentioned alone and not as another as in 14.16. His future coming will be marked by teaching Jesus’ disciples all things, the nature of which is left unspecified.

-14.28. “I go away, and I will come to you.” The departure is soon to happen (Jesus’ death) and the other is not yet revealed though intimates Pentecost.

-14.29. “And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.” *Nun* or now is Jesus speaking with the disciples about his going away and coming.

-14.31. “Rise, let us go hence.” *Enteuthen* is the word for “hence” which means from this time or from this place...i.e., either space or time or both. The place to which Jesus bids his disciples to go is not specified. Presumably the Last Supper has been concluded, though chapter fifteen continues without reference to *enteuthen*. Perhaps it took place in another room or elsewhere.

15.19. “But I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Here as elsewhere in these references *kosmos* is the “world” and in the verse at hand, the preposition *ek* for “out of” signifies removal from it. In other words, this *ek*-ness is the source for the world’s hatred.

-15.25. “It is to fulfill the word...‘They hated me without a cause.’” Reference is to Pss 35.19 & 69.4. This fulfillment is the second reference to the Psalter, the first being in 13.18.

-15.26. “But when the Counselor comes.” *Hotan* is the word for “when,” this when-ness not being specific as Jesus is speaking.

-15.27. “You have been with me from the beginning.” *Arche* is the word for “beginning” connoting a principle which sets in motion a whole sequence of events.

-16.2. “Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.” *Hora* is the word for “hour” as noted 13.1. Here it has a negative overtone relative to the disciples. As to its actual coming, no specific time is mentioned.

-16.4. “When the hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.” Here *hora*, Jesus’ words and remembrance are one and the same.

-16.4. “I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you.” Cf. 15.27 for the last reference to *arche*, beginning.

-16.16. “A little while and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me.” Two uses of

mikron for “little while,” last noted in 14.19. Such *mikron* can be measured in terms of *chronos*...the coming descent of the Holy Spirit...yet can be taken as, in the context of this entry, the next instance of a *stigma*. The significance of this *mikron* is spelled out in the next few verses.

-16.23. “In that day you will ask nothing of me.” *Hemera* is “day,” last noted in 14.20. The reason for not asking is that Jesus “will see you again and your hearts will rejoice” [vs. 22].

-16.25. “The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father.” Cf. 16.4 for *hora* as “hour.” In both verses, it has yet to arrive not given an indication as to its arrival. Within this *hora* no longer will Jesus use figures or *paroimia* (also as proverbs)...words spoken beside (*para*) that which is deemed or supposed, the verbal root *oimai*.

-16.26. “In that day you will ask in my name.” The last verse Jesus spoke of an hour and right after speaks of a “day” or *hemera* (cf. 16.23).

-16.32. “The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered.” Here *hora* has a negative connotation. It is both laying in the future and already present, that is, relative to the disciples being scattered. In the first instance, they are not scattered but together. However, in their minds and spirits, uninformed by the Counselor, they are scattered interiorly.

-17.1. “Father, the hour has come.” Here *hora* refers not to the scattering of the disciples as in -16.32 but to his glorification which has just commenced.

-17.11. “Now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.” Two uses of *kosmos*, “world” (cf. 15.19). Note that Jesus says he is no longer in the *kosmos* yet at the same time that he is coming to the Father. I.e., this coming seems to be in a place of sorts between the *kosmos* and presence of the Father.

-17.16. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Here a separation is posited between both Jesus and his disciples with regard to the *kosmos*. At the same time, Jesus has yet to come to the Father as noted in the last reference.

-17.18. “As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” Verbs are in the past tense indicating that both Jesus and the disciples are not there, in the *kosmos*.

-17.24. “Father, I desire that they also...may be with me where I am, to behold my glory.” The object of Christ’s desire (*ethelo*) is to be where (*hopou*; cf. 14.13) he is, present tense. The verb is more along the lines of willing as opposed to desire commonly understood. In this where-ness those given by the Father to Christ will behold Christ’s glory.

-18.1. “He went forth with his disciples across the Kidron valley where there was a garden.” Verses from this point on shift from Jesus speaking (spiritually, if you will) of his mission to concrete places.

-18.9. “This was to fulfill the word which he had spoken, ‘Of those whom you gave me I lost not one.’” This refers to 6.39, 10.28 & 17.12.

-18.27. “Peter again denied it; and at once the cock crowed.” *Euthus* for “immediately” shows the concurrence of Peter’s denial of Jesus with sunrise or the slightest emergence of daylight, a sign of hope for Peter despite the terrible denial.

-18.37. “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.” Earlier Jesus spoke of leaving the world or *kosmos* but here hearkens back to his entry into it.

-19.9: “Where are you from?” *Pothen* is the word for “where” or better, from where, which applies to one’s origins, etc.

-19.17: “To the place called the place of a skull which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.” The Greek text has for “to” the preposition *eis*, into, indicating full-presence-in.

-19.24: “They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” Fulfillment of Ps 22.18.

-19.25: “Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.” *Para* is the preposition for “by” implying around in the sense of accompanying (cf. 16.25).

-19.27: “And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” I.e., John entrusted with the care of Mary, Jesus’ mother. It is the same *hora* (hour) when Jesus expired. Note the Greek phrase *eis ta idia* for “to his own home” which reads literally, “into those belong to him.”

-19.28: “Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), ‘I thirst.’” Fulfillment of Ps 69.21 which reads in full, “They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Jesus’ simple “I thirst” does not correspond exactly to the text.

-19.36 & 37: “For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, ‘Not a bone of him shall be broken.’”...“They shall look on him whom they have pierced.” References to Ex 12.46 (Passover lamb) and Zch

12.10.

-20.1: "On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark." This was the day after the Sabbath which had ended the evening before.

-20.9: "For as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead,." Reference to Ps 16.9-10, "Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For you did not give me up to Sheol or let your godly one see the Pit."

-20.25: "Unless I see in his hand the print of the nails and place my finger in the mark of the nails and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." One words indicating two physical locations regarding Jesus' wounds: *tupos* for "print" or place in the sense of pattern. Thomas wants to see the first *tupos* and place his finger in the second *tupos*. *Tupos* is not mentioned regarding Jesus' side.

-21.4: "Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus." Easy not to recognize someone under such conditions. The same may apply to Mary Magdalene more or less at the same time of day (cf. 20.15).

-21.22: "If it is my will that he (John) remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" The disciples confused this remaining with not dying which Jesus affirmed. Perhaps insinuated is John later at Patmos where he composed the Book of Revelation.

-21.25: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." The concluding verse of John's Gospel which juxtaposes Jesus as confined to a given place and time with the infinite number of books about him. In other words, we are presented with a kind of *stigma* where divine reality does not abolish the distinction between time and space but contains it.

11 April, Second Sunday of Easter

Today's Gospel (Jn 20.19-31) takes place the evening of Easter, a time of day symbolized by "the doors being shut," words which are repeated later in vs. 26. Twice Jesus says to his frightened disciples "Peace be with you." The first precedes the showing of his hands and side (there is no mention of his feet). The second greeting is followed by "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you." This harkens back to just two days ago when Jesus said, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" [17.18]. Such words must have been fresh in the disciples' minds and now have a special impact when they confront him suddenly and unexpectedly. The difference is mention of the world or *kosmos* in the latter. Chances are that by this statement after his resurrection Jesus wants the disciples to recall his lengthy discourse about his relationship with them and his divine Father. As for vs. 21, the verb "send" is mentioned twice and has two different verbs. The first is *apostello* or being sent out on a mission. Here the Father sends out the Son, *apostello* being a verb usually associated with the mission of the disciples. The second verb is *pempo* which Jesus uses with regard to his disciples. This is a more common verb and has the connotation of dismissing whether positively or negatively. Both *apostello* and *pempo* are united by the connective "as:" "as the Father has sent me, so I send you." Note that the first is in the past tense—the Son having accomplished the Father's mission—and the second is in the present tense. This present tense intimates that the sending by the Father of the Son carries over to the sending of the disciples by the Son.

Jesus does not expand on the words just spoken but immediately breathes upon the disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." He does so only in the context of them being able to forgive sins; nothing more is said of the Spirit. Presumably Jesus is relying upon the disciples' recollection of his discourse on the Spirit as companion and advocate only forty-eight hours earlier. Again, we have no explanation or fleshing out as to how the disciples were to implement this command. Surely it must not have been as dramatic as the Spirit's fiery descent at Pentecost but just as real. Perhaps the Spirit had to rest upon the disciples gently and abide with them in a hidden fashion until fifty days later. It was only then at Pentecost that they knew how to implement this forgiveness as well as having had the duration of fifty days to ponder the difference between Jesus being sent by the Father and Jesus sending them.

Thomas comes on the scene next, presumably the same evening, though no clear indication is given as to his arrival. Thomas states his desire for physical proof of Jesus' resurrection which is taken up "eight days later." In those intervening days Thomas must have engaged the disciples in lively debates about Jesus. Chances are

Mary Magdalene was involved, the first person to have reached Jesus' empty tomb. No appearance of Jesus is recorded, so it must have been a tense and confusing eight days. Chances are that such discussions took place behind those "closed doors" as opposed to out in the open, the temple area, for example. Actually, we get a strong sense of being closed in through a hearing of today's Gospel.

Once Thomas accepts Jesus as having been risen, John says that Jesus "did many other signs...which are not written in this book." John records the Thomas incident only since it has direct bearing upon faith in Jesus Christ. Still, this leaves unanswered the nature of other appearances by Jesus; even if he may have conversed further with Thomas. Actually, John says that Jesus had done signs or *semeion* which can also mean a mark or signal pointing to something greater than the *semeion* itself.

18 April, Third Sunday of Easter

As we move further from Easter itself and the octave of Easter which culminated on Low Sunday or last week, our attention shifts gradually to Pentecost. This is not so much evident at the moment but is behind our perception of time as we move through these fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. In sum, this time is one of waiting for a second Incarnation, as it were, that of the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel (Jn 21.1-19) begins with the words "After this" which seem not to refer to a particular period or time. However, we can take into account last Sunday when Thomas doubted the appearance of Jesus. "After this" also could refer to the words of vs. 30, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book." That can include a large number of signs (*semeion*) which necessarily do not pertain to actual appearances of Jesus. These, on the other hand, are presented in terms of revelations, the verb *phaino* being used. It means to make visible and differs from the verb *apokalupto* commonly associated with the notion of revealing and hence the Book of Revelation (*apokalupsis*), that is, the disclosure of something which has been present all along even though we may not recognize it. *Phaino* seems to apply to a manifestation which, if you will, comes in and off the scene as we see after Jesus' resurrection. Furthermore, this verb can apply to someone or something becoming present within a given situation after which it leaves; maybe or maybe not it will come again. In other words, *phaino* as found in John's account is vital for depicting Jesus yet intimates a provisional presence...provisional in the sense that the disciples must await the Holy Spirit's descent some fifty days later. As for what *phaino* intimates, it would be a temptation to associate it with a lesser reality, a kind of phantom which the disciples invented. However, the revealing at hand is quite concrete and involves extended dialogue on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias.

Vs. 4 presents us with Jesus standing on the beach at daybreak (*proi*) or that twilight period when it's neither fully day nor fully night. However, the twilight here is tending from darkness to light. As for this in between time, the ability to see may be hampered further by being by the sea which could distort one's vision. In vs. 7 John says that it is Jesus, not a revelation, a *phaino* of him. In a sense, this verb fits in well with the disciples not recognizing him during this transitional time or the movement from darkness to light. When Jesus addresses the disciples as "children" they have no objection as you think they might. Instead, they respond directly to his question about having caught no fish. Then again, they may wanted to go on with their work and not agitate this unexpected stranger on the shore.

When the disciples set out at Jesus' bidding to fish after a fruitless night they did so during the morning twilight. Most likely during this time John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved" or had *agape*, recognized Jesus ('It is the Lord!'). There may have been something unique about this twilight by the seas which evoked recent memories of Jesus' *agape* just before the passion and death. John's recognition happened close to the shore ('about a hundred yards off,' vs. 8), and from there Jesus bade the disciples to cast their nets. As for the *agape* Jesus had for John, this seems to shift or comes to a head with Peter: "Do you love (*agapao*) me more than these?" To this question Peter responds in all three times, "you know that I love you." The verb is not *agapao* but *phileo* which has to do with showing affection or acting in a friendly manner. *Phileo* could be taken as a response to a loving statement, a kind of reciprocity. It's interesting that vs. 20 (not in this Gospel proper) reads "Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved (*agapao*)...he said to Jesus, 'What about this man?'" It's almost as though we revert to the *agape* which Jesus had for John, a higher level than

phileo, which despite Peter's profession of love for Jesus (his *phileo*), nevertheless roused jealousy in him.

25 April, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Today's short Gospel (Jn 10.27-30) is the first one for the Easter season (i.e., a Sunday in Easter) not dealing directly with the Resurrection. Instead of taking it as a paucity of scriptural passages referring to the Resurrection, we can view this Gospel and others for the remaining Sundays of Easter as a gradual shift in focus. That is to say a shift from the Resurrection to Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit, at this half way mark of the Easter season. Inferences to the Holy Spirit might not be evident at first glance but become clearer the more we subject the texts to a closer read, that is, in the spirit of *lectio divina*.

The context of Jesus' words was the Dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem (an eight day festival in December) and more specifically, on the portico of Solomon. "How long will you keep us in suspense?" say the Jews, the text reading literally, "How long will you take away the soul of ours?" Note the singular "soul" (*psuche*) with the plurality of Jews...one *psuche* belonging to a group of people. It is more striking given the physical circumstances of being on the portico in the cold of winter with pale sunlight. The suspension consists of the Jews wanting to know if "you are the Christ," and for him to tell them "plainly." The Greek for "plainly" is the adverb *parresia*; the same is used for the noun which suggests freedom of speech without recrimination for what one had said. To this Jesus responds simply that he had told them (*parresia* implied) yet their unbelief prevented them from hearing his words. Thus disbelief hinders freedom of speech, of speaking plainly.

From this point Jesus identifies his followers as sheep: "You do not belong to my sheep" or more vividly and to the point, "from (*ek*) my sheep." Use of the word "sheep" can be taken as a less than flattering description of people who follow Jesus which perhaps is further incitement for the Jews to stone Jesus as recorded in vs.31. As for the sheep, there is an order with respect to Jesus. They hear him, he knows them and they follow him. Thus we have hearing-knowing-following. The first and third pertain to the sheep while the second belongs to Jesus; around it the other two revolve. The knowing (*ginosko*) is the response by Jesus to the sheep hearing him. It is transformed...perhaps one could say transfigured...into the sheep following Jesus. The verb here is *akoloutho* which intimates going in a specific sequence or order, not just a random following of Jesus. One image that comes to mind is the order in which sheep enter a sheepfold, one behind the other. At this point the simple-minded image of sheep characterized by listening is altered or comes to maturity by following in the order...the *akolouthia*...which Jesus gives. Also, a counting of the sheep entering the sheepfold is implied to make sure all go in, and this going in is into the hand of Jesus contained, in turn, within the hand of the Father described in the next paragraph.

The result of this transformation from hearing into following through Jesus knowing the sheep is threefold: eternal life, not perishing, or better, "not coming to destruction into (*eis*) eternity (*aion*)" and finally, no one being able to snatch these sheep from the hand of Jesus. The verb *harpazo* (to snatch) is strong, involving not just stealing but a thorough plundering. A certain intimidation is hinted at by putting *harpazo* "out of my hand," that is, *harpazo* as right there in front of Jesus which certainly would stop someone. Not only is *harpazo* presented with respect to Jesus' hand but to the hand of the Father...not unlike the Father's hand being larger, both overshadowing and containing the hand of Jesus, almost telescopic-like. This hand-to-hand containing of the sheep which is immune to snatching (and hence plundering) is summed up by the last words of today's Gospel, "I and the Father are one." Literally this reads, "I and the Father one we are," a more dramatic and forceful statement which naturally leads to the Jews picking up stones which the next verse recounts.

As noted in the first paragraph, this passage has nothing to do with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ nor of the Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost. Yet upon reading it closely, it fits in well with this period of fifty days preparation for Pentecost, a better understanding of the relationship between Jesus Christ and his Father who, after all, are united by and with the Holy Spirit.

2 May, Fifth Sunday of Easter

At first glance, today's brief Gospel (Jn 13.31-33 & 34-35) seems more appropriate for Lent or Holy Week since it takes place just prior to the Last Supper. However, now that we're into the second half of Easter season—inclining with greater rapidity toward Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit—we can read the same text differently. So often the Gospels record that the disciples did not comprehend what was transpiring until after Jesus rose from the dead. Liturgically speaking, we too are on this “other side” of Jesus' resurrection. Yet should we insert ourselves within the fifty day period between Easter and Pentecost (let alone the three year period of Jesus' ministry), still we have no comprehension of Scripture's meaning despite our having encountered Jesus as risen from the dead.

The Gospel begins with Jesus just having been glorified (*doxazo*) which is a biblical way of saying that he has manifested himself fully. Note the passive “is glorified” meaning that Jesus is the subject of this glory, i.e., he received it from the Father whom he includes quickly, “in him God is glorified.” The words “in him” indicate that Jesus is speaking of himself not unlike speaking of an object. If the active voice were used for such circumstances, easily people would think Jesus to be presumptuous if not out of his mind: “Now I am glorified.” This idea of being glorified calls to mind dramatic theophanies from the Old Testament, chief among which is Mount Sinai. That image is quite unlike the present one which takes places within a very crowded Jerusalem or within the context of a swollen population there for celebration of the Passover. While throngs were milling about, here we have Jesus and his small band of disciples in an upper room off what most likely was a crowded side street speaking about glorification, talk which perhaps shook even his disciples. No small wonder that after the Last Supper discourse Jesus and those with him withdraw to the relative isolation of the garden across the Kidron valley. Yet given so many people in Jerusalem, chances are that even that place had people milling about.

Within the apparently circumstances of a crowded Jerusalem and talk about glorification we have Jesus utter the key to his message: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” That is, if you have *agape* for one another. Apparently these words were lost upon the disciples, for Peter says immediately, “Where are you going?” The familiarity of this disregard for manifesting *agape* is so common that it requires no comment. One of the best ways to escape attention to it is not by arguing with Jesus but by changing the topic of discussion. However, that doesn't work with Jesus, for to Peter he says that he will deny him three times.

9 May, Sixth Sunday of Easter

Next Sunday is the last Sunday of Easter before Pentecost, so as noted with regard to last Sunday's entry, the Gospel for today (Jn 14.23-9) can be read as preparation for that great feast which comes after fifty days from the Resurrection of Jesus. As for today, we pick up the Gospel mid-stream, if you will, when Jesus is giving his discourse during the Last Supper. Some years ago I had outlined this discourse so I decided to include relevant notations for the verses at hand:

Vs. 23: Jesus answered him, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

A man: the Greek text has a relative pronoun, “who.”

Loves (*agapao*): here connected with keeping (*tereo*) of Christ's word or *logos*. Christ is the *Logos* who speaks a singular *logos*, a kind of reflection of himself.

Also dependent upon this condition (“if”) is the Father loving (*agapao*) the person which similarly intimates a *tereo* of Christ's *logos*.

We will come to (*pros*) to him: direction towards—which and can intimate a continuous coming as well as arrival.

Home (*mone*): cf. vs. 2 as “rooms:” from the verb *meno* (to stay, abide). This is the only New Testament use of the term. Compare with Mt 6.6, “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door.” *Tameion* is the word at hand, the only NT use which fundamentally means “storeroom.”

With (*para*) him: connotes being-by, in the presence of but not quite fully “with” in the English sense.

Vs. 24: He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

Love (*agapao*): here suggests its opposite (hatred). Similarly, a lacking of keeping (*tereo*) means disobedience.

My words (*logos*, singular): compare the plural with the singular of the previous verse.

The word (*logos*): singular, here comes through Christ from the Father. Such hearing is related to a sending (*pempo*) by the Father. This verb connotes the giving of a commission.

Vs. 25: These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

You: both uses are in the accusative case.

Christ's speaking is concurrent with his being with the disciples.

With (*para*) you: cf. vs. 23; intimates indirect presence. The Greek has the verb *meno* noted in vs. 10 as "dwells" and from which "room" (*mone*) is derived.

Vs. 26: But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Counselor (*Parakletos*): cf. vs. 16. Both verses show that the *Parakletos* is not present but is to come.

Holy Spirit (*Pneuma*): first identification of the Spirit as holy (*hagios*) in the chapters at hand. John's Gospel has two other references, 1.33 & 22.22 (i.e., at the beginning and end of the Gospel).

Will send (*pempo*): cf. vs. 24 with respect to the Father's word.

In (en) my name: distinct, as it were, from the person of Christ. "In my name" is first noted in vs.

13.

Will teach (*didasko*): first use of this term in the chapters at hand, future tense.

All things: unspecified as to what they pertain.

Bring to remembrance (*hupomimnesko*): future tense. This is the only use of the verb in John's Gospel. It suggests a causing to remember, indirect, as by the preposition *hupo* (under) prefixed to the verb. "So if I come, I will bring up (i.e., cause to remember) what he is doing" [3 Jn 10].

All: with reference to Christ having spoken. Compare with "all things."

Vs. 27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Peace (*eirene*, twice): in the sense of the Hebrew *shalom*, completeness, wholeness. "That in me you may have peace" [16.33].

This peace has two aspects, both with respect to verbs in the present tense: 1) It is first given (*aphiemi*). The other sense of this verb is found in vs. 18, "I will not leave you (desolate)" and 2) giving.

My peace (*eirene*): relative pronoun is used; compare with simple "peace" in this verse.

Hearts (*kardia*): the singular is used..."the heart of you" as in vs. 1.

World (*kosmos*): presumably in reference to "peace" but not explicitly mentioned.

Be troubled (*tarasso*): cf. vs. 1 for this verb and phrase.

Be afraid (*deiliao*): the only use of this verb in the NT. Both this verb and *tarasso* pertain to the singular "heart."

Vs. 28: You heard me say to you, "I go away, and I will come to you." If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.

Go/come: with reference to vs. 3, "And when I go...I will come." There the verb is *poreuo* (go; *erchomai* is used for "come"). In the verse at hand, *hupago* is used for "go" as in vs. 4, "where I am going." Again, note the preposition *hupo* prefaced to the verb. Most likely that is the verse related to "you heard me say."

To (*pros*) you: last noted in vs. 23 with respect to Christ and the Father.

Loved (*agapao*): bound up with the disciples rejoicing (*chairo*). This verse is next found in 16.20 with respect to the "world." "The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice" [3.29].

Go (*poreuo*): here with respect to (*pros*) the Father, direction-towards-which. The Father being

greater than Jesus makes more sense with regards to what this *pros*-direction intimates.

Vs. 29: And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.

It: with reference to the going away and coming back of the previous verse.

13 May, Ascension Thursday

Today we are on the verge of completing the fifty days belonging to the Easter season; in fact, we have moved beyond it but not quite fully. We must wait for Pentecost Sunday, nine days hence, the days after Ascension being the original novena. This brief period of time is unique in the liturgical season because the Ascension of Jesus obviously means that he has left earth and the disciples are now on their own. At the same time the Holy Spirit has not yet come, so this time is one of abeyance, of suspension. It must have been confusing for the disciples even though they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Lk 24.52). One wonders what that joy must have consisted of...certainly real but not fulfilled. While the disciples awaited Pentecost, perhaps they expected Jesus to appear in bodily fashion as he had done after his resurrection. This isn’t said explicitly though somehow we get an intimation of its truth. As for today’s Gospel (Lk 24.46-53), it recounts the Ascension of Jesus more or less in outline; Acts, which is attributed to Luke, gives a fuller account as well as the Pentecost event and subsequent growth of the church.

Anyone who reads the Gospels is struck by the frequent interjection of “in order that the scriptures may be fulfilled” or the like. We have such an example here, “these are my words (*logoi*) which I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus mentions all three parts of the Hebrew testament: law, prophets and psalms, that is to say, the legal, inspirational and liturgical aspects of life. We can assume that the disciples were abiding faithfully by these three elements both before they joined themselves to Jesus as well as earlier on their own. As for Jesus’ presence, he acknowledges this by saying “while I was still with you.” The prepositions *pros* is used for “with (you)” which implies direction toward which. That is to say, either in movement toward a given direction or having a direct relationship with...to (*pros*)...the person or situation at hand. Just as the three-fold nature of the law, prophets and psalms formed the disciples in a kind of *pros* relationship with the disciples, so had the person of Jesus established a relationship with...*pros*...them in such a direct fashion. One could say by way of both hindsight and anticipation, the same will apply to the Holy Spirit at and after Pentecost. Only the Spirit’s role will be of constant pointing to Jesus.

Right after these words Jesus “opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” This can be unpacked by starting with the verb *dianoigo*, the preposition *dia* suggesting an opening through of the scriptures, an opening effected by dividing. Its object is the disciples’ minds, rather the mind (*nous*) of theirs or a singular *nous* or faculty of perceiving proper to a plurality of disciples. *Suniemi* is the verb to understand which means a bringing or setting together (*sun* or with prefaced to the verb). And so we could say that the *dia* of *dianoigo* is directed toward (*pros*) the disciples that they may have a setting together (*sun*) with respect to the scriptures. If that is so, then what Jesus said about his *logoi* or words he spoke while still with them will, after his ascension and Pentecost, serve to clarify the three-fold nature of the Hebrew scriptures, the law, prophets and psalms. Jesus proceeds to give an example: “that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.” Chances are that the disciples, even if they were very observant readers or listeners, could not nor had the capacity to see the Hosea reference (6.2) apply to Jesus. That verse, by the way, reads: “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him.” Surely once that is clarified by Jesus himself the disciples were enabled to see many references in law, prophets and psalms. Right away this brings up the misleading perception that the disciples were endowed with a special, even esoteric, capacity to see in the scriptures foreshadowings of Jesus. However, chances are that this was a kind of training in *lectio divina*, if it may be put that way, that Jesus wishes to transmit to his followers and hence to his church which will come into being shortly at Pentecost.

As for Jesus’ ascension proper, he bids the disciples to “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” However, those words don’t apply exactly, for in the next verse Jesus “led them out as far as Bethany” when he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And so Jesus qualified his command for

the disciples to stay in Jerusalem, for they returned there or more precisely, “went up to the upper room” (Acts 1.13) until the descent of the Holy Spirit.

16 May, Seventh Sunday of Easter

Today's Sunday is unique in that a few days ago Jesus had ascended into heaven. As for the previous Sundays of Easter, they dealt with his Resurrection in preparation not just for his Ascension but for the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Now that Jesus is ascended, we have a Sunday when he is not present; the same applies to the Holy Spirit who yet has to make his presence known to us. While this is no longer strictly applicable to us, are re-created nevertheless mysteriously they are re-created through the liturgy. Not that they are re-enacted but made present again in all their original force by the Church's yearly celebration. Anyone who follows the Gospel texts and related scriptural readings in the spirit of *lectio divina* knows what this means.

As with last Sunday's entry, today follows a similar theme, that is, insertion of notations taken from another document on the home page relative to the Gospel, Jn 17.20-6. This insertion runs as follows:

Vs. 20: I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word.

Pray (*erotao*): last noted in vs. 15 with respect to the Father not taking the disciples out of the world.

For (*peri*, around, concerning) those only. The same applies “for (*peri*) those who believe in me.” In (*eis*, into) me: a fuller presence within Christ.

Through (*dia*) the word (*logos*) of theirs as the Greek literally reads.

Vs. 21: that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The key word to understand the sense of “one” is *kathos*, “as.” Here *kathos* leads to a “triple in (*en*):” me, you and us.

Have sent (*apostello*): cf. vs. 18: “As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” Did send (*apostello*, twice): cf. vss. 3 & 8 with reference to the Father doing the action which here is transferred to Christ doing the action.

Vs. 22: The glory which you have given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one,

Glory (*doxa*): cf. vs. 5, “glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made.” Also compare with vs. 24, “to behold my glory.” Such glory originates with the Father, is given to the Son and then to the disciples. It has the ability to effect being “one” conditioned by *kathos* (as) noted in the previous verse.

Vs. 23: I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

In (*en*): the order here is first Christ with respect to the disciples and then the Father with respect to Christ.

Perfectly (*teleioo*): perfect passive participle used. The next reference of this verb is 19.28, “Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.”” In the verse at hand, the preposition *eis* (into) is used: “perfectly into one.”

May know (*ginosko*): last reference is vs. 8, here with respect to the world's knowing that the Father sent the Son and the Father having loved the disciples as the Son.

Loved (*agapao*, twice), where *kathos* (even as) is important to understand the two uses.

Vs. 24: Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world.

Desire (*thelo*): more with regards to willing than the desiring as signified by the noun *eros*. “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will” [15.7].

May be with (*meta*) me. Note the distinction between these words and “they whom you have given me.” Christ bids the Father that this latter group partakes, as it were, of being meta him. Such *meta* is

“where I am.”

To behold (*theoreo*): compare with two uses in 16.10, “and you will see me no more; and again a little while, and you will see me.”

Glory (*doxa*): the object of *theoreo* (“which you have given me,” vs. 22).

In your love for me: the Greek text reads “because you have loved (*agapao*) me.” Vs. 23 has this verb with respect to the Father vis-a-vis the disciples.

Foundation (*katabole*) of the world: literally, a throwing or laying down. The preposition *kata* intimates according to a plan or intention. This is the only use of the term in St. John’s Gospel. “I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world” [Mt 13.35]. Compare with other uses of “world” in St. John, mostly negative.

Vs. 25: O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you; and these know that you have sent me.

Righteous (*dikaios*) Father: the only use of this term in St. John’s Gospel and the only time applied to God the Father in the Gospels. “They were both righteous before God” [Lk 1.6].

Three instances of the verb *ginosko*: the kosmos not having it, Jesus Christ as having it and the disciples as having it.

Have sent (*apostello*) me: last noted in vs. 21 with the same implication. A close connection exists between the third *ginosko* and this sending.

Vs. 26: I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

Two uses of the verb *ginosko* (compare with the previous verse): first with respect to “your name” (Father) and second with respect to making it known in the future; i.e., both the past and future uses of the verb.

Love (*agape*): compare with the use of *phileo* in 16.27, “for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me.”

Have loved (*agapao*): the verb used with the noun.

In (*en*) them/I in (*en*) them: two uses of the same preposition with respect to the noun and verb, love.

23 May, Pentecost Sunday

Today we have a short Gospel (Jn 16.12-15) which concludes the fifty day period of Easter as well as the Lenten season just prior to it. The nine days preceding Pentecost or those days originating with the Ascension provided an opportunity to reflect on the significance of this rather lengthy period of time so its end won’t hit us so abruptly. That abrupt end comes upon us with tomorrow or the day after Pentecost when the Church plunges us directly back into Ordinary Time. Really, this is quite an abrupt change when you think of it. Thus a major liturgical cycle is capped off, if you will. Though Jesus utters the words of today’s Gospel shortly before his death, resurrection, ascension and the Holy Spirit’s descent, they permeate these events by reason of the relationship between Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit. All this is done not so much in hindsight but now at the completion of the Church’s most important cycle of her liturgical year.

As for the “many things” Jesus wishes to communicate to his disciples, they are not set down in writing, though we get an intimation of them from his appearances after the resurrection. “But there are many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” Such are the concluding words of John’s Gospel. To bear (*bastazo*) these “many things” means to carry or support the words of Jesus words which suggests the image of a weight pressing down. It is interesting to compare this *bastazo* with the Spirit “resting on each one of them” [Acts 2.3] which, despite being Spirit, still had a divine weight...*kavod* (for that is the original meaning of this Hebrew word for glory...pressing upon the twelve.

Jesus speaks of “when the Spirit of truth comes” yet does not specify when it will be nor at this juncture could the disciples understand what he means. The leading into the truth at first suggests a guidance from outside

but in fact is a guidance from without to within: “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” [Acts 2.4]. As for the “authority” of the Holy Spirit, the Greek text reads literally, “he will not speak from himself.” And so the authority at hand is a speaking of the other two divine persons which puts the Spirit well into the background. And so when the Spirit does fill the disciples in the upper room, he does so not as himself, if you will, but as a combination (for lack of better word) of both Father and Son. Because such speaking has two voices, it requires some training and close attentiveness in order to get accustomed to this new way of communication. “Whatever he hears he will speak” suggests a temporal order: first hearing followed by speaking with the process repeated again, etc.

As for the Spirit to glorify (*doxazo*) Jesus, we don’t hear specific references of the Spirit doing this from here on in John’s Gospel, that is, pertaining to his death and resurrection. For example, Jesus asks his Father to glorify him (cf. 17.1). Nevertheless, given the relationship Jesus is revealing here, the Holy Spirit as in between, as it were, Father and Son, is not absent. The verse at hand is more specific regarding *doxazo* which consists in taking what is of Jesus and declaring it to the disciples. This taking is not specified nor limited, so we can assume it comes from Jesus’ divine nature. Note that the verse does not say “and will give it to you.” Rather, accent is upon announcing what comes from Jesus’ divine nature which suggests some distance will exist between Jesus and his followers.

Although not said directly, the Gospel concludes with “he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” Very similar words to those of the previous verse only here prefaced by Jesus’ words, “All that the Father has is mine.” So instead of glorifying Jesus, the Spirit will take everything from Jesus (and that everything is from the Father) and declare it to the disciples. All in all, the taking from Jesus mentioned in vss. 14 and 15 sum up the Spirit’s role as declarer. The verb is *anagello* intimating that in the near future the disciples and the growing church will function as such in imitation of the Holy Spirit, the taker of what belongs to Jesus and this coming from the Father.

30 May, Trinity Sunday

Today’s Gospel is the same as for last Sunday (Pentecost) where several choices were presented, including that of Jn 16.12-15. Because of this unintentional oversight or not foreseeing that the same Gospel excerpt could be used for two consecutive Sundays, notations are made on the first reading (Prov 8.22-31) which deals with God’s creation of wisdom, *chakmah*. It was easy for some in the early church to apply a passage like this to Jesus Christ as Son of the Father though that did not become the orthodox position.

While the change from Pentecost Sunday to Ordinary Time the day after was abrupt, the liturgy strings out the recently completed Easter season with Trinity Sunday today, Corpus Christi next Sunday and the Sacred Heart of Jesus the following Friday. These few weeks give an opportunity to reflect back on all that had transpired while despite the sharp divide between Pentecost Sunday and Monday in the Eighth Week of Ordinary Time, we slowly and gingerly make our way forward into a period of time we haven’t seen until mid February.

Proverbs speaks of the pre-existence of wisdom in comparison with the created nature of the world. Wisdom isn’t presented as some kind of divine being along with God but an activity endowed with speech. The comparison between wisdom and creation is given as an outline. What we have here is the coming into existence of two foundational elements of creation: mountains and sea, not the created beings inhabiting them. While reading these verses it is helpful to keep in mind the various words related to the act of coming into existence. Most verses in English begin with “when.” For it the Hebrew uses the preposition *b* or in prefaced to the first word suggesting a presence-within that which is being created, not just its coming into existence with God leaving it on its own:

-Vs. 22: “Created me at the beginning of his work.” The verb here is *qanah* which intimates more an acquisition or possession. The Hebrew lacks an equivalent of “at” and reads literally “acquired me the beginning of his way (*derek*).” *Derek* is the simple term for a road and here can refer to that which God is about to accomplish.

-Vs. 23: "Ages ago I was set up at the first before the beginning of the earth." The verb here is *nasak*, more as offering a libation or an anointing which intimates that wisdom was anointed not unlike a king in order to govern creation.

-Vs. 24: "When there were no depths I was brought forth." Depths or *tehomoth* is reminiscent of Gn 1.2 prior to God's act of creation which was spread out over six days: "The earth was without form and void (*tohu wabohu*)." The verb in Proverbs for "brought forth" is *chul* which also means to twist, turn around and intimates that this bringing forth of wisdom was done, if you will, in a twisting sort of way indicative of an artist making a kind of twirl or quick manual gesture to finish off his creation.

-Vs. 25: "Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth." The verb *tavah* for shaped means to sink, to seal, as though mountains were set as a seal upon the earth. Mountains are symbolic of God's eternity, a seal of sorts to remind people of that eternity when they gaze at them. As for the hills, the verb *chul* is used as with depths in the previous verse.

-Vs. 26: "Before he had made the earth with its field or the first of the dust of the world." The Hebrew for both fields and dust are of uncertain origin. The common verb *hasah* is used for making. Compare the dryness of this material with the already mentioned wetness of the depths.

-Vs. 27: "When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep." The verb *kun* means to set up, prepare, make ready, here relative to the heavens. This is one of two instances in this excerpt when wisdom is with God, the other being in vs. 30 ("I was beside him"). The verb *chuq* as drawing a circle implies a surrounding or embrace. An alternate meaning of *chuq* is bosom which here applies to the face of the deep...its surface...to restrain it from swallowing up the land. The noun for circle is *chug* which suggests being drawn by a compass. Both *chuq* and *chug* are very similar in sound, a play on words.

-Vs. 28: "When he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep." This verb contrasts two opposites, skies and deep. The verb *'amats* means to be firm and connotes a certain alertness as to what is transpiring, here the object being the skies, *shachaq* usually referring to clouds. The verb *hazzaz* means to make strong, that is, to secure not so much the wild, formless nature of the deep (*tehom*; cf. *tehomoth* of vs. 24) but how this deep manifests itself in the ocean or through its fountains, hence the ocean being symbolic of a threat against swallowing up the land.

-Vs. 29: "When he assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth." The verb *sum* or to put, set in place, is used for assigned, another limitation God puts on the potentially uncontrollable and destructive force of water. The object of *sum* here is *choq* or limit which also means an appointed law or statute. The almost legal nature of this is further conveyed by the verb *havar* (transgress) relative to God's command or *peh* which also means mouth. Thus a command issues directly from the mouth of God.

-Vs. 30: "Then I was beside him like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always." *'Amon* is master worker, from the verbal root *'aman*, to prop, stay up, support, be faithful. To be near the Lord is to share in his creativity which is the theme of these verses. As noted in vs. 27, that verse and the one at hand are the only two when wisdom is given as beside God. Two verbs are similar: *shahah* for delight and *sachaq* for delight, the latter suggesting a type of rejoicing marked by contempt. The former suggests something gentler, a kind of caressing.

-Vs. 31: "Rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men." The only verse of this passage not referring to mountains nor the sea but to humanity. A second use of the verb *sachaq* (to delight, as in vs. 30) here applied to *tevel* which is equivalent to the Greek *oikoumene* as opposed to the physical planet in and by itself. Given *sachaq* as marked by some contempt, it can disclose some of wisdom's attitude toward this *tevel*. The verb *shahah* (also in vs. 30) is used with regard to the sons of men, a gentler form of delighting.

6 June, Corpus Christi

Today is the second Sunday after Pentecost when the majestic Lenten-Easter-Pentecost cycle is almost at a close...technically speaking, it closes this coming Saturday with the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Wisely the Church has inserted the two feasts of Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi in order to mitigate the transition from this three-fold cycle to the extended period of Ordinary Time. We did experience this sharp transition, however, the day after Pentecost when we were plunged directly into Ordinary Time. No matter how much we may prepare for the transition, it does hit us rather dramatically...kind of in-your-face. So instead of these two Sundays giving opportunity to reflect upon Pentecost in and by itself, they allow us to take

in the larger picture of what had transpired since Ash Wednesday and how that three-fold cycle will govern the rest of the liturgical year or until the First Sunday in Advent which comes late November.

Today's Gospel (Lk 9.11-17) is preceded by the return of the apostles from their first experience of preaching God's kingdom and healing (cf. vs. 2), that is, without Jesus being among them. They were on their own with little or no guidelines except their brief experience of being in the company of Jesus. In hindsight, one would think this an exceptional privilege. However, a close read of the Gospels reveal that the apostles were both quite insensitive and ignorant as to what was going on most of the time. While they out and about on their own, king Herod got wind of their activity and confused Jesus (and/or his apostles) with John whom recently he beheaded. Thus the feeding of five thousand people is set against this background. If Herod was amazed at what had happened with the apostles, chances are truly he was stunned at the next event though nothing is recorded about his reaction. His attitude to a certain extent is echoed, however, in the verse after this Gospel passage, "Who do the people say that I am?"

"When the crowds learned it, they followed him." That is to say, the crowds learned of Jesus taking his disciples to Behsaida after their successful missionary endeavor. Such knowledge was passed very quickly in tight-knit ancient societies (again, refer to Herod). In light of this, word from the people to whom the disciples were sent may have spread just as rapidly or before the apostles returned to Jesus.

As for the crowds approaching Jesus, "he welcomed them," the verb being *apodechomai* suggesting a reception or taking into one's care. Just like the recently completed mission of the apostles, he "spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing." So if the crowds who got wind of the apostles out on their mission followed them, their instinct was correct. It led them straight to Jesus who continued, if you will, the apostles' mission. In light of this one gets the impression that as great as preaching and healing may be, there's more to what Jesus has to say. This moves into a realm proper to him alone, namely, the ability to impart what we now know as the Eucharist. Although the feeding of these people does not pertain directly to this (it was instituted at the Last Supper), still it is a kind of foreshadowing.

12 June, Immaculate Heart of Mary

Today's brief notations are an exception from the customary practice of commenting upon the Gospel passages of Sundays and major feast days. The reason? Today marks the very end of the Lenten-Easter-Pentecost liturgical cycle as it has developed over the centuries. Several times reference was made to it in previous entries, especially since Ash Wednesday forward through Pentecost. Since we're dealing with something very important though little appreciated, perhaps a consideration of today's Gospel (Lk 2.41-51) may be in order. Then again, today's feast (as was yesterday's, Sacred Heart) has a certain connotation of piety belonging to another age though it seems to remain somewhat popular. As for the liturgical cycle just completed, today marks the 115th day since Ash Wednesday when the drama of our redemption had begun. Not only are we a full third of the calendar year from that day (17 February), the seasons themselves are quite different, having passed from winter to the threshold of summer. From next Sunday onward to the end of November we will be situated squarely within Ordinary Time, about five and a half months.

As for the Gospel itself, we have the scene when Jesus' parents unwittingly left their son behind in Jerusalem. Yet the passage more directly associated with today's feast is the prophecy of Simeon about Mary when she presented Jesus in the temple, so we'll focus on that briefly. To be more specific, the verse at hand is "and a sword will pierce through your own soul that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." We can appreciate this revelation here today or 115 days after Ash Wednesday after all the major events that had taken place. In contrast to this opening of Mary's heart we had the Gospel of Ash Wednesday (Mt 6.1-6; 16-18) which dealt with praying and giving alms in secret. The phrase "in secret" or *en to krupto* occurs four times, so obviously Jesus is communicating something important. In other words, he wishes to draw our attention away from visible reality to an invisible one where true seeing by the Father takes place all the time. This being "in secret" we have done throughout the just completed 115 days, and so we are in a position to have our hearts revealed, to paraphrase Lk 2.35. We could say now that our pilgrimage from Ash Wednesday has come to a conclusion, a full third of the calendar year, no small bulk of time. Because both the Gospel for Ash

Wednesday as well as the one for today deal with the revelation of human thoughts, they are similar and a fitting model, if you will, to apply to the other two-thirds of the calendar year.

As for the Gospel proper, note that words applicable to Mary's heart are mentioned: "and his mother kept all these things in her heart." This keeping is applicable not just for the period of 115 days but for attentiveness to scriptural readings in other liturgical cycles when "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature," words preceding those relative to Mary's heart.

13 June, Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 7.36-8.3) gives a moving account of the unknown woman who brought a jar of ointment to anoint Jesus' feet. The way she is described ("a woman of the city who was a sinner") has a way stigmatizing this person for having engaged in sexual misconduct. One gets the impression that she just about the worst type of human around though in actuality she must have paled in comparison to the sins committed by people...men...who could, perhaps literally, get away with murder. This tendency to ostracize the woman stands out all the more in the context at hand, the Pharisee's house.

"If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is." Words from Simon the Pharisee which demean Jesus. "This man" and "prophet" are the core of the insult which must have been directly not just to Jesus but those present at the meal. Jesus responds deftly with "Simon, I have something to tell you." Right away this puts Simon in his place...publically, not privately...even before Jesus begins his story about the creditor who forgave two debtors. "Now which of them (debtors) will love him more?" The verb is *agapao* from which is derive *agape*, the lesson Jesus wishes to impart. It occurs again in vs. 47, "for she loved much." Only towards the end of this incident do we have an account of other people present at the meal. Their role was not unlike a chorus which responded, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" No intimation is given as to these guests wanting to be forgiven of their sins, just their exclamation which mirrors Simon's rather sarcastic remarks, "If this man were a prophet..." When the guests had been seated, the "woman of the city" must have been observing Jesus beforehand and followed him to Simon's home. No indication is given as to how she got in, perhaps having sneaked in or just walked on through the door as an uninvited guest.

The retort Jesus presents to Simon has three parts in comparison with the woman: he gave no water for washing his feet, no kiss and no anointing of his head. It is interesting that chapter eight, which follows this incident, begins with "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God." With him were "some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," and chances are that the recently forgiven woman at Simon's house was among them. In fact, she may have been responsible for gathering them, having made a very different impression on them than the one showed by Simon the Pharisee. From then on we lose sight of this remarkable woman whose history after Jesus' death and resurrection can only be surmised.

20 June, Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 9.18-24) comes on the heels of Corpus Christi two weeks ago, so we should keep in mind that passage of Jesus feeding the five thousand as a kind of after-glow. Following such a dramatic event we find Jesus "praying alone" which is contradicted, in a sense, by the "disciples (who were) with him." Such a scene is not unlike that of the garden of Gethsemani when the disciples were nearby but Jesus was alone. Then again, being alone for ancients might have been different from our notions. Because societies were so corporate and privacy lacking, solitude had to sought right in the midst of interaction with people.

Surely the disciple were both confused and filled with joy at having witnessed their master feed so many people, this on the heels of their triumphant return from their first ministry. If he could do this now, surely they could do the same later if not outdo him. With both events in mind, we should not be surprised at Jesus asking, "Who do the people say that I am?" Note "the people," presumably referring to those whom he just fed. In a sense, this question was an easy one instead of the disciples being asked directly for their response. It was not unnatural when the five thousand were receiving their food in the wilderness to claim Jesus to be

John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets was has risen. That is to say, the first two men (John having been beheaded recently) were associated with inhabiting the desert in which they received their mission. The third element is intriguing: no specific prophet is mentioned (the disciples hadn't a clue), but one could imagine such a prophet whose name hasn't been disclosed inhabiting the desert and feeding people. As for the question put to the disciples, Jesus doesn't respond but now asks them directly. Only Peter's response is recorded, "The Christ of God." Again, Jesus gives no response to Peter. The only thing Jesus says is that he must suffer at the hands of the religious authorities and be raised on the third day. That leads into the statement about denial which follows.

To resolve the two questions Jesus puts to the disciples...his identity as perceived by the people and the disciples...he sets down the well-know condition for discipleship: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." This taking up of one's cross was familiar to most Jews, crucifixion being a common form of punishment. It is not far-fetched to imagine Jesus and his disciples having seen numerous criminals crucified as they made their way around, especially visits to Jerusalem. Actually here we have the first reference to this mode of death, so it must have been quite frightening to hear Jesus speak about it. The words "take up his cross" doesn't apply strictly to crucifixion itself but the arduous process of getting there. One's mind automatically goes to the Via Dolorosa, the path Jesus took to Mount Calvary. That painful journey was a one-time deal, if you will. Jesus says "daily" which, of course, means taking up one's cross for the rest of one's life. In sum, "take up his cross" is a way of saying that anyone who follows Jesus will be perceived as a criminal condemned to the worst form of death, a far cry from the disciples triumphant missionary trip just prior to the feeding of the five thousand.

27 June, Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 9.51-62) opens with the words which read literally, "When the days drew near for him to be received up," *analepsis* being the noun for "received up." Chances are that this term refers to his crucifixion, though it smacks of the ascension, which had occurred earlier in chapter nine. Jesus' resolve for this *analepsis* comes across through the words "he set his face to go to Jerusalem." *Sterizo* is the verb meaning to establish firmly and is repeated in vs. 53. Jesus must have had an intimation for completion of his ministry which is conveyed by the simple yet mysterious words of "when the days drew near." No one in his company is recorded as having this intimation. Surely Jesus had ascended to Jerusalem many times before, including the Passover celebration, but this is the first time he "sent messengers ahead of him to make ready for him." The village to which the disciples went was Samaritan, hence the long, historic hostility there toward Jews. The disciples must not have been alone, for already people had started their trek to Jerusalem for Passover. It should be noted that there must have been quite a few people en route for this most important of celebrations. Thus in addition to the Samaritans hostility to the Jews, they may have wanted to protect their village from being overwhelmed by travelers and people wanting to take advantage of them. At the same time, Passover must have been an economic boon for these villages, even Samaritan ones.

En route to Jerusalem Jesus met three men desirous of following him. The essence of his words to each respectively were 1) "the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head," 2) "Follow me...leave the dead to bury their own dead" and 3) "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." These men might even have been Samaritans. Anyway, clearly Jesus' reception was well received and accompanied by a desire to be his disciple. Jesus rebuked each man in his turn which intimates the urgency of "him to be received up" or his *analepsis*. All three would-be disciples came up with legitimate reasons to hold off a bit to prepare themselves before following Jesus, each of which Jesus rejected sharply. Perhaps he had enough of being slighted by the Samaritans, took that as cue to *sterizo* his face to Jerusalem and to get on with the most important part of his mission.

Chapter ten begins with Jesus appointing "seventy others" to go to "where he was about to come." That is to say, these seventy amplify those messengers "sent ahead of him" of vs. 52 and could fan out not just to Samaritan villages but to others en route to Jerusalem.

4 July, Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 10:1-12, 17-20) follows on the heels of last Sunday when Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem." This is the second time Jesus sent messenger ahead of him, the first being in 9:52 where the number of messengers is not given. However, in the case at hand we have a definite number, seventy men, who went "two by two." That makes thirty-five groups and at least thirty-five potential places to visit, no small amount by any standards. Obviously these men knew the route to Jerusalem, for they entered "every town and place where he himself was about to come." The considerable increase in number of messengers seems to reflect that "setting of face" noted in the previous entry by the Greek verb *sterizo* (to establish firmly). The seventy must have seen this plainly etched in face of Jesus and reflected in his urgency to get underway with their mission. As for the choice of sending these men in pairs, it can be assumed that Jesus knew the seventy fairly well so as to make appropriate companions. After all, two is a small number when your intent is as bold as to approach a town, each man wondering whether it will accept them or more importantly, accept their message. After all, the choice of liking or disliking either man or both was quite immediate.

After having made this division, Jesus said to the seventy men or thirty-five pairs that the "harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." So instead of appealing directly for workers in the field, Jesus advises beseeching the lord of the harvest to send them. At first glance this may be difficult to accept, given the large harvest at hand. Then again, the lord in charge knew the situation better than the workers who were too close to the action. In beseeching the lord there exists the possibility that he may send just a few or maybe no workers at all. It was his judgment call as not so much as to the harvest being "plentiful" but whether or not it was of suitable quality. We could assume that hired hands lacked that expertise. On the other hand, it can be assumed they more knew of the nitty-gritty details of the actual harvest compared with their master. And so, it is not unusual for a conflict to arise.

As for the thirty-five pairs of proto-missionaries, Jesus bids them to travel lightly and not be afraid to accept hospitality from the people they encounter. As for their being rejected, Jesus assures them that "the kingdom of God has come near." Being near is not the same as being at hand; the thirty-five pairs of disciples might be taken as representative of this proximity, whereas Jesus...who has yet to make his appearance...is the kingdom of God present. As for Jesus going to Jerusalem, surely he must have had very many places to stop en route given the rather large number of missionary pairs (thirty-five). Still, there was a chance that some places may not have accepted these groups who, in turn, reported them to Jesus.

The words of rejection were harsh: "It shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town." *Anektos* is the Greek for "tolerable," clear enough, which means the capacity to bear or endure something. Obviously the dreadful fate of Sodom (and Gomorrah) is well known among both Jews and Samaritans, part of the narrative with which they grew up. To compare those villages unreceptive of the missionary groups to the two Old Testament cities is not necessarily an exaggeration but reveals the immediacy of accepting Jesus' message. One cannot help but keep in mind Abraham bargaining with God in Gen 19:22-33. Abraham seems to have won out at ten just men yet did not take it lower. So we can assume that Sodom and Gomorrah had...most likely as a total between them both...less than ten righteous men. The judgement upon both cities was effected by the two angels (cf. Gen 19:1) who presumably were the same men who visited Abraham (cf. 18:2). However, the first encounter has three men whereas 19:1 has two angels." In other words, somewhere between the dialogue with Abraham at Mamre and Abraham's bargaining with God this change from three men to two angels occurred. Perhaps it was a result of Abraham whittling the number from fifty righteous men to ten that had something to do with it. The three men may have good a clue from Abraham and decided to assume the form of dreaded missionaries who brought damnation to Sodom and Gomorrah.

11 July, Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 10:25-37) has Jesus dealing with one of the most maligned type of characters found in all societies, ancient or modern, a lawyer. This fellow asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. "Inherit" is a word one would expect from a lawyer, expecting Jesus to come up with a legal response for something completely gratuitous. However, right away Jesus retorts by "How do you read?" The source of this reading is the Torah from which the lawyer quotes unhesitatingly, "You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbor

as yourself.” The word “read” is *anagignosko* which means more specifically reading in public as in the synagogue. So that means the verse at hand is not intended just for an individual but for those in the synagogue, the entire congregation. The lawyer responds well to the question and as he was trained to do, realizing that he was put on the spot unexpectedly. In fact, probably he didn’t even expect Jesus to know what an inheritance was. As the story Jesus is about to tell, the neighbor, traditionally taken as a fellow Jew, is expanded well beyond this relatively narrow understanding.

Right after this brief but pointed exchange the lawyer “wishes to justify himself” by asking Jesus “who is my neighbor?” He assumed that this neighbor would be a fellow Jew as just noted, one in the synagogue familiar with *anagignosko*, reading the Torah aloud. To that Jesus begins the parable of the man who fell in among robbers and who was rescued by a Samaritan. While most Jews despised Samaritans, chances are that lawyers did so even more, given the fact they there must have been extended litigious arguments and affairs between the two groups. As for the (Jewish) priest and Levite who saw the man beaten up by robbers, their unwillingness to help is amplified by the words “on the other side.” That is to say, they crossed the road to avoid the man, perhaps pretending he wasn’t there. One can’t help but recall the parable of Lazarus and the rich man where “a great chasm has been fixed in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able” (and visa versa, Lk 16.26). By contrast, we have the directness of the words applied to the Samaritan: “came to where he was” which suggest that he did not cross the road even when he could have. Unlike the brothers of Lazarus, the Samaritan could go to “warn them lest they also come into this place of torment.” The Samaritan “had compassion” or *splagchnizomai*, to be moved inwardly as by one’s bowels. Thus the compassion shown here is of the deepest kind, a full expression of *agape*, if you will. Surely this image must have struck the lawyer deeply because he was of the same caste as the priest and Levite who passed by the wounded man.

As for the Samaritan, he told the innkeeper to whom he entrusted the wounded man that he will repay him when he comes back. We have no record of what happened upon his return, of what happened to both later on. Perhaps the Samaritan himself fell in among robbers who got word of his compassion for a hated Jew. If so, hopefully the man he rescued repaid the favor. As for the two perhaps having met, that would be a friendship established between former enemies, a Jew and a Samaritan. The story ends here for us to draw our own conclusions except for the telling words addressed to the lawyer, “Go and do likewise.” Nothing is said of the lawyer’s response. Surely he must have foreseen this.

18 July, Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“As they went on their way, he entered a village.” Such are the opening words for today’s relatively short Gospel (Lk 10.38-42) which follows on the heels of last week’s story about the man who fell in among the robbers and who was ministered to by a Samaritan while the priest and Levite passed by. It makes you wonder if Jesus and his disciples actually encountered someone like this poor unfortunate along the way. If they did—and chances are high, given the dangers of traveling at that time—the disciples may have used the incident to test Jesus. Surely they weren’t above being like that lawyer who asked about inheriting eternal life.

Martha received Jesus (unspecified village) while her sister, Mary, “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching.” That means that beside having shown Jesus hospitality, it wouldn’t be surprising that her home turned into a synagogue of sorts to which others came spontaneously to hear Jesus teach. The Greek verb for “sat” (at the Lord’s feet) is *parakathemomai*, literally, to sit beside, *para* (beside) being prefaced to the verbal root. It’s a comforting scene indicative of Mary’s attention to Jesus’ *logos*, the word used here for “teaching.” The verb *parakathemomai* is used in conjunction with the preposition *pros*, “at the Lord’s feet.” *Pros* suggests full presence or attention to a specific direction. That is, the *para* associated with *parakathemomai* takes on a new meaning, if you will, with this *pros* as it relates to the *logos* of Jesus. It is a kind of sitting beside (*para*) with attention directed toward (*pros*) Jesus. As for the *logos* or teaching, it is not specified but may have been similar to the robber and Samaritan just recounted: not so much for Mary’s benefit but for the disciples, to reinforce a central teaching of his *logos*.

While Jesus was continuing with his *logos*, Mary’s sister Martha blurted out a request for her to help out. She

figured that asking Jesus directly would get her sister to come at once. Instead, Jesus catches Martha off guard by calling her “anxious and troubled” or *merimnao* and *thorubazo* (verbs). The first suggests paying undue attention to minutiae and getting bogged down by them. The second derives from *thorubeo*, to make a noise or uproar like a crowd, quite vivid indeed. So when Martha hears Jesus thus speaking (though Greek wasn’t used but the sentiment was certainly there), she must have been reduced to silence. In fact, we don’t hear from Martha, for the incident comes to a close without anything further being said.

What catches one’s attention, however, is Jesus saying to Martha...and this is what generations have pondered in one way or another... that “one thing is needful.” Again, we have reference to the Greek which *henos estin chreia*. The mystery and appeal to these words over the centuries is that Jesus does not spell it out. Apparently he doesn’t want to...either to Martha nor to Mary nor to his disciples. Leave it at that and figure it out by pondering the Gospel incident as a whole and see what you come up with. Anyway, *henos estin chreia* is sandwiched in between the story about the Samaritan showing mercy when a priest and Levite passed him by and the beginning of Chapter Eleven which begins with “He (Jesus) was praying in a certain place.” Apparently that struck the disciples so forcefully that they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

25 July, Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today’s Gospel (Lk 11.1-13) begins with “he was praying in a certain place,” a fact noted at the conclusion of last Sunday’s entry. As to the location of this *topos*, no details are given. Since mention of this *topos* occurs right after the incident with Martha, we can assume that she was familiar with it. However, Martha may have decided to tag along out of curiosity to Jesus’ response to her pre-occupation with serving him to see by example what exactly was that “one needful thing.”

One of the disciples asks Jesus about prayer (*proseuchomai* often has to do with the offering of prayers along the lines of worship) had in mind the way John the Baptist had taught his disciples...*kathos* or as John taught.” He and the other disciples must have been familiar with that way and assumed that Jesus would carry on along the same line. There are no records of this, however. Chances are it dealt with repentance in chapter three. Much of what John said pre-supposed being alone in the desert which, in turn, pre-supposed solitary prayer, which later became a model used by the desert fathers. Also implied was keen insight into the messianic passages of the Old Testament about preparing the way of the Lord. More than prayer must have been on the disciple’s mind. He must have been concerned about how John comported himself for such a prolonged period in the desert with little or no apparent communication with the outside world.

Jesus gives no response as to how or what the Baptist taught regarding prayer, let alone his solitary lifestyle. Right away he launches into what now is known as the Our Father, the tone of which is quite different from John’s approach and rightly so because John’s mission had been fulfilled. Certainly it wasn’t highly charged by comparison and even may have been disappointing to the expectant disciples listening to Jesus, waiting to see how closely he would fit in with John. Then again, Jesus did not live a prolonged solitary life as John had done. They were more familiar with him being pretty much out there in public most of the time. At the same time, this was for only approximately three years. The disciples may or may have not known how Jesus lived during the bulk of his life at Nazareth.

After having presented the elements of the Our Father, Jesus tells a story about a man who asks a friend for three loaves of bread. What makes this normal request different, even inopportune, is that it happens in the middle of the night. Actually the word *anaideia* is used which translates as impudence, shamelessness. Instead of rebuking the man for this effrontery, Jesus praises it: “Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.” In other words, prayer is transformed from the customary way of worship implied by *proseuchomai* to a boldness approaching recklessness and no concern for a man sleeping with his children.

Jesus concludes his response to the disciple who asked about prayer in the context of John the Baptist’s way by calling him (though indirectly), “you who are evil.” *Poneros* is the adjective here, more as good-for-nothing, toilsome or just a pain. If Martha had been present as noted above, she would have concurred with this assessment of *poneros* which must have come as a shock to the disciple and others with him. Chances are that

Mary, did not accompany her sister Mary as she went to that “certain place.” Mary had no need for this, having grasped the difference between the way John and Jesus taught about prayer. If the disciple had been attentive to the dialogue that went on in the house of the two sisters, he would have not asked about how the way of prayer differed between John and Jesus. Should his curiosity remained perked, it would have been wiser to ask Mary to teach him how to pray.

1 August, Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today’s Gospel (Lk 12.13-21) opens with the words “one of the multitude.” *Ochlos* is a revealing word if we are to take it in the context of the opening verse of this chapter: “so many thousands of the multitude.” We have the distinct impression that throngs upon throngs are pressing in upon Jesus made all the more dramatic by their treading upon each other. *Katapateo* is the verb here which suggests walking upon...walking upon people, all in an attempt to reach Jesus. As for listening to him, one would have to be in fairly close range to hear a voice unsupported by mechanical or physical devices. Just prior to this Jesus said that the “Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” The person who spoke up seems to have been completely oblivious to this, requesting that Jesus ask his brother about dividing an inheritance. That in a sense is a *katapateo*, a treading upon the discourse Jesus is presenting. Rightly we see some frustration with Jesus, “Who made me a judge or arbiter over you?” Despite many attempts to raise the awareness of the audience he was addressing, frustration is inevitable, given the pre-occupations with many people, that Jesus gets into these less than desirable situations. Still, he uses these situations to teach of other things and so bring round his audience. In the case at hand, the interruption about speaking on the Spirit in terms of an inheritance leads to a parable.

This parable consists of a man wishing to pull down his older storage places and construct new ones to accommodate the abundant harvest. Nothing is wrong with this plan and is something Jesus probably would have approved. However, what’s bad about the situation is the man taking satisfaction in his construction project intended for him alone. Now contrast that with Joseph in Egypt. At that time Joseph built extensive granaries throughout the land and stored enough grain for the coming seven year famine in order that the people may survive this grievous long-term affliction (cf. Gen 41.47-9). Chances are that some in the multitude grasped this association, the story of Israel in Egypt being very much a part of their tradition. As for the question posed by the man, that is, relative to inheritance, it may not have been terribly surprising. In a society where lineage is important for self-identity, most of Jesus’ listeners must have been pre-occupied with inheritance in one way or another. So when this pre-occupation is put in terms of a selfish attitude represented by the man wanting to build barns, his comparison with the generous Joseph must have affected them deeply. Then again, Joseph was helping Egyptians, dreaded enemies and oppressors of Israel. In conclusion, Jesus deftly got off a rather mundane subject and turned it around to reveal a deeper truth about how to live.

“So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Such is the last verse of today’s Gospel. Note the preposition *eis* (into) for “toward.” That is to say, riches are “into God” or in the process of entering more his presence. Jesus seems to put no restrictions on this entry...*eis*...which can continue indefinitely. Focus upon this continual *eis* sets the stage for the next verse where Jesus tells not the crowd but his disciples not to be anxious about corporeal concerns.

8 August, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today’s Gospel (Lk 12.32-48) starts out on a cheerful note with Jesus saying that his Father is pleased to give them the kingdom of heaven. It ends up quite otherwise. In the same breath he asks his “little (*mikros*) flock,” a phrase of endearment, to relinquish all possessions for it. Though Jesus has spoken of this kingdom earlier, admittedly it was vague and ill-defined, always put in terms of renunciation. The disciples and other listeners had nothing to go on about this kingdom, really, except Jesus’ word. Despite all this, there must have been something mysteriously appealing to what Jesus was trying to communicate, a fact which remains just as valid today. One attractive aspect to this kingdom is that a thief cannot approach (*eggizo*) it meaning that the thief recognizes the kingdom yet stays away. As far as purses getting old and moths eating away one’s prized

possessions, they pale in comparison to what a thief can do...even murder you.

After a few verses about the durability of this kingdom for which everything is to be relinquished, Jesus speaks about watchfulness, of having one's loins girded and lamps burning for the arrival of one's master. This suggests being outdoors in the cold of nighttime as opposed to the daylight hours. The master had been away at a marriage feast, so it was safe for the servants to assume that he would come home quite late, well after dark. This notion of a late arrival is backed up by mention of the second and third watch of night when the servants should be prepared to wait upon their master. Even though Jesus speaks of the necessity to be ready (*hetoimos*) because the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour, again we can assume his arrival will be at night, that is, if we follow this story closely. As for the words "unexpected hour," the Greek reads *ou dokeite* or "does not think or suppose," the time one does not reckon the master will arrive. And so this applies equally to neglect of watching during the daylight hours. Still, this emphasis on nighttime harkens back to the above-mentioned thief who dares not approach the kingdom of heaven even under the cover of night.

Peter asks Jesus whether this story of the late-arriving master (*kurios*) is intended "for us or for all," that is, for all other listeners. It's safe to assume that rarely or unless specifically stated that Jesus speaks with plenty of people milling around him and his disciples in mind as opposed to a neatly arranged audience. We get glimpses of this even today in Near Eastern societies where things are done more out in the open than Western ones. As to Peter's question, Jesus stresses the role of a steward (*oikonomos*) instead of master. The former literally means one who cares for the household which includes family members and slaves, not just the physical possessions. It is the *kurios* who appoints a person...and this could include a trusted slave...to such an important position, of giving food "at the proper time." The well-known Greek word *kairos* is this "proper time" which applies more to an occasion. As related to food, it can mean making sure enough of it is on hand for three meals a day, no small task for the family, slaves and hired hands. Once this is made clear, Jesus turns attention, rather, re-directs it to his earlier words about the servants being prepared to meet their master. Instead of returning late (at night) from a marriage feast, the temporal duration is more spread out: "and will come on a day when he does not expect and at an hour he does not know." That is, the master can come anytime, day or night as opposed to the more likelihood of the latter which was suggested above.

So despite the urgency of being watchful, Jesus speaks of two servants who don't live up to this standard: one who is negligent and harsh (he beats his fellows due to the master's delay, thinking he can get away with it) and the other who did not know the master's will. The former will get a more severe beating and the latter, no so severe. Nevertheless, the treatment meted out is quite horrendous because the verb *dero* is used which fundamentally means to skin, flay...an intense form of whipping being involved. Perhaps the negligent servant might not survive; the same could apply to the other one depending upon his physical constitution. With this fearful image in mind Jesus brings to a close the absolute nature of having one's loins girded and lamps burning which opened the Gospel. This severity doesn't stop here but carries to vs. 49 when Jesus speaks of his coming to cast fire upon the earth and wishing it were kindled already. There doesn't seem to be a transition at all here, simply that Jesus continued along with his discourse which gets harsher as chapter twelve draws to a close.

15 August, Assumption

As noted in previous entries for today's feast, the Assumption is one of those days which lacks scriptural support and cannot be explained in a forthright manner. This doesn't detract from its value but adds to its sense of mystery. In short, the Assumption can be grasped best by a slow, meditative reading of scriptural passages relevant to Mary done in the spirit of *lectio divina*. In other words, we understand the Assumption through *lectio* only as it leads to a silencing of our mental faculties. From that silence springs the mystery of this feast day. Thus the Assumption is a challenge not so much to be understood but a mystery first into which we must be initiated (that's the original idea of *mysterium*) in order to contemplate it.

Today has two readings, one for the Vigil Mass and the other for the Day Mass, the former being considered here, Lk 11.27-8, which consists of just two sentences. The Gospel begins with "as he said this." This refers to Jesus having spoken of an unclean spirit which was cast out and returns with seven others making the person worse off than before. Presumably an unknown woman was present when Jesus was speaking about this and

grasped what he meant. She couldn't help but utter the words of exclamation, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!" Although she says this in a spontaneous outburst, there's a chance she could have known Jesus' mother, Mary...and Mary herself may have been right there. So instead of attributing words of praise to Jesus for what he had just said, the anonymous woman attributed it to Mary. Although Jesus seems to shift attention away from his mother, she would not have taken this as an offense but would have concurred fully. It would come as no surprise that Mary would have recalled the words of her cousin Elizabeth, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" [Lk 1.42]. Although that took place in her youth when pregnant with Jesus, Elizabeth's words were sufficient to keep Mary happy, *makarios*, from that point on.

Blessed or *makarios* can translate as "happy." As for Jesus' response, such happiness applies to persons who first hear the word of God and then keep it. The latter verb is *phulasso*, to keep watch or guard as well as to cherish something. It evokes Psalm 119, the longest of them all, which centers around the divine Law or Torah. In it we find many references to keeping the Torah, so it is well worth reading that Psalm in light of today's Gospel.

As for the Gospel, without missing a beat, Jesus responds with his own form of blessedness: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" We can just imagine the joyous expression on the faces of both Jesus and the woman during this short exchange made all the more meaningful by its brevity. It wouldn't be surprising that the exchange took place in an instant. While done in the context of a larger group of people, many whom could have heard them, changes are they hadn't a clue as to what it meant. So instead of continuing with the theme of *makarios*, Jesus (and let's say with the woman's consent) decide to change the subject.

Immediately after the wonderful exchange of *makarios* Jesus speaks of the sign of Jonah, of how it symbolizes the coming death and burial of the Son of man. He also speaks of the queen of the South who came to listen to King Solomon, perhaps having in mind the woman with whom he just spoke.

22 August, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 13.22-30) has a certain urgency about it which is appropriate as we draw to the close of summer and prepare for autumn. We can take it as a distant signal or warning to prepare ourselves for the weeks just prior to Advent as well as the Advent season itself. Here as in many Gospel incidents an anonymous person poses a question pertaining to a life-or-death situation. There's something appealing and comforting to anonymity because it is all-inclusive and reminds us that we all are troubled by the same issues and have the same questions. Should we knew the person's name here, it wouldn't add any information to the issue at hand. As for the question, it runs: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" To pose such a question implies some familiarity, even if it's dim, of what it means to be saved and the natural curiosity as to how many people will be saved. Even deeper is implied a universal alienation from God though here God isn't mentioned outrightly but certainly implied.

To this anonymous person with his universal question Jesus responds with a rather narrow answer. "Strive to enter by the narrow door." To someone uninitiated, his response is indicative that an indeterminate few persons will be saved, though Jesus refuses to elaborate. The verb for "strive" is *agonizomai* which can be taken as to contend for a prize. *Agonizomai* introduces an element of competition and excitement to the matter at hand, thereby elevating it to another plane instead of worrying who will win and who will lose. Jesus' words are not unlike asking his questioner to enter a race, enjoy running it along with other competitors and taking aim for the narrow door which is a kind of finishing line. The very act of *agonizomai* is the issue at hand, not entering the narrow door though both go hand-in-hand. Most people would be focused on getting through the door, not so much on the race itself. Jesus qualifies the participants in this unique type of contest when he says that many will seek to enter it and will be unable. This inability to enter isn't specified; however, the more you consider *agonizomai* as an invitation to participate in a race, the better is your discernment between those persons who are eager for it and those who are mildly curious. Until this invitation to compete is given, both groups lived together like wheat and tares growing in the same field, barely indistinguishable

from each other.

Jesus moves the image from the implied one of a race with the verb *agonizomai* to a householder who closes his door upon those beseeching him. His words are telling: "I do not know where you come from." Continuing with the image of a race, that would be equivalent to a referee standing at the finishing line (i.e., the 'narrow door'). He sees the contestants way off at the starting line, their initial dash and progress along the track until they reach the finishing line. If the referee says to a racer that he doesn't know him, this is equivalent to saying that he had entered the race illegitimately and has no right to participate in it, let alone be qualified to enter through the narrow door.

The image shifts further from the household to the dreadful fate of those he shut outside his house. Apparently such persons who ate and drank with him are cast into the darkness. Though this time of night isn't explicit, it is implied by the words "when once the household has risen up and shut the door." Within this house are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and prophets...those who had engaged in *agonizomai* and who had entered the narrow door. The narrowness of this entrance is contrasted with "men (who) will come from east and west and from north and south and sit at table in the kingdom of God." No specific number of such people are given; they could be in the millions or a handful. One fact is certain, however, that they will come from all four cardinal points of the earth. As for participating in this banquet, the verb *anaklino* is used for "sit at table," implying a reclining on a bench according to ancient Greek and Roman fashion.

Today's Gospel began with a pressing question by an anonymous questioner which led him and others to a place he had not anticipated. His question wasn't answered, of course, but brought to another level as to participating...reclining...at table in the kingdom of God. "Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Such are the last words with the indeterminate "some." Actually the inadequacy of Jesus' response to a legitimate though rather limited question expands out to an invitation, not a threat, to undergo that *agonizomai* to the narrow door and see what happens next. From our vantage point, the door not only is narrow but closer, making the invitation all the more appealing.

29 August, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 14.1,7-14) begins with the first verse of chapter fourteen and advances to several verses later, 7-14. It runs as follows: "One Sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him." The verb "watching" is revealing in the context of Sabbath, the day of rest. Though Jews were forbidden to perform unnecessary actions on that day, *paratereo* suggests intense activity but of a mental variety which genuine observers of the Sabbath would have frowned upon. It means an intense observation with one's attention focused narrowly upon something or someone. Everything else taken as distractions are brushed aside without effort, for they are perceived as incidentals which fail to detract from one's focus. The preposition *para* (beside) intensifies the verb *tereo*, a kind of watching on all sides for the slightest deviation. Surely Jesus must have picked this up with all eyes upon him. It would not be surprising to find that Jesus pitied this mis-directed attention which should be attentive to observing the Sabbath day. After all, *tereo* is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew verb *shamar* used in keeping both the Sabbath and the Torah.

Being the subject of such close scrutiny on this the weekly holy day of rest gave occasion for Jesus to offer a parable about vying for the best place at a banquet. "He marked how they chose the places of honor." The verb here is *epecho*, literally as to hold upon and refers to directing one's attention to something or someone, not unlike fastening upon it permanently. *Epecho* reveals the quickness of his mind to pick up and utilize a potentially harmful situation and turn it to his advantage. Compare Jesus' *epecho* with the people around him who were *paratereo*. Both verbs are similar yet different: in the case at hand, the former pertains to the aiming of one's attention whereas the latter, though it involves this mental state, implies being attentive with a view towards something that might go wrong. If this is so, then indeed things will go wrong. Thus the situation in the house of one of the Pharisees is a duel between two types of attentiveness. That can be applied to the parable Jesus is presenting where at a marriage feast where a guest may have to relinquish his place to a more important person. So we could say that by favoring the "lowest place" as soon as you enter

the house is a way of directing the previously misdirected *paratereo* to one sensitive to the situation at hand. The preposition *eis* (into) used with the “lowest place” suggests going into that last place and staying there. Even if one isn’t invited to “go up higher,” that is fine because you as guest are indifferent as to where you may be seated. The word *prosanabaino* consists of two prepositions prefaced to verb *baino*, to go. It means a going to or toward (*pros*) coupled with *ana*, up to and upon. The image thus presented is that the guest will go up to the host who is inviting him.

When Jesus finishes speaking this parable he addresses the Pharisee who had invited him. By now this man must be confused thoroughly because he doesn’t know where to seat Jesus. He saves him from embarrassment (and that *paratereo* which must be going on among his fellows) by asking him to invite those who can’t repay him for having been invited. This will make the Pharisee “blessed” or *makarios* (it also means ‘happy’) or happy at being relieved from engaging in *paratereo* as well as being the object of *paratereo*. The Pharisee may not grasp fully what is transpiring should he take up Jesus’ offer—and perhaps he did later on—but is assured of “being repaid at the resurrection of the just.” As for introducing the resurrection of the just here, it can apply to a rising...a rising which will occur only if one prefers that lowly place at the marriage feast which, in turn, opens up the possibility of being invited to “go up higher.” Still, that implies a gamble as well as a challenge. There’s a possibility the host may not invite one to that higher place. This falls in line with many of parables and sayings of Jesus which leave the situation unresolved yet with the possibility that one may work it out for oneself positively. Nothing clear-cut is offered which makes the words of Jesus all the more intriguing and worth pondering.

5 September, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Great multitudes accompanied him.” Such are the opening words of today’s Gospel (Lk 14.25-33). *Ochlos* is the singular for “multitude” which implies a moving swarm of people, undisciplined and lacking direction as to where they are going. There comes to mind the potential for a leader to stir up these people in rebellion against some injustice or a desire for political revenge. However, we can envision Jesus in a very different way at the head of this *ochlos* along with his disciples who assist him in holding the crowd in check. This picture of a swarm makes Jesus’ words all the more dramatic, “And he turned and said to them.” That is, he turned around and looked at the vast swarm behind him. Their clamor must have been in his ears for some time, so it was time to address them. He may have been perturbed at some who chanted politically charged words, something the Jewish elders would use against him later on, not just here but in many other instances. Since so many were following, Jesus could not help but come up with an image that certainly would whittle down the crowd in dramatic fashion.

When addressing such a large audience, the people had to draw close to hear Jesus who must have spoken at the top of his voice in order to be heard. Some of his disciples and other followers may have relayed his message to those not able to be within hearing range. Jesus uses the strong word *miseo* (to hate) with respect to one’s closest relatives, even one’s own life. This hatred is not misdirected but used in reference to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Surely the twelve with him were pondering these words and must have had their hidden doubts. Though not recorded, their hesitation became evident in how they behaved at the time of Christ’s passion and death. And so they became just as unruly and confused as the *ochlos*. As for the *ochlos* in today’s Gospel, we don’t know how they received Jesus’ words but can surmise their response.

Jesus seems to have modified his strong words about following him by offering two examples of prudence: taking into account the building of a tower and negotiating with an enemy stronger than oneself. If a person doesn’t exercise this prudence or translates it into whether or not he or she has the strength to hate one’s closest relatives, then following Jesus isn’t an option. As to most of the *ochlos* who heard all this we can assume most turned away and rightly so. However, we can credit the *ochlos* as having taken to heart the two examples Jesus had offered. The Gospel gives no clue as to their reaction but leaves us to ponder what might have happened as well as how the disciples must have felt being put on the spot, albeit indirectly. Having finished his words, Jesus turns again, not toward the people but toward his destination which is not given, perhaps Jerusalem.

12 September, Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today we have two Gospels, the longer or shorter version, the latter (Lk 15.1-10) being considered here. Last week Jesus was at the head of an *ochlos* or crowd which he attempted to whittle down by using strong language, that is, about hating one's closest relatives. We don't know how the situation turned out but can surmise most had left; indeed, some of his closer disciples must have had their doubts. Today's Gospel begins with "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him." Surely we have here an undesirable group which may have been part of the *ochlos* just noted. They may not have been repulsed by the harshness of Jesus' words but hung around because they knew they were down and out and had nothing else to lose. Note the verb *eggizo* (drawing near) which is the exact opposite of what most the *ochlos* must have done when they drifted away, although that is not explicit but implied. While presumably the *ochlos* was dwindling and the tax collectors and sinners were increasing, we have another group, the Pharisees and scribes, a complicated mix. Without a doubt, they saw the immensity of the *ochlos* like an army on the move and wanted to see if it developed into a political threat, for example, to take over Jerusalem. However, their fears were allayed when the crowd began to dissipate. They must have felt additional disgust when in place of those rabble-rousers the other undesirables took their place. The Pharisees and scribes exclaimed not so much with wonder but with disgust...and who can't blame them..."This man receives sinners and eats with them." First comes the receiving (*prosdechomai*) or welcoming this with hospitality and then eating with (*sunesthio*) them.

Let's say that Jesus had received the sinners and was reclining at meal with them. Close by were the Pharisees and scribes (i.e., standing) whom Jesus addressed from the middle of the meal. The sinners must have felt embarrassed with so many notables crowding around the banquet hall, intimidating them just as much as their host, yet felt that any words from Jesus would calm the situation just as he had done with the *ochlos* in last Sunday's Gospel.

Now Jesus has set the stage for a parable concerning ninety-nine lost sheep which the shepherd leaves to search out one lost sheep. Not only does the shepherd leave the ninety-nine, he does so in the wilderness (*eremos*), a place devoid of vegetation and full of wild beasts. The shepherd must have felt they would be safe: perhaps the *eremos* was too remote even for beasts of prey. Also the sheep may have been left there a brief period of time. Regardless, the shepherd returns with the stray sheep on his shoulders: "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." Words not unlike the father of the prodigal son to the so-called good son, "It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive" [vs. 32].

As for those who "need no repentance," they are not unlike the son who never disobeyed his father as well as the guests invited to celebrate the return of the prodigal son. Jesus calls these ninety-nine persons "righteous" (*dikaïos*) who are not unlike the Pharisees and scribes present among the invited sinners and tax collectors. There could have been a danger lurking among these invited guests to take delight at how Jesus handled his opponents with such deftness. Though unrecorded, we can surmise Jesus turning to them saying that they are in danger of losing their initial sense of having transgressed God and man and should keep it ever before their minds. As for the Pharisees and scribes, presumably they remained in the banquet hall to hear the next two parables which run through to the end of Chapter Fifteen. We don't hear their response, but chances are their tendency to murmur (which characterized them, vs. 2) resumed as soon as they stepped outside.

19 September, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 16.1-13) is about the dishonest steward who was "wasting his (master's) goods." The verb here is quite vivid, *diaskorpizo*, which translates as to scatter through, as if this man were throwing his master's possessions to the four winds. No details as to this squandering is given which reached the master through reports ("What is this that I hear about you?"). Surprisingly, the steward was not punished as is the case in other parables but let off lightly with a dismissal from office. It turns out, however, that there was some interval between the master's dismissal and the steward's actual departure, for quickly he makes a move to save his position. As for the nature of his office, the term is *oiknomos* which literally means house-law (or custom), *oikos-nomos*, one in charge of dispensing and administering a large household. In an attempt to retain his position...for a steward was an important administrator and could have been a slave as well...he

decides to relieve people under him of their obligations, a shrewd, calculating move which must have gotten the attention of the master. Such things were hard to conceal within a close-knit society, so almost immediately this move on the steward's part was broadcast throughout the household and beyond. Surely debtors to the master must have come from far and wide to take advantage of what was going on.

"The master commended the dishonest steward." Why not? It saved him the bother of dealing with these servants. The verb here is *epaineo*, literally to commend upon (*epi* being prefaced to the verbal root) and thus suggests that the master approved fully what the dishonest steward had done. Chances are this astute move to curry favor with his underlings reflected the equally astute way the master comported himself both at home and in business dealings. More specifically, the master praised his steward for his shrewdness or *phronimos*, actually an adverb meaning "wisely" but in a worldly sort of way. At this point Jesus compares this wily fellow with "the sons of light," that is, making him by way of implication a son of darkness. The sons of light lack the ability to behave *phronimos* and never could have accomplished what the steward had done, that is, writing off debts owed. Not that the sons of light would retain these debts but simply had no interest in collecting them. Thus it would not be far off the mark to call them irresponsible as far as human standards go.

Jesus concludes this parable with a curious exhortation: "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal habitations." The adjective *adikos* is used here which is equivalent to the noun *adikia* as applied to the unjust steward (that noun is rendered better as 'steward of unrighteousness'). Jesus focuses upon those servants under this fellow, not the steward himself. By so currying favor the steward relieves the underlings from their burdens, thinking that he is the one getting the better half of the deal. Actually it's the master who is making out best of all as he watches all this transpire. Who knows...perhaps even secretly he encouraged his workers to curry favor with the steward and thus be relieved of their burdens. While the master may have lost considerable income, at least he had these people firmly in tow and thus obligated to him in the future. As for the "steward of unrighteousness," we don't know if he retained his job despite having been praised by his master.

Note, however, that Jesus says that the "unrighteous mammon" will fail. When this happens, they or the servants indebted to their steward and thus to their master will be received into the eternal habitations. "They" is indefinite and not specified which could apply to other stewards of the master's large household. Instead of being relieved of measures of oil and wheat, the servants will enter these dwellings which are eternal. The word for "habitations" is *skene*, literally a tent as opposed to an established dwelling (*oikos*). That means the servants will reside in temporary places which ironically turn out to be eternal compared with the *oikonomos* or man in charge of his master's *oikos*.

26 September, Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This Gospel (Lk 16.19-31) concerns the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus which is addressed within the context of the Pharisees, vs. 14 ('who were lovers of money'). With this in mind, the parable is all the more striking.

As for the rich man (*plousios*), he "feasted sumptuously every day," the adverb being *lampros* or literally, in a bright or very manifest fashion. The idea is that his feasting was ostentatious and everyone was aware of his excess which is how he wanted it. This public show makes sense in the next verse where the poor man (*ptochos*) Lazarus is "at his gate" or right there where everyone could watch the wealthy man feast away behind closed gates. The reason for such ostentation was to cower into submission people like Lazarus, all the while enjoying himself. In addition, there must have been guards at the gate to make the scene all the more intimidating. Meanwhile, Lazarus "desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table" while dogs were there licking his sores. That means Lazarus had a full view of the lavish meal intended to impress and cower. The food which fell was not due to the sloppiness of the rich man and his guests but a deliberate gesture to intimidate people like Lazarus.

The parable moves quickly on with the death of Lazarus carried off by angels to the bosom of Abraham, a way of saying that Lazarus went right to the source of the father of all Israel. Note that the preposition *eis* (into) is used, "into the bosom of Abraham," a kind of nesting where he would be cherished and nourished for all

eternity. Even though Lazarus was a beggar, his miserable condition necessarily didn't make him a candidate for holiness, but that's beside the point, to contrast his position with the rich man about to be described in some detail.

After death the rich man found himself in Hades and "in torment," *basanos* also meaning torture or inquiry by torture which later is described as "in this flame" (vs. 24), *phlox* suggesting an intense flash of fire. This man saw "Abraham far off" with Lazarus there in his bosom much as a child resting on its mother's breast. He doesn't address Lazarus but Abraham, the former never uttering a word throughout the entire parable. His voice must have been quite loud to cut across the distance ('far off) and reach out from the flash of that *phlox* in which he was situated. Even in this situation horrible beyond imagination Abraham addresses the rich man as "son" which connotes some sympathy at having to watch him without being unable to relieve his torment. Lazarus isn't presented as watching the rich man; Abraham wanted to protect him from this, pushing him deep into his bosom beyond the sight. Even though the parable takes place in Hades, we have the rich man on one side and Abraham (with Lazarus) on the other which must have been worse than the *phlox*, bad as that was. In other words, the rich man was forced to view Lazarus much as Lazarus watched the rich man at his gate. Instead of dogs licking his sores, the *phlox* is consuming the rich man without destroying him. And if the scraps of food which fell from the rich man's table is thrown it, we can imagine the far greater riches that must have fallen from Abraham's bosom and how they tormented the rich man.

The rich man saw Abraham "far off," a fact spelled out further by the "great chasm" (*chasma*) of vs. 26. A chasm doesn't have to be "great" in terms of width; chances are here such was not the case, that "far off" can be understood in terms of the chasm's depth which represents the profound difference between the two men and their condition. The chasm serves to separate the rich man in Hades and the bosom of Abraham, two opposite realities yet in full sight of each other. With this depth in mind (as opposed to width), the rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers as a warning. If Lazarus took up the offer, he'd end up in front of their gates just like in front of the rich man's home. This really symbolizes the depth of that chasm. It's spelled out further when Abraham refers to Moses and the prophets whose writings wouldn't convince people like the rich man and his five brothers. Thus both those writings, the Torah and Lazarus if he had risen from the death, a type of Jesus, would have no effect at all.

In conclusion, mention of Moses (traditionally the author of the Pentateuch) and the prophets can be taken as a failure to read them in the spirit of *lectio divina*. If that approach were taken as opposed to using the writings to squeeze out all sorts of laws and regulations, chances are less people like the rich man would end up in Hades.

3 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

When we come to October, there's a sense that we have moved definitively into a new season compared with September whose occasional warm days remind of us of summer just a month ago. Liturgically speaking, that means we have a greater awareness of having covered a considerable amount of territory, that territory when Ordinary Season had begun after Pentecost back in the spring. This consists not so much as movement in space but movement in time...not linear time but circular...with the end being renewal, not just a beginning exactly the same as the one before it and so forth. And spring itself seems so distant compared with the waning of the calendar year we're starting to become aware of more. So it seems when we're in a given season we're aware of the one just behind us and the one ahead. That's a quite a change here in New England.

At this juncture we're quite a way through Ordinary Time which is the largest segment of liturgical cycle, and we have a growing sense that it's getting old and in need of renewal (and that renewal is Advent). Awareness of this is subtle but not so much when a change of seasons comes around. All in all, attunement to the ebb and flow of various liturgical times and feasts within a given year is a sign that we are alive and even better, alive with the larger reality of the Church.

Today's Gospel (Lk 17.5-10) begins with a simple cry from the heart, the heart of Jesus' disciples: "Increase our faith!" The verb is *prostithemi* (to add to) with the preposition *pros* prefaced to the root *tithemi* thereby

signifying a direction-toward which. Implied is that the disciples had faith already...this they knew...yet perceived some kind of lack. As for the type of faith involved, nothing is said explicitly, most likely faith in Jesus himself and his mission. What prompted them to exclaim these words were the words of Jesus about the danger of causing “little ones” to sin, this right after the parable (of last Sunday) which dealt with the rich man and Lazarus. Therefore it isn't at all surprising for the disciples to speak as such.

Without launching into a discourse about faith, Jesus compares it to the smallness of a mustard seed. As is the case elsewhere, he doesn't develop the comparison between faith and this type of seed. Rather Jesus says that such a seed would say to a mulberry tree, “Be rooted up and be planted in the sea.” That is to say, a small seed, one which hasn't even begun to sprout, has the audacity to take on a mulberry tree. That type of tree isn't especially high but is known for rapid growth. Thus the comparison Jesus sets up is between something very small and big, that the former has the capacity to take over the latter despite the huge difference between them. Not only is the mustard seed tiny, it has the capacity to order the fast-growing mulberry tree to be planted in the sea. While listeners to this parable may praise the mustard seed and recall Jesus' other references to it, the real glory goes to the mulberry tree. After all, it obeyed its tiny cousin by uprooting itself and walking over to the ocean in which it set its roots. This change of environment from one friendly to one hostile is the real lesson.

10 October, Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

On the surface, today's Gospel (Lk 17.11-19) has a “typical” air about it, just right for Ordinary Time, insofar as it is one of many recorded healings. Then again, there's nothing typical about what Jesus had done, especially since a fairly large number of people are involved, ten lepers. It should be noted that this excerpt follows upon the heels of last Sunday's Gospel when the Apostles bade Jesus to increase their faith. Chances are the lepers got wind of this and decided to see for themselves...not just an increase of faith but a cure of a most deadly disease.

“On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.” Such is the opening verse which takes place on a border between two distinct areas: Samaria, which was hostile to the Jews and the source of one of Jesus' greatest parables (the Good Samaritan) and Galilee, the native land of Jesus and the place where he had chosen his first disciples. The words *dia mesou* are for “between” which read literally “through the middle.” That suggests that Jesus was passing “through the middle” of these two very different territories, being fully present to each. Furthermore, this *dia mesou* occurred while Jesus was en route to Jerusalem for the Passover...not just the Jewish Passover but the new Passover he was going to inaugurate. The preposition *eis* (into) is used with respect to Jerusalem, i.e., “into Jerusalem”...into that city “through the middle” of Samaria and Galilee. Taking this approach, one gets the impression Jesus was walking on something akin to a knife edge, carefully balancing himself not to fall to either side but to keep focused upon going “into Jerusalem.”

“And as he entered a village:” the same preposition *eis* is used here, “into a village,” which is intensified by the verb *eiserchomai* where *eis* is used as a prefix for the verb “to enter.” We don't know on which side of the *dia mesou* is this village located. Perhaps it was unique among villages in that it was right smack *dia mesou*, on that knife edge, neither Samaritan nor Galilean. Let's say it was one or the other before Jesus arrived. However, once he entered (the ‘double’ *eis* of the free-standing preposition and the one prefaced to the verb), the village inhabitants willingly accommodated themselves to Jesus. That would make it very easy for the ten lepers to approach him. However, these lepers “stood at a distance” which means they could be either on the Samaritan side or the Galilean one. Jesus didn't bid them to come closer; not only was he sensitive to how people felt about such unclean castaways but just as important, not to take sides...Samaria nor Galilee.

After healing the ten lepers from a distance, Jesus tells them to “show themselves to the priests.” That would give proof of their healing as well signal an official reinstatement within the communities from which they had been banished. Since the priests were in Jerusalem, we can assume the lepers followed that knife edge road *dia mesou*...right down the middle...until they came to Jerusalem.

This incident says that one of the ten lepers, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus “giving him thanks.” Jesus expresses some disappointment at not having been thanked by all ten lepers by asking “where are the nine?”

Presumably they stayed in Jerusalem for the Passover, loudly proclaiming their healing. This makes one wonder how they responded and if they were present when Jesus did reach the city. Did they take up palm branches and shout out Hosanna? Were they around when Jesus was publically condemned to death and crucified? Did they sympathize with him or even join in his condemnation? Finally, they heard about Jesus' resurrection and what followed...were they a part of that larger group or just forgot the whole thing? As for the one leper who was a Samaritan, he turned out to be the one truly healed because he returned to thank Jesus. That's why Jesus concludes with "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

17 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The parable in today's Gospel (Lk 18.1-8) is preceded by Jesus' words to his disciples (who were last referred to in 17.22) "that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." Between that mention and the parable at hand there intervenes the parable about the coming of the Son of man in the context of Noah and the flood. It is only after that digression that Jesus bids the disciples first to pray followed by not to lose heart. The verb for "pray" is the common New Testament, *proseuchomai*, where the preposition *pros* is prefaced to *euchomai* which implies the making of a vow. *Pros* as in the direction toward-which intimates a specific direction to the type of prayer Jesus wishes for his disciples. "Loose heart" is *egkakeo* which also translates as to grow weary; from this verbal root is derived the adjective *kakos*, evil, so we could say that Jesus does not wish the disciples to fall into evil, let alone give way to its influence.

It's good that Jesus spoke thus before telling the parable at hand, for to his listeners it seemed to come out of the clear blue and not something you'd expect from a teacher of some repute. It's about a judge "who neither feared God nor regarded man." That description seems to counter Jesus' exhortation to pray and not loose heart, for anyone would lose heart at the introduction of this undesirable character. *Entrepo* is the verb for "to regard" which literally means to turn in, *en* being prefaced to the verbal root. So in a sense this judge was single-minded which put him in a peculiar situation. The widow who badgered him realized this and saw in him an opportunity to obtain her request despite other people counseling her to stay away. "Vindicate me against my adversary." No polite introduction as would be expected, just a forthright request. *Ekdikeo* means to exact vengeance for a crime and *antidikos*, the opponent; both have the same root which applies to justice. Jesus doesn't mention the issue here, just the widow's boldness of speech.

"For a while he refused" which literally reads "He did not come upon time (*chronos*)."

Almost immediately the judge reflects upon his lack of respect for God and man which has a certain admirable quality by reason of his honesty. However, he speaks about this lack of respect to himself only, not out loud, for that would be too embarrassing. The judge doesn't have a change of heart...for that would detract from the parable...but wishes to get rid of the widow. First he acknowledges the woman's persistence with the words "she will wear me out" or *parecho* (literally, to hold beside, to produce as one's own) used with the noun *kopos* (a striking). In other words, the widow will go right up to me and hit me as indicated by the verb *hupopiazō* ('She will wear me out by her continual coming'). *Hupopiazō* literally means to strike one under the eye, to give a black eye. All in all, the judge knew of this woman's feisty reputation and wanted to be rid of her as quickly as possible.

And so Jesus says "Hear what the unrighteous judge says." The judge utters less than flattering words for someone in his position which is in line with his reputation for being corrupt as well known. Is that the kind of prayer and not losing of heart Jesus wishes? While admiration certainly goes to the persistent and courageous widow, we're encouraged to pay attention not to her but the judge. The underlying notion seems to be of getting the matter at hand over with to proceed with something else, ones which is more important. And that matter is the coming of the Son of man with which Jesus concludes the parable. He leaves reception of this Son of man open-ended with the words, "will he find faith on earth?" The response from the corrupt judge, as well as the widow, is not given, but their respective attitudes have a lot to bear upon how each will respond.

24 October, Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 18.9-14) comes upon the heels of last week's parable about the unjust judge and his

reluctant hearing of a feisty widow. It seems that Jesus likes using rather unsavory characters to talk about prayer, the two at hand being a Pharisee and tax collector, each despicable in his own right. So instead of mollifying his listeners with a conventional story, Jesus continues to upset them but only with the intent to make them think deeply.

Both the Pharisee and tax collector “went up into the temple to pray,” the verb *anabaino* suggesting a going up in the broader context of a pilgrimage, for example, to the temple at Passover or another major feast. The former character was more feared because he was an archetype of religiosity often depicted as lacking true religious understanding and the latter, an agent of the hated Romans who occupied Israel. And so these two men set out, each from their respective homes, to make the ascent to Jerusalem. Part and parcel of their pilgrimage were the Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120-134), short but to the point so as not to tire those reciting...singing...them while making the upward trek. Rightly is this parable seen as the two men within the temple, the Pharisee boasting of his generosity and the tax collector humbling himself. However, each man must have had the same basic attitude beforehand which was manifest during their ascent to Jerusalem. We can assume that the Pharisee had an extensive retinue and even brought along his own herd of animals for sacrifice within the temple, an impressive sight. The tax collector traveled pretty much incognito, perhaps at night, so he wouldn't be recognized and therefore reviled. Alone and unaided, he faced the threat of death.

“I tell you, this man (tax collector) went down to his house justified rather than the other (Pharisee).” Note the important words “went down” which happens, obviously, after both had ascended to Jerusalem. As for the return of the each man, we have no details as to what happened to them yet Jesus wishes our attention to be drawn there. Given how Pharisees are depicted in the Gospels, chances are the one at hand returned home the same way as he had ascended, fully justified in his own eyes. As for the tax collector, his acknowledgment of being a sinner allowed him to return home safely and in full view of people who must have been struck by his changed demeanor. It can be assumed that he did not remain a tax collector but abandoned that job hateful in the sight of his fellow Jews. Such was Jesus' observation of the two whom he must have encountered during one of his own ascents to Jerusalem as well as his return home. Jesus knew that one of these ascents would be his last, a fact that enhanced his awareness of how his fellow pilgrims comported themselves.

Did the Pharisee and tax collector ever meet later in life? If they did, the former who condoned Jesus' condemnation to death would have remembered the latter's repentant demeanor within the temple. Every time their paths crossed, even momentarily, the Pharisee was angered so much that he sought to kill the tax collector just as much as he did when condemning Jesus.

31 October, Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

“He entered Jericho and was passing through.” Such is the first verse of today's Gospel (Lk 19.1-10) which has Jesus first entering Jericho and then leaving it. Apparently Jesus has no intention of stopping at this city well below sea level and close to what is now known as the Dead Sea. This introductory verse is significant in that it presents Jesus passing through a town on an important trade route and at the very bottom as well as the start of his ascent to Jerusalem (cf. vs. 11, ‘he was near to Jerusalem’). As the Gospel recounts later, this was his last trip to the holy city, so it had special significance as he made his way for the Passover and thus his death. No small wonder that Jesus did not wish to stop at Jericho but move on as quickly as possible to consummate his mission.

In last Sunday's Gospel the Pharisee and tax collector were in the temple. After their respective prayers were said, each left with the latter having “went down to his house justified” (18.14). Nothing is said about the Pharisee, leaving his fate up to our imagination. Let's say that Jesus met the tax collector as he made his way up to Jerusalem though in the earlier passage no specific time as Passover is given. Perhaps both the tax collector lived in Jericho or not far from it and returned to the holy city in order to celebrate the feast. Then again, the tax collector could have been Zacchaeus, for that was his profession...not only that but the chief one. “He was small of stature,” *helikia* being the noun here which alternately means the span of life and age, especially the prime of life. Due to this *helikia*—and let's say his smallness of height plus implying Zacchaeus knew full well his span of life was short—he ran ahead of the crowd. That is to say, he ran ahead of the crowd

which got wind of Jesus' approach to their city. They wanted to see him passing through, urging him to stay but knew ahead of time that Jesus and his band of disciples had their minds set on going directly to Jerusalem. This knowledge is quite possible, given the close-knit society of the time where word quickly got out as to everyone's plans; Jesus, being well known, thus was unable to hide his intent.

Zacchaeus climbed up into a sycamore tree "for he was to pass that way." In other words, this tree was located either within Jericho or just outside the well-traveled road used by pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. Chances are that Zacchaeus wasn't alone in the sycamore tree which could have accommodated quite a few spectators. However, Zacchaeus stood out by reason of his stature, a small man on a large branch overhanging the road. "Make haste and come down, for I must stay at your house today." The verb for "to stay" is *meno* which suggests remaining. That could be for the night or for a meal, but probably the latter since Jesus wanted to move on and perhaps camp out on the road closer to his final destination. It keeps in line with vs. 1, "and was passing through." So of all the people of Jericho pressing in, Jesus chose this chief tax collector, one of the most despicable inhabitants of the city. Keeping in mind the parable of last Sunday, Jesus wanted to get first-hand word of Zacchaeus' experience of repentance in the temple. Given Jesus' proclivity for searching out lost souls, he was especially interested in the Pharisee, whether that man had a similar conversion or not. Because apparently this wasn't the case, the suspicion Jesus had about the religious establishment in Jerusalem was confirmed, that it was determined to kill him.

After Zacchaeus joyfully told Jesus about how he restored what he had taken from the poor...and that implies unfair taxes, given his profession...we can assume that he accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem. En route both sang the Psalms of Ascent also noted in last week's Gospel, and that Zacchaeus formed part of the Palm Sunday procession into Jerusalem. Chances are that he became associated with the disciples of Jesus after his death and resurrection, eventually returning home to Jericho.

1 November All Saints

Today's Gospel (Mt 5.1-12) appropriately contains the essence of holiness expressed by the Beatitudes. While each is different, they work together as a harmony. For example, a person may be inclined to one beatitude over the others but over time, will acquire the characteristics of these other beatitudes. They come at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, that is, shortly after he had been baptized by John and having chosen his first disciples. And so the beatitudes are both an introduction to what will follow as well as a summary of what had gone before.

"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, saying." Such are the opening words of the Gospel. These crowds are the result of Jesus having gone "about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues...and healing every disease" [4.23]. In other words, Jesus was renowned early on as to his teaching and healing abilities, so having crowds this early in his ministry is a sign of his popularity. As of yet Jesus hadn't wearied of so many following him; it was something new for him, so might as well make the most of the situation. Thus Jesus ascended a mountain to make himself more visible to the people.

"And he opened his mouth and taught them." This opening of Jesus' mouth can be taken as a way of catching the attention of one's listeners, a brief moment in time indicative more of the presence of the speaker than his words. Immediately afterwards comes the teaching, i.e., "he taught them" where no distinction seems to be made between the crowd and the disciples. So right away an order is established which will be followed throughout much of Jesus' career. At this early stage there seems to be no distinction between the ability of both crowds and disciples; the disciples haven't yet been winnowed out sufficiently, if you will, from the larger audience. By having them sit in front of him and being the first to receive the opening of his mouth, Jesus imparts to his twelve the essence of his teaching through the beatitudes. So instead of separating them from the crowd or those for whom Jesus actually came, he unites both but in an order that makes no distinction of favor but created in order to reach as many people as possible.

As for the beatitudes, while they have a special place in Jesus' teaching, by no means are they isolated from other things he has said. For example, this teaching which took place on a mountain with the disciples in front and the crowd behind continues uninterrupted through 7.28 at which point the "crowds were astonished at his

teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority.” And to think all that Jesus uttered from 5.3 through 7.28 began with that ever so instantaneous “and he opened his mouth.”

7 November, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 20.27-38) is an example of a faulty argument on the part of the Jewish authorities of the day centered around a question designed to trip up Jesus. That is to say, some Sadducees are tagging along or behind Jesus and pose him a question about the resurrection...and if it is true, which resurrected person will be married to whom. The Sadducees are applying one category (marriage) to another (resurrection) as though both belonged to the same level; they are attempting to have both see eye-to-eye, an impossible endeavor. To complicate the matter further, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, so they were on the hunt for anyone who may be teaching contrary to their position. Thus they were itching to challenge Jesus. Perhaps the Sadducees got wind of how he refuted others from the religious establishment and wanted to try him from their way of thinking, that at last they might get him on this point. As for the resurrection, the one of Jesus himself wasn't far in the future, though he had to attain it through suffering and dying at the hands of religious authorities not unlike the Sadducees. This proximity to his resurrection thus makes Jesus all the more worthy listening to when he describes in some detail what that state is like.

Instead of answering the Sadducees directly, something they would like him to do in order to trick him up, Jesus moves the discourse from a confusion of categories, if you will. This confusion is a mistaken alignment of “eyes,” if you will, where the eye of one point of view does not coincide with the point of view of the other eye. Jesus attempts to rectify this mis-aligned vision by bringing up the notion of *aión*, a Greek word which applies to a definite space and time, for example, the extension of one's life. The contrast consists in a difference between “sons of this *aión*” who engage in marriage and “those who are accounted worthy to attain to that *aión*” which Jesus identifies with the resurrection. Jesus seems to identify the Sadducees with the “sons of this *aión*” since they brought up the question of marriage in context of the resurrection. On the other hand, Jesus speaks of a second group as those who are “accounted worthy” or *kataxióo*. As to the nature of how this is done, Jesus doesn't spell it out but leaves it to our imagination. It's tricky business unless one pays close attention to the text: one can fall into the trap of the Sadducees denying the resurrection or to put it more accurately, deny the resurrection because one feels himself to be unworthy of it. That makes the words “accounted worthy” all the more difficult to swallow, for no one is deemed such. The way Jesus approaches the matter is fairly typical of how he deals with life-and-death issues, not straight on but indirectly, leaving room for some margin or error. Instead of worrying about whether one can or cannot make the grade, Jesus injects a certain amount of adventure where the outcome isn't certain. So instead of depressing his listeners, Jesus wants to do away with a dogmatic approach to such important issues and place responsibility upon the person involved. Such was not the case of the Sadducees, let alone Pharisees.

One way of appreciating the mysterious yet problematic words “are accounted worthy” is whether or not Jesus' words about being “equal to angels” (*isaggelos*) strikes home or not. To be *isaggelos* is to be lifted from the realm of *aión* and to enter another sphere, “sons of the resurrection.” It's something people can't grasp on the natural level yet have a capacity to live such by reason of having been made in the divine image and likeness. The issue of marriage doesn't apply here and hence the issue of propagation. If one remains caught up in the value of *aión*, one's period of life, then one can't appreciate how its value, important as it may be, fades away with the prospect of being like the angels who exist not in any type of *aión* but outside space and time.

14 November, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel (Lk 21.5-19) prepares us for the conclusion of one liturgical year and as well as the next, an event that will come on the scene in several weeks with the First Sunday of Advent. This transition is marked by a series of dire images intended to arouse attention so as not to miss the significance of the warning which otherwise could go by unnoticed. To pick up on this warning requires a mode of perception quite different than passing from one calendar year to another. That transition implies a rather sharp break with the past and anticipation of the future. Behind this perception is that constantly we're evolving or moving ahead...to what no one really knows. However, that perception of time's passage doesn't apply here. As for the

foreboding images presented to us now, they are similar to the ones in the first few Sundays of Advent.

“And as some spoke of the temple.” So begins the Gospel with those accompanying Jesus as they marveled at the temple’s adornment and to whom Jesus responds harshly: “there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” Jesus had just entered Jerusalem for the last time and by week’s end was destined to be handed over and crucified. Obviously those speaking about the temple hadn’t a clue about this and were astonished at Jesus’ sudden and dire words. “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign?” *Semeion* is the word for “sign” which applies to an omen or a pointer concerning future events. So instead of elaborating upon what appears to be the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus shifts the attention of those around him to “take heed that you are not led astray.” This must have been confusing, for they were expecting more about the temple. To Jesus, being on the watch was more important, namely, not to *planao* or not to wander about. While this injunction is not as forceful as the one about not going astray, it has longer lasting effects. To make matters worse, many will come in Jesus’ name claiming that they speak for him. Such must have been the case with some who spoke about him after his resurrection and mis-interpreted his mission as well as that event in light of the recent crucifixion. Clearly they weren’t among the “devout men” [Acts 2.5] present at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. Because they did not partake of the Spirit, such persons will say “the time (*kairos*) is at hand” without the slightest clue as to what they are talking about.

In addition to these misguided people Jesus speaks on a grander scale, that of worldwide strife and natural disasters. Despite the sensationalism of such events, they play a secondary role, forming the larger context of vs. 12 when followers of Jesus will be delivered to secular authorities. Instead of using *kairos* to describe that we have “This will be a time for you to bear testimony” [vs. 13]. The verb *apobaino* reads here as “will turn out for you” or the situation will arise to be a *marturion* or witness. The preposition *eis* (into) is used with *marturion* indicating the close identity of the person and his or her personal witness, i.e., “into witness.” As for how to handle being a *marturion*, Jesus doesn’t spell it out. Instead, he avoids it and wants his listeners to do the same: “Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer.” This sentence can be broken down as follows: “settle it in your minds” or place in your hearts. *Promelatao* is the verb for “meditate” which means to practice or rehearse in your mind what you will say later according to a pre-recorded script. And “answer” is *apologeomai*, to defend oneself by explaining how and why one is bearing *marturion*. Those who claim to speak for Jesus in vs. 8 are familiar with this technique and wish others to have it. Such a technique is a sign...a *semeion* along the lines of the temple’s overthrow in vs. 6...which will have the same dire result.

“For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.” This, however, won’t take place within the temple but within the upper room of Pentecost. For Jesus to speak of the Holy Spirit here would be too much for his listeners, so he omits it. He concludes this section with a contradiction. Despite people handing over people who subscribe to Jesus’ teaching, “not a hair of your head will perish.” Their *hupomone* (endurance) or literally, standing-under, will be the key to such people possessing not so much their physical lives but their souls, *psuche* being the word used here in vs. 19.

21 November, Christ the King

Today’s Gospel (Lk 23.35-43) presents us with Jesus hanging on the cross while the people and soldiers were mocking him, for example, “Let him save himself.” From one point of view this is impossible because Jesus or Yeshuah is salvation personified so he had no need to save himself. A bit later one of the two crucified criminals (*kakourgos*, literally, evil-doer) repeated the words of Jesus’ mockers, “Save yourself and us.” However, the other criminal rebuked him, saying that both were under the same sentence and were receiving the “due reward” of their deeds. This man proceeded to say that “This man has done nothing wrong.” The adjective here is *atopos*, literally, “not-place” or something like out of place. In other words, what Jesus had done throughout his lifetime and even on the cross was in place or in order.

Chances are the repentant criminal earlier had heard Jesus himself preaching or may have had personal contact, even as late as sharing the same prison cell the night before. Perhaps the other criminal was in the same cell too yet refused to acknowledge Jesus’ role as Yeshuah. And so right up to the very end of his life Jesus was engaged in bestowing salvation upon as many people as possible. One wonders what happened to

the body of the repentant criminal. Was he placed in a tomb not far from that of Jesus? Did he rise on the same day, albeit in a hidden way? Or was his body venerated as a kind of relic, the first person to enter paradise as Jesus had promised him?

And so this Gospel depicts Jesus at his lowest and highest point simultaneously, a fine way to sum up the liturgical year that is about to come to a close. It offers a time to look back all the way to the previous seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and time after Pentecost until this very moment and see that Jesus never had been *a-topos* or out-of-place. Even though the theme of today's Gospel belongs to the Triduum or lies on the threshold of the Easter season associated with spring and hence the rebirth of creation, it is a fitting way to conclude the year. That is, we are at the conclusion of a year which is characterized as being *topos* (noun) or having all the proper elements *in place* to effect salvation.

28 November, First Sunday of Advent

NB: During this new liturgical year the first readings will be commented upon. Reason: the last time the Gospel for this year was in 2007, so it would be repetitive to make notations. Because these readings (especially from the Old Testament) may not be as familiar as the Gospels, *the first reading will be posted in italics* for each entry. As with all biblical citations in this document, the **Revised Standard Edition** of the Bible is used. This shift to commenting upon the first readings will continue indefinitely; it may last (for example) through Advent after which the Gospel will be commented upon. A note will be posted as to this if and when it happens.

Is 2.1-5: *The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

A procedure different from the notations on the Gospel will be followed, at least to begin with, and that will consist of a brief outline of each verse.

Vs. 1: Word (*davar*): alternately as speech as in "Hear the word of the Lord," a phrase frequently used by Isaiah and most other prophets. In the verse at hand, the divine *davar* is seen (*chazah*) in the sense of beholding. Vision (*chazon*) in 1.1 is derived from it and which Isaiah sees whereas in the verse at hand, *davar* is the object of *chazah* or beholding.

Vs. 2: This verse continues into the next one and concludes there.

-It shall come to pass. The Hebrew text reads, 'It will be.'

-'Latter (*acharyth*) days.' 'Your latter days will be very great' [Job 8.7].

-'Mountain of the Lord:' this phrase occurs two other times, the next verse and 30.29. In the verse at hand, 'house of the Lord' is associated with it.

-Shall be established (*kun*): connotes a sense of directing. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me' [Ps 51.10]. The next reference is 9.7, 'to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness.'

-'Highest of the mountains.' The Hebrew text reads, 'in the head of the mountains.'

-Shall flow (*nahar*): alternately, 'to shine:' 'They shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord' [Jer 31.12].

-Nations (*goy*): last noted in 1.4, 'sinful nation.'

Vs. 3: Let us go up (*halah*): frequent references in Isaiah such as 37.14, 'and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord.'

-Jacob: here in conjunction with 'house of the God.' Other similar references are: 2.5, 6; 10.20; 14.1 (twice);

29.22; 48.1; 58.1.

-May teach (*yarah*): fundamentally means to cast or shoot anything and as applied to teaching or that which needs to be pointed out. The next reference is 9.15, 'The prophet who teaches is the tail.'

-Ways (*derek*, singular): prefixed with the preposition *min* (*m-*) or from. The next reference is 8.12, 'not to walk in the way of this people.'

-Paths (*orach*, singular): fundamentally as 'to wander.' The next reference is 3.12, 'confuse the course of your paths.'

-Law (*Torah*): last noted in 1.10 as 'teaching.' *Torah* is derived from the verbal root *yarah* as noted in the verse at hand.

-'Word (*davar*) of the Lord': last noted in 2.1 which Isaiah saw. The preposition *min* (*m-*) is prefaced to *davar*. Compare this sense with the same preposition prefaced to *derek*.

Vs. 4: Judge (*shaphat*): last noted in 1.26 as participle, 'judges.'

-'Between.' A similar sentiment with the verb *shaphat* in 5.3, 'Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard.'

-Nations (*goy*, singular): last noted in vs. 2 and used twice more in the verse at hand.

-Shall decide (*yakach*): last noted in 1.18, 'let us reason together.' The next use of *yakach* with the meaning in the verse at hand is 11.3, 'what his eyes see or decide.'

-Beat (*katat*): connotes breaking as well as hammering. The next use of this verb is 24.12, 'the gate is smitten with destruction.'

-Swords (*cherev*, singular): used twice in the verse at hand and as in 1.20 but not noted there, 'you shall be devoured by the sword.'

-Plowshares (*eth*, singular): the same word (particle) as 'of' often used before a noun as the object of a verb. 'Beat your plowshares into swords' [Jl 3.10]. The verb *katat* is used here as in the verse at hand.

-Spears (*chanyth*, singular): also as in Jl 3.10 just noted.

-Pruning hooks (*mazmerah*, singular): from a verbal root meaning 'to pluck,' 'to prune,' 'to sing.' It is also noted in Jl 3.10. The other reference is 18.5, 'he will cut off the shoots with pruning hooks.'

-Learn (*lamad*): last noted in 1.17 with respect 'to do good.'

Vs. 5: 'House of Jacob:' cf. vs. 3, 'house of the God of Jacob.'

-Walk (*halak*): the common verb as used in vs. 3, 'that we may walk in his paths.'

-Light (*or*): the next reference of this frequently used noun in Isaiah is 5.20, 'who put darkness for light and light for darkness.'

5 December, Second Sunday of Advent

Is 11.1-10: *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.*

Vs. 1: Shoot (*choter*): the only other use of this term is Prov 14.3, 'The talk of a fool is a rod for his back

(Hebrew: 'a rode of pride').

-'Stump (*gezah*) of Jesse:' the other reference is 40.24: 'Scarcely are they plant ed, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth.' The only other use of this term in the Bible is Job 14.8, 'Though its root grow old in the earth and its stump die in the ground.'

-Branch (*netser*): the next reference is 14.19: 'but you are cast out away from your sepulcher like a loathed untimely birth (a loathed branch).' 'In those times a branch from her roots shall arise in his place' [Dan 11.7].

-Shall grow (*parah*): the next reference is 17.6, 'four or five (berries) on the branches of a fruit tree.' 'Be fruitful and multiply' [Gen 8.17].

Vs. 2: 'Spirit (*ruach*; mentioned four times in this verse) of the Lord.' In the verse at hand, the divine *ruach* 'shall rest (*nuach*) upon him (note similar sound of the two words).' 'Him' refers to the 'shoot' and 'branch' of vs. 1, so this person had a dual nature.

-This divine *ruach* consists of the five following, all of which have been noted earlier: 1) wisdom (*chakmah*): next reference is 28.29, 2) understanding (*bynah*): next reference is 27.11, 3) counsel (*hetsah*): next reference is 14.26, 4) might (*gevorah*): next reference is 28.6, 5) knowledge (*dahath*): next reference is 32.4.

-'Fear (*yire'ath*) of the Lord:' not noted as being immediately connected with the divine *ruach*. This same phrase as mentioned in vs. 3 and 33.6 after that one.

Vs. 3: Delight (*ruach*): a verb which fundamentally means 'to smell,' 'to blow' from which 'spirit' is derived as used in this verse. 'And the Lord smelled a sweet savor' [Gen 8.21].

-Decide (*yakach*): first noted in 2.4: 'He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples.'

Vs. 4: Poor (*dal*): last noted in 10.2: 'to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right.'

-Equity (*myshor*): the only use of this term in Isaiah with this meaning. For another use of this term see 40.4: 'The uneven ground shall become level.'

-'Meek (*hanaw*, singular adjective) of the earth:' the next reference is 29.19: 'The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord.' This word also means 'poor,' 'afflicted.' 'He does not forget the cry of the afflicted' [Ps 9.12].

-Smite (*nakah*): first noted in 1.5: 'Why will you still be smitten, that you continue to rebel?' The object of this verb is 'earth.' Compare with 'meek of the earth' in this same verse.

-'Rod (*shevet*) of his mouth:' first noted in 9.4: 'For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.'

-'Breath (*ruach*) of his lips:' the same word for 'spirit' as noted in vs. 2.

Vs. 5: Girdle (*'ezor*, used twice): cf. 5.27 as 'waistcloth:' 'not a waistcloth is loose, not a sandal thong broken.'

-Loins (*chalats*): first noted in 5.27 as 'waistcloth.' From a verbal root meaning 'to be prepared,' to gird oneself.'

Vs. 6: Three pairs of opposites: 1) wolf (*ze'ev*): the other reference is 65.25: 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together.' This animal associates with lamb (*keves*) first noted in 1.11: 'I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of he-goats.' Both are to dwell (*gar*) together which fundamentally means 'to sojourn' as opposed to a permanent dwelling. 'Is this your exultant city whose origin is from days of old, whose feet carried her to settle afar' [23.7]? 2) leopard (*namer*): the only reference in Isaiah. 'The mountains of the leopards' [Sg 4.8]. This animal associates with the kid (*gedy*), the only reference in Isaiah. 'Go to the flock and fetch me two good kids' [Gen 27.9]. Both are to lie down (*ravats*), a verb which suggests gathering four legs under the animal's body. It is next found in vs. 7. 3) calf (*hegel*): the other reference is 27.10: 'there the calf grazes, there he lies down and strips its branches.' This animal associates with both the lion (*kepyr*) first noted in 5.29: "their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar;' fatling (*mery*), the other reference found in 1.11 as 'fed beasts.'

-'Little child (*nahar*):' first noted in 3.4: 'And I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them.' This term can refer to both newborns and young children.

Vs. 7: Two additional pairs of animals with opposite characteristics: 1) cow (*parah*): the only reference in Isaiah.

This animal associates with the bear (*dov*), the other reference being 59.11: 'We all growl like bears, we moan and moan like doves.' Both are to feed (*rahaḥ*), the next reference being 14.30: 'And the first-born of the poor will feed, and the needy lie down in safety.' The alternate meaning of this verb is 'to delight in.' 2) lion (*'aryeh*): the next reference is 15.9: 'a lion for those of Moab who escape.' Compare this term with *kepyr* in the previous verse which refers to a young lion. Although not compared with another animal, this lion eats straw 'like the ox (*baqar*) first noted in 7.21 as 'young cow.'

Vs. 8: Suckling child (*yoneq*, participle): the verb is found in 60.16: 'You shall suck the milk of nations, you shall suck the breast of kings.'

-Shall play (*shahah*): alternately as 'to delight,' 'to be blinded.' For the latter, cf. 6.10 as 'shut' with respect to eyes: 'Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their ears.'

-Asp (*paten*): the only reference in Isaiah. 'The cruel venom of asps' [Dt 32.33].

-Weaned child (*gamal*, participle): for another sense, cf. 3.9, 'For they have brought evil upon themselves.'

-Adder (*tsephony*): the other reference is 59.5: 'They hatch adders' eggs, their weave the spider's web.' Another related term is *tsephah* in 14.29: 'for from the serpent's root will come forth an adder, and its fruit will be a flying serpent.'

Vs. 9: 'Shall not hurt (*rahaḥ*):' the only use of this term with this meaning in Isaiah. This verb has multiple nuances and is first noted in 8.9 as 'broken:' 'Be broken, you peoples, and be dismayed.'

-Destroy (*shachat*): first noted in 1.4 as 'deal corruptly:' Sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly!

-'Knowledge (*dehah*) of the Lord:' the other reference is 28.9: 'Whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?' This noun is a variation of *dahath* last noted in 11.2: 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.' It is akin to 'water covering (*kasah*) the sea' (first noted in 6.2).

Vs. 10: 'Root (*shoresh*) of Jesse:' compare with 11.1, 'stump of Jesse.' *Shoresh* is found there as well.

-Ensign (*nes*): cf. 5.26 as 'signal:' 'He will raise a signal for a nation afar off and whistle for it from the ends of the earth.'

-'Him shall the nations seek (*darash*).' The Hebrew text literally reads, 'to him...' *Darash* is first noted in 1.17: 'learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.'

-'Dwelling (*menuchah*) will be glorious (*kavod*). The first reference to the latter is 3.8: 'because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence.' This is the only reference in Isaiah with this meaning. 'This is rest; give rest to the weary' [28.12].

12 December, Third Sunday of Advent

Is 35.1-6 & 10: *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

Vs. 1: Shall be glad (*sus*): this verb is next found in 61.10: 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.'

-Wilderness/dry land: *midbar/tsyah*. The former is first noted in 14.17 as 'desert' and the latter is next noted in 41.18; from a verbal root meaning to be dry: 'I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.'

-Desert (*haravah*): cf. 33.9, this word connoting a plain: 'Sharon is like a desert.'

-Blossom (*parach*): first noted in 17.11 as 'make blossom' and is found in the next verse.

-Crocus (*chavatsleth*): the other use of this noun is Sg 2.1, 'I am the rose of Sharon.'

Vs. 2: Rejoice with joy. The verb *gyl* is first noted in 9.3: "You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;" the noun *gylah* (derived from *gyl*) is found one other time in the Bible, 65.18, 'But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.'

-Singing (*ranan*, infinitive): first noted in 12.6 as 'sing for joy.'

-Glory/majesty: *kavod/hadar*. Both nouns are used twice in the verse at hand. The latter is first noted in 2.10, 'Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord.'

Carmel/Sharon. The other references in Isaiah to both proper nouns are found in 33.9, 'Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.'

Vs. 3: Strengthen (*chazaq*): first noted in 27.5 as 'lay hold of,' Or let them lay hold of my protection.'

-'Weak (*raphah*) hands:' the verbal root is noted in 13.7, 'will be feeble:' 'Therefore all hand will be feeble, and every man's heart will melt, and they will be dismayed.'

-'Feeble (*kashal*, participle) knees:' first noted in 3.8 as 'has stumbled:' 'For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen.'

-Make firm (*'amats*): the next reference for this verb is 41.10: I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.'

Vs. 4: 'Fearful (*mahar*) heart:' first noted in 5.19 as 'make haste' which is the fundamental meaning of this verb: 'Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it.'

-Be strong (*chazaq*): cf. vs. 3 above.

-With vengeance (*naqam*): verb first noted in 1.24: 'I will vent my wrath on my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.'

-'Recompense (*gemul*) of God:' first found in 3.11: 'for what his hands have done shall be done to him.'

-Save (*yashah*): first noted in 25.9, Lo, this is our god; we have waited for him, that he might save us.'

Vs. 5: Shall be opened (*paqad*): this multi-faceted verb is first noted in 10.12: 'When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride.'

-Blind (*hiuer*): first noted in 29.18, 'and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.'

-Deaf (*cheresh*): first noted in 29.18: 'In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book.'

-Unstopped (*patach*): first noted in 14.17: 'Who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'

Vs. 6: Lame man (*piseach*): first noted in 33.23: 'Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided; even the lame will take the prey.'

-Leap (*dalag*): the only use of this verb in Isaiah. 'Leaping upon the mountains' [Sg 2.8].

-Hart (*'ayal*): the only use of this noun in Isaiah. 'My beloved...is like a young stag' [Sg 2.9].

-'Tongue of the dumb (*'ilem*): the other use of this adjective is 56.10: they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark.'

-Sing for joy (*ranan*): last noted in vs. 2.

-Shall break forth (*baqah*): first noted in 7.6 with the alternate meaning, 'conquer:' 'Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves.'

-Wilderness/desert: *midbar/haravah*. Cf. vs. 1 for these two terms.

-Streams (*nachal*, singular): first noted in 7.19 with the alternate meaning, 'ravines.'

Vs. 10: 'Ransomed (*padah*) of the Lord:' first noted in 1.27: 'Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.'

-Singing (*rinah*): first noted in 14.7: 'The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.'

-'Everlasting joy (*simchah*, twice...'gladness'):' first noted in 9.3: 'You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy.'

-Shall obtain (*nasag*): the other use of this verb is found in 51.11: 'they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

-Joy (*sason*): first noted in 12.3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.'

-Sorrow/sighing: *yagon/'anachah*. The other use of the former in Isaiah is 51.11: 'they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' The latter is first noted in 21.2, 'all the sighing she has caused I bring to an end.'

-Shall flee away (*nus*): first noted in 30.16: 'A thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you shall flee.'

19 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Is 7.10.14: *Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.*

Vs. 10: 'Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.' A common way of putting this literally in Hebrew is, 'increased to speak.'

Vs. 11: Sign (*'oth*): next reference is vs. 14. 'This shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you.' Also, 'But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you' [Ex 3.12].

-Deep (*hamaq*): i.e., as Sheol. The other reference is 29.15. 'Your thoughts are very deep' [Ps 92.5]!

-High (*gavah*): i.e., as heaven or *mahal* (above). This is an adverb prefaced by the preposition *l-* (to, towards), the only reference in Isaiah. As for *gavah*, it next occurs in 55.9, 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

Vs. 12: Put to the test (*nasah*): i.e., tempt the Lord, the only reference in Isaiah. 'God did tempt Abraham' [Gen 22.1].

Vs. 13: To weary (*la'ah*): first used in 1.14, 'they (festivals) have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.' In the verse at hand it is used with respect to men and God.

Vs. 14: The sign from God consists of a young woman (*halmah*; the only reference in Isaiah) which alternately means 'virgin.' 'Therefore the maidens love you' [Sg 1.3].

-Conceive (*harah*): the next reference is 8.3, 'And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son.' 'Into the chamber of her that conceived me' [Sg 3.4].

-Immanuel or 'God with us.' The other reference is 8.8, 'and its outspread wings (the river Euphrates) will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.'

25 December, Christmas (Vigil Mass)

Is 62.1-5: *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. 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. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 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. 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.*

Vs. 1: Will (not) keep silent (*chashah*): last noted in 57.11 as 'held my peace.'

-Will (not) rest (*shaqat*): last noted in 57.20, 'But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest.'

-Vindication (*tsedeq*): last found in 61.3 as 'righteousness' and used in the next verse. 'That they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.'

-Brightness (*nogah*): last noted in 60.19, 'The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night.'

-Salvation (*yeshuah*): last noted in 60.18, 'you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.'

-'Burning torch (*lapyd*):' the only use of this noun in Isaiah. 'His eyes as lamps of fire' [Dan 10.6].

Vs. 2: Shall give (*naqav*): the other use of this verb in Isaiah is 36.6 as 'will pierce:' 'Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it.'

Vs. 3: 'Crown of beauty (*tiph'arah*): last noted in 28.5, 'In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people.'

-'Royal diadem (*tsanoph*):' the only use of this noun in the Bible.

Vs. 4: Shall (not) be termed: the common verb 'to speak' (*'amar*, twice) is used.

-Forsaken (*Hazuvah*): from the verb *hazav* last noted in 58.2, 'Yet they seek me daily...and did not forsake the ordinance of their God.'

- Desolate (*Shemamah*): from the verb *shamam* last noted in 61.4 as 'devastations' (participle), They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations.'
- My delight (*Chephtsy*): from the verb *chaphats* used in this verse and last noted in 58.2, 'They ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.'
- Married (*Beulah*): from the verb *bahal* used in this verse and last noted in vs. 5 and 54.1, 'For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord.'
- Vs. 5:** Young man (*bachur*): last noted in 23.4, I have neither reared young men nor brought up virgins.'
- Virgin (*betulah*): last noted in 47.1, 'Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon.'
- Bridegroom/bride: *chatan/kalah*. Both nouns are last noted in 61.10, 'As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.'
- Rejoices (*sus*, twice): last noted in 61.10, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God.'
- Over you. The Hebrew text literally reads, 'on you.'

26 December, Holy Family

Sirach 3.2-6 & 12-14: *For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother; O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him. For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and against your sins it will be credited to you.* NB: The Book of Sirach is taken from the Apocrypha and is written in Greek.

The Lord himself shows honor (*timao*) to the father and confirmation (*stereo*) of right (*krisis*) to the mother. The former is a verb related to *time*, that which is paid in token, a sign of one's worth. The latter is a noun meaning judgment, a trait normally associated with the role of a father; the verb *stereo* suggests making strong and unmoved. The child reflects the honor originally imparted by the Lord, *timao* being the same verb which intimates an exchange of the divine and human relative to one's father. Showing *time* is an atonement for sins, the verb being *exilaskomai* (to propitiate). The preposition *ex* (from) prefaced to the verb intimates a thorough removal of sin. As for the mother, she resembles a person who lays up treasure (*apothosaurizo*), this verb applicable to hoarding wealth.

Vs. 6 shifts the bestowal of honor (*timao*) from God to the child honoring the father which becomes a means by which the child's prayer will be heard (*eisakouo*), literally as hear-into. With regard to the mother, obedience to the Lord will refresh her, *anapauro*, a verb suggestive of desisting or the giving of relief.

Vs. 14 speaks of kindness to a father, *eleemosune* also applying to pity. It will be credited to the child of the father, *prosanoikodomemai*. This unwieldy verb comprises the root *oikeo* (to inhabit) with two prepositions, *pros* (in the direction toward-which) and *ana* (upon). Putting this notion of credit or recognition of a kind act as by the child in literal fashion we get recognition that will dwell with him in his direction (*pros*) and continue to increase (*ana*).

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Although this ends the year 2010, the reflections on the Gospel for Sundays and major feasts continue under a new heading for the year 2011. Inserting excerpts from the prophet Isaiah during the Advent season was an experiment. The reason: this was the first time since these reflections were posted in 2007 that the three year liturgical cycle had run its course. However, it is unlikely that this will happen in the foreseeable future. Entries for the year 2011 (and hopefully beyond) will differ from earlier postings though taking them into consideration. For that reason, perhaps their focus will be more specific, dealing with (for example) a particular word, phrase or the like.

