

21 OT, Year A Readings and Commentary

Commentary by Dave Pitt: In today's first reading we hear of the imminent dismissal of Shebna, master of the palace, or chief steward of the royal household. He would have had the great responsibility of both entrance and exit from Jerusalem. Shebna was removed from his position because he abused his authority. The subsequent installation of Eliakim provides clear context for today's Gospel reading.

In Isaiah God appoints Eliakim. In Matthew God, in the person of Jesus, appoints Peter. Both are given the same responsibilities, Eliakim to the House of David, Peter to the House of the Son of David. Peter is, thus, made the chief steward of the Church, a role that is continued by the Pope and our Bishops. We too share in this ministry to the degree that we are leaders of our communities.

The second reading crucially illustrates the connection between today's readings from Isaiah and Matthew: "Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor? Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid?" These two rhetorical questions clarify that God does not need His stewards to substitute their wisdom or will for His. Church leaders of all degrees of authority, ourselves included, must be vigilant against abusing their authority, lest the fate of Shebna be ours also.

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Lectionary Summary: Glenn CJ Byer: In today's first reading we hear of the imminent dismissal of Shebna, master of the palace, or chief steward of the royal household. He would have had the great responsibility of both entrance and exit from Jerusalem. Shebna was removed from his position because he abused his authority. The subsequent installation of Eliakim provides clear context for today's Gospel reading. In Isaiah God appoints Eliakim. In Matthew God, in the person of Jesus, appoints Peter. Both are given the same responsibilities, Eliakim to the House of David, Peter to the House of the Son of David. Peter is, thus, made the chief steward of the Church, a role that is continued by the Pope and our Bishops. We too share in this ministry to the degree that we are leaders of our communities. The second reading crucially illustrates the connection between today's readings from Isaiah and Matthew: "Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor? Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid?" These two rhetorical questions

clarify that God does not need His stewards to substitute their wisdom or will for His. Church leaders of all degrees of authority, ourselves included, must be vigilant against abusing their authority, lest the fate of Shebna be ours also.

First Reading Isaiah 22:19-23

I will place the key of the House of David upon his shoulder.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace:
"I will thrust you from your office
and pull you down from your station.
On that day I will summon my servant
Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah;
I will clothe him with your robe,
and gird him with your sash,
and give over to him your authority.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and to the house of Judah.
I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder;
when he opens, no one shall shut,
when he shuts, no one shall open.
I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot,
to be a place of honor for his family."

The word of the Lord

Commentary: Isaiah 22:19-23 by Deacon Owen Cummings: Clearly this Isaian passage is being used as a kind of symbolic anticipation of St. Peter's being given the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the gospel reading from St. Matthew. We can see why. Eliakim is being given the position of master of the palace in Jerusalem. He is to be given the key to the House of David, with the authority to admit and to deny admission. And so God has Isaiah speak for him to Eliakim: "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah... I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot." There are two images here. First, despite the prestige and assumed privileges of his office, Eliakim's role *vis-a-vis* the people of Jerusalem and Judaea is to be fatherly. The implication seems to be that this prestigious role is about service of the people, not about domination and status. Second, as master of the palace Eliakim is to be a symbol of security in the midst

of uncertainties and confusion. The historical context of Isaiah is fraught with political threat and intrigue. In the midst of all this Eliakim, in his fatherly role, is to provide a sense of well-being and security for the people.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

℟(8bc) Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple.

I will give thanks to your name,
because of your kindness and your truth:
when I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.
Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

Commentary **Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8** by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB:
This psalm is a whole-hearted thanksgiving for salvation. Even though it is phrased in terms of an individual, the praise and thanksgiving it expresses can be understood as coming from the whole community. It fits very well the post-exilic period. God has intervened and delivered the Israelites from their Babylonian exile and restored them to their rightful place. This deliverance had been promised by the prophets and now the restored community is giving witness to the fulfillment of that promise. The motivation for this whole-hearted song of praise and thanksgiving is simply stated as, "...I called, you answered..." (Ps 138:1-3).

The redeemed community understands that in the face of surrounding empires it is totally powerless (Ps 138:6). The fact that God is all powerful yet reaches out to the lowly is a great cause for hope. The lowly have been raised up and the haughty have been brought low.

This is not only a saving event. It is also a moment of great revelation. It discloses just how merciful and compassionate God really is. The redeemed community must still face many dangers and uncertainties. But now it will face those situations with trust and hope in God. The community is now convinced that it can count on God to continue to intervene on its behalf (Ps 138:8). What God has begun, God will surely bring to completion. The community pledges its on-going trust in God's saving activity while at the same time making a strong petition to God: "Never forsake the work of your hands."

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Second Reading Romans 11:33-36

From God and through him and for him are all things.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!

For who has known the mind of the Lord

or who has been his counselor?

Or who has given the Lord anything

that he may be repaid?

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

The word of the Lord

Commentary: Romans 11:33-36 by Virginia Smith: Situated as it is at the close of a three-chapter discourse on the equality before God of Gentiles and Jews and how Israel fits into God's redemptive plan, today's four-verse excerpt forms, in effect, the exclamation point at the end. In the next chapter, Paul will launch off in an entirely new direction, developing the idea of the body of Christ.

This short doxology has its roots the First Testament. In Isaiah 40:13, the opening chapter of Deutero-Isaiah, we hear, "*Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or who has instructed him as his counselor?*" God needs no human advisor; neither has he ever been bested, "*Who has assailed him and come off safe; who under all the heavens?*" (Job 41:3)

In terms of literary genre, this is a wonderful hymn of praise, such as

might seem fitting for the Book of Psalms. However, not all hymns/psalms are to be found in the Psalter. If we look, we will find them sprinkled liberally throughout both testaments. Of the four principal categories of prayer (petition, penitence, thanksgiving, and praise), the latter often receives short shrift from many. We're very good at petition, and sometimes we remember contrition and gratitude, but too rarely do we stop to praise God simply for who he is with no self interest involved. It may at least partially be attributed to human nature. Our loved ones sometimes protest our lack of appreciation of them, and it may well be true. Awareness of this gap in our relationships, both divine and human, is the first step in making the necessary modifications.

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Gospel Acclamation Matthew 16:18

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church
and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

Gospel Matthew 16:13-20

You are Peter, and to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and
he asked his disciples,
"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"
They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
Simon Peter said in reply,
"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Jesus said to him in reply,
"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly

Father.

And so I say to you, you are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.
Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
Then he strictly ordered his disciples
to tell no one that he was the Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord

Lectionary for Mass in the Dioceses of the United States of America, volume I Copyright © 1970, 1997, 1998 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Commentary: Matthew 16:13-20 by John Paul Heil: Main Theme: Jesus establishes Peter as the FOUNDATIONAL ROCK of the Church.

Some have favorable but inadequate assessments of Jesus' profound identity, namely, that he is one of the great prophets, such as John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah. Peter, however, is finally able to confess that Jesus is much more than a prophet--indeed, that he is the Christ (or Messiah), the Son of the living God! Peter thus complements and climaxes his fellow disciples' confession of Jesus as truly the Son of God after they experienced Jesus walking on the sea and saving Peter from sinking into it. But Peter's confession is not his own doing; it comes to him as a pure gift of God, the heavenly Father of Jesus, the Son.

Once God has graciously granted Peter this gift, Jesus complements it by authoritatively commissioning Peter to be the foundation rock on which his church is built. That Jesus rescued Peter from sinking into the waters of the nether world when he tried to walk on the stormy sea reinforces his promise that the "gates of the nether world shall not prevail" against the church. That Jesus gives Peter the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" empowers Peter to open (or close) that kingdom to others through his authority to "bind and loose," that is, to teach and govern the church.

