Study Notes for the Sunday Mass

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"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. Today's first reading is from Isaiah where we see the concept of Messianic typology. In the second reading, Saint Peter expounds on how anyone, Jew or Gentile, is saved (spared from God's justifiable wrath) through faith in Jesus Christ. Then we move to a brief Gospel lesson from Saint Mark in which we see John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus' baptism in which all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are represented.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied during the time from 739 – 681 BC to the Jewish people who had walked away from God in their hearts and instead observed rote repetitive religious practices which were meaningless to them. Additionally, though they were rich in physical blessings, Isaiah warned them about their harsh treatment of the poor (Isaiah 3:15). Isaiah frequently uses a technique called "prophetic foreshortening" in which significant yet distant events are displayed as happening in the near term, such that their fulfillment is "telescoped" or "foreshortened" together with near term events. He also uses a significant amount of Messianic typology such as the display of Jesus as the Suffering Servant in Chapter 53. A theological type is something that prefigures its ultimate explanation, such as the Prophet Jonah being three days in the belly of the fish which prefigured Jesus being in the grave for three days (see Matthew 12:40). Another of the types that he displayed was King Cyrus who was the King of Persia under whom the later Babylonian captivity of Judah (the southern kingdom) ended. Isaiah named Cyrus as God's chosen instrument under whom the 70-year Jewish captivity would be broken hundreds of years before he was even born (Isaiah 44:28).

In today's reading In Chapter 42, it seems that Isaiah is once again speaking of Cyrus as a type of the coming Messiah (Jesus). As you read the opening verses of Chapter 42, you should recognize the typological representation of King Cyrus whose identity is soon lost in the revelation of the Person of the Messiah. As we read the text from Isaiah, we likely don't immediately see the person of Cyrus but rather Jesus because we are so familiar with how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. For us, the distant event in Isaiah's day of the coming of Jesus Christ completely overshadowed anything about the immediate circumstances being encountered by the Jewish people during Isaiah's time. *Note: The reading omitted verse 5 that has been included in the text below.*

First Reading:

> *(Isaiah 42:1-7) 1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." 5 Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it, 6 "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a*

light to the nations, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison

The opening verse reads almost exactly like God's pronouncement made at the baptism of Jesus Who said, "This is my Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17, from today's Gospel reading). The baptism of Jesus displayed the Holy Trinity of God much like we see in this reading. At the baptism the Spirit of God descended on Him as a dove (Matthew 3:16) along with the Father's pronouncement as we just noted. In Isaiah's text we see the Father pronouncing His pleasure in the Son along with the proclamation that God has put His Spirit upon Him (v. 1), something that certainly looks far beyond King Cyrus. As Isaiah continues he explains the nature of Jesus and His ministry, he will be quiet and meek (vv. 2 – 3), not boldly proclaiming as had his predecessor John the Baptist, but quiet and not even breaking a brittle reed or extinguishing a smoldering lamp wick (v. 3). Verse 4 says that Jesus will "not be disheartened until He has established justice in the earth." In verse five Isaiah provides God's profound stamp of creative authority, He is the One "Who spread out the earth and its offspring . . . ." He is also the One who called the people in righteousness to worship Him alone and reminded the Jews of His covenant with them (v. 6). He reminded them that one of their purposes was to be a light to the nations (v.6) to open the spiritually blind eyes of the people (v. 7). When the Messiah comes, He would also be a light to the nations, as Luke said in Luke 2:32 regarding Jesus. The Messiah will open the blind eyes of the people held in bondage, both to their sin as well as to the captivity they would experience under various civil kings such as Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. Saint Peter referred to this when he mentioned freeing the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19).

As believers, we can proclaim that although we have not seen Jesus, we believe that He has freed us from the darkness of our own spiritual prisons where we were held by the evil one in darkness (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, also see the Reflection Questions).

Introduction to the Second Reading:
The second reading is from the Book of Acts. The context is Peter's speech to the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1), a god-fearing Gentile who respected the Jews by giving them alms (Acts 10:2). Cornelius had seen an angel of God telling him to send a delegation to bring Peter to Joppa so he could speak with him.

Second Reading:

(Acts 10:34-38) 34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. 36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) -- 37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. 38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

Peter explained how as we saw in Isaiah 42:6 that God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ wasn't limited just to the Jews but extended to anyone who believed. Peter's speech came after he had seen a vision of a great sheet descending from the sky and filled with animals that were ceremonially unclean to the Jews (Acts 10:9-16). In this vision, God commanded Peter to "kill and eat," and said that these animals were not to be regarded as clean because they had been cleansed by God (v. 15). In order

to further emphasize the importance of this vision God repeated it three times. Therefore, when Peter met with Cornelius and heard about the miraculous events that had happened with him too seeing a vision from God (in the form of an angel) Peter understood that the plan of salvation had been extended to the Gentiles. In the New Testament era the church has stepped in where Peter left off, proclaiming the message of salvation to everyone, not just to the Jews as was Peter's (the Rock) primary ministry.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:
The Gospel reading is from Saint Matthew where he recorded Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist. One could think that Jesus wouldn't need to be baptized by anyone, rather that He would be the One doing the baptizing. However, we find out something quite different in the reading. *Note: The * indicates the translation of a Greek word in the historical present tense.*

Gospel Reading:

> *Matthew 3:13-17 NAS95 13 Then Jesus *arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*

Jesus had to fulfill all righteousness, and part of this was to submit to John's baptism of repentance. The Jews of that era were used to repeated ceremonial washings. However, John's baptism represented a person's one-time public confession of repentance, a willingness to turn from their sin and to the plan of God for their lives. Even though Jesus was sinless in His essence as God, He had to live a perfect, sinless life as a man, and this meant submitting to the Father's will through the ministry of John the Baptist. Otherwise, when King Herod came to kill all the infants two years old and younger, as was recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' death would have atoned for the sin of the world and that would have been the end of His ministry. "But God" had other ideas, and Jesus submitted to the Father's wishes. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). We can celebrate that Jesus was willing to submit to the Father's plan.

As we make the sign of the cross, we can remember Jesus' baptism and how it demonstrated the reality of the Holy Trinity. We saw during the baptism that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus the Son like a dove (v.16e), and the Father announced, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (v.17b). God said through Isaiah in the first reading, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him" (Isaiah 42:1). God is delighted in His Righteous Servant, and He delights in us as servants of the Lord Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. In the first reading (Isaiah 42) we saw how the Messiah would be a light to all the nations to open their spiritually blind eyes and hearts. Saint Paul spoke about the agent responsible for this spiritual blinding: "*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of*

this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

To whom is Paul referring to as the "god of this age"? A clue can be found in the last verse of the second reading from Acts.

2. How does the fact that Jesus submitted to His Father's will regarding seemingly small things like being baptized help us to identify with Jesus' humanity? What are a few ways in which you have recently submitted to God the Father's will for you?

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