

Jesus Returns to Galilee and Caper'na-um

I Will Make You Fishers of Men



While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennes'aret. ² And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, ⁷ they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)

Be Silent, and Come Out of Him

³¹ And he went down to Caper'na-um, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; ³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority. ³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ "Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." ³⁷ And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region. (Luke 4:31-37)





And Took Her by the Hand

²⁹ And immediately he left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them. (Mark 1:29-31)

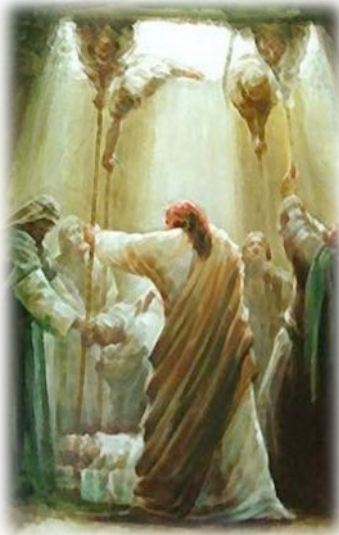
I will; be clean

⁴⁰ And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter. (Mark 1:40-45)



Rise, Take Up Your Bed and Go Home

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. ² And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." ³ And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶ But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, take up your bed and go home." ⁷ And he rose and went home. ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. (Matt 9:1-8)



New Wine Must Be Put Into Fresh Wineskins

³³ And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." ³⁴ And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵ The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." ³⁶ He told them a parable also: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.'" (Luke 5:33-39)



On the Shores of the Sea of Galilee with Father Joel & Valerie



On the Sea of Galilee



Statue of Saint Peter standing near the shore of the Sea of Galilee



Jan overlooking the ruins of Caper'na-um



Remains of the Synagogue of Caper'na-um built between the 4th and 5th centuries.



Artifacts believed to be part of the 1st century synagogue from which Jesus taught and healed the demoniac. Part of the Torah *theca* or container that held the Torah scrolls.



1st century Star of David from the Synagogue in Caper'naum



1st century Synagogue embellishment showing the Ark of the Covenant



The Church of St. Peter in Caper'na-um is built over a Byzantine era church site which itself was built over what is believed to be the House of St. Peter.



The 1st century habitation over which the Byzantine church had been built had ancient graffiti written on its wall indicating that the house was pilgrimage site for early Christians as the home of St. Peter.



View from outside of the 1st century dwelling underneath the Church of Saint Peter in Caper'na-um.



View of the 1st century dwelling underneath the Church of Saint Peter in Caper'na-um from inside the sanctuary.

Reflections

Kevin's Reflection #1: On The Four Fishermen, the Mother-in-Law, and the Holy Scriptures

In my first writing of Jesus Returns to Galilee and Caper'na-um I quoted from the Gospel of Matthew for the passage in which Jesus calls the four fishermen:

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, in the boat with Zeb'edee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matt 4:18-22)

When I read this passage from Matthew I was immediately struck by how quickly and unreservedly these four men literally left everything to follow Jesus. Lately, it seems like I've been writing a lot about how people initially respond to Jesus in either a positive way, such as the Samaritans, or a negative way, the Nazarene Jews, but now these four fishermen give up everything and they barely know anything about Jesus, or so it would seem from the story recorded by Matthew. Wow, I thought, these fishermen had some extraordinary spiritual perception! I was discussing this with Jan, when she pointed out to me the passage about this same event as recorded in the Gospel of Luke (which I ended up quoting for this Photo-Journal entry). It all made a whole lot more sense to me now. According to Luke, before Jesus told the fishermen that He would make them fishers of men they had listened to His teaching from their boats, and they had experienced the miracle of their nets being filled to the point of almost bursting with their catch of fish. They probably had heard stories about Jesus and His previous visits in Galilee and Caper'na-um. They may have been familiar with what John the Baptist had said about Jesus. Now, He had been in their boat, they had heard Him teach, they had witnessed a miracle, and He was calling on them to follow Him and be a part of something so big it would change their lives forever and the world as they knew it. And although they felt unworthy of the call, they followed Him. It all makes more sense now. So the question I have is this, "Whenever this story is told, why not just use Luke's version of the story?"

Before I attempt to answer that question, let's look at another story that occurred in Caper'na-um, this time recorded by St. Mark. In this story Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. How does Jesus do this? By taking her by the hand and lifting her up:

And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her,

Luke recorded the same story in his Gospel, and it reads as follows:

³⁸And he arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they besought him for her. ³⁹And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them. (Luke 4:38-39)

In this version of the story, Jesus does not touch Simon Peter's mother-in-law, but instead rebukes the fever. So which one is it: did Jesus heal her by His touch or through His words?

These were questions that the early 2nd century Christians were asking themselves. Remember, this was before the canon of the New Testament had been officially organized. Nevertheless, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were recognized fairly early in the Church as authentic and inspired; even so there were a variety of "gospels" that were being used that were problematic. Some of these problematic gospels were hybridization created in an attempt to harmonize the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in order to resolve the seeming inconsistencies and ambiguities between the gospels. The most famous of these in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, meaning "from the four."

The *Diatessaron* was written between 160 to 175AD. There is no evidence to suggest that Tatian's goal was to replace the Four Gospels, but rather it was to weave a single, coherent narrative probably for the purposes of simplifying the catechesis of new believers, and to silence the criticism of nonbelievers with respect to

inconsistencies within the gospels. The *Diatessaron* found some favor within the early Church especially in the Syriac churches. The following diagram demonstrates how Tatian very carefully edited three of the four Gospels into a single narrative.

Diatessaron	Matthew	Luke	John
<p>Diat. 4:28-41 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptizd of him. And Jesus was about thirty years of age, and was supposed to be the son of Joseph. Now John saw Jesus coming unto him, and saith, This is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me shall come a man, which is preferred before me, for he is before me. And I knew him not; but that he may be made manifest to Israel, for this cause am I come baptizing in water. Now John was forbidding, saying, I have need to be baptizd of thee, and comest thou to me? Jesus answered him, and said, Suffer it now: thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And when all the people were baptizd, Jesus also was baptizd; and he went up straightway from the water: and the heaven was opened unto him. And the Holy spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove's body: and he, a voice from the heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And John bare witness, saying, Furthermore I saw the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon Whosoever thou shalt see the spirit descending and abiding, this is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness, that this is the Son of God.</p>	<p>Matt. 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptizd of him. 14 But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptizd of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptizd, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.</p>	<p>Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptizd, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptizd, and praying, the heaven was opened, 22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. 23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, [here we have the Lukan genealogy]</p>	<p>John 1:29-34 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and have reced that this is the Son of God.</p>

From: *The Diatessaron and its Relevance to the Study of the Pentateuch* by Dr. Naomi Koltun-Fromm

So what became of the *Diatessaron*? Ultimately, the Church rejected the *Diatessaron*, although it continued to be used for some centuries primarily as a teaching tool, but not as canonical scripture. What was wrong with it, after all it did harmonize the Gospels and resolved the problem of apparent inconsistencies? The answer to this question is ultimately why I felt I wanted to write about this in my reflection.

When you think about it, everything that has been done here in the Photo-Journal has had at its starting point the intersection of a Sacred Site and Holy Scripture. The Church recognizes that certain geographical locations have been made holy by the visitation of the Holy; in the case of Israel by the presence in both time and space of the patriarchs, prophets, angels, God, and in the fullness of time, Jesus, the Son of God. The sacredness of these sites is elucidated and made present through the Holy Scripture. Together the Sacred Site and the Holy Scripture become an opportunity not just to remember, but *to make present again* (Greek: *anamnesis*) the mysteries that unfolded both at the site and in the scripture. This Greek word, *anamnesis*, is the same word used by Luke in the passage below, which in our English translates as *remembrance*:

¹⁹ *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* (Luke 22:19)

The Church recognizes that during the Eucharistic celebration at Mass we are participating in far more than a memorial service, we are *making present again* the same reality that occurred that evening Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples:

1363 *In the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, **they become in a certain way present and real**. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events **are made present** to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them."*

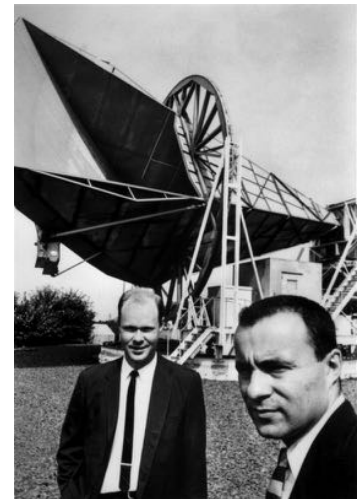
1364 *In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, **and it is made present** the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross **remains ever present**. "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out." (Catechesis of the Catholic Church)*

This reminds me of the Big Bang—you know, how the universe came into being. Allow me a moment to explain myself. During the 19th and 20th century there were a number of competing theories that attempted to explain the origin of our universe, the Big Bang theory was one of them. I am not a cosmologist, but I will attempt to explain this theory as simply and as accurately as I can. This theory stated that there was a time when the universe was not. When it came into being is started as a *singularity*, a point occupying no space whatsoever. Then something changed, the singularity exploded or went through a series of explosions (the Big Bang) hurling the newly created space, time, matter, antimatter, and everything else outward forming our expanding universe. The theory postulated that if this were true we should expect that there would be cosmic microwave background noise from the explosion. In 1964, American radio astronomers Robert Wilson and Arno Penzias discovered this birth cry of the universe thereby lending support to the Big Bang theory.

It is a fascinating idea that we are everywhere surrounded by the after glow of the birth of our universe, but we didn't know it was there until we had the right equipment to perceive it. It's amazing that something that happened so long ago still reverberates through time and space. But isn't this what happens at Mass? Consider what the Catechism says:

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.

Christ sacrifice on the cross, like the Big Bang, happened once yet remains ever present. The Logos' incarnation, His baptism, His Temptations in the Wilderness, His miracle at Marriage at Cana, His encounter with the Samaritan woman, and all of the events and words that Jesus spoke that we've already discussed thus far, each is a spiritual



Bob Wilson and Arno Penzias and the radio telescope at the Crawford Hill Horn Antenna in New Jersey

Big Bang, that remains ever present to those who have the “right equipment” to perceive it. What is that right equipment? For the Eucharist it is the elements of bread, wine, and water, the Priesthood, the Liturgy and the believing assembly of the faithful. For the pilgrim it is the Sacred Site and the Holy Scripture. In each of these examples there are still two absolutely essential pieces of equipment required to perceive and to receive these spiritual signals from heaven. They are the *mind* and the *heart*. The mind alone might be able to perceive the signal, but their reality will remain a mere theory. In order for these spiritual realities to be realized in the life of the believer the *antennae* must be properly aligned, that is, *with the mind in the heart* where the signal is perceived and then received in a synergy of transfiguration of the believer.

A Pilgrimage, together with the Holy Scripture, can be an *anamnesis*, a “making present again” the mystery of the “Word made flesh” who dwelt among us some two thousand years ago in Israel. I am convinced, however, that the Holy Scripture alone can “make present again” to us in a very real, life changing way the same mysteries that are record for us in the Gospels. I don’t say this in anyway to diminish the value of making a pilgrimage, but to encourage all Christians to believe that such graces are available to them when they read the Scriptures.

Now what does all of the above have to do with the *Diatessaron* and the Four Gospels? Simply this, such a life-transforming encounter would not be possible if the Scriptures were merely the writings of men. The *Diatessaron* for all its harmony and coherence was inadequate to convey the fullness of the Word made flesh. Neither could a Gospel that claimed to be the direct dictations from God because it lacked the necessary human element essential for it to be transmitted to the mind and hearts of men and women.

Jesus said,

“...the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
(John 6:63)

These words were spoken by *the Word made flesh*, and so it must be that these same words can only exist in full actuality, in *spirit* and *life*, when they become *flesh* in the life of the believer. In order for Jesus’ Words to be communicated to us through time and space those Words had to first become *flesh* in the Four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then each of the Evangelists, through the *spirit* and *life* working in them, added their own unique human element to Gospels they wrote. The Church Fathers recognized that God honors the human element of the Gospels and values it far more than harmony and consistency. Ours is an incarnational religion where our humanity, even with its flaws, is part of the story. God loves this and He has allowed us to even participate in the writing of His story among us. This is why four very human, unharmonious, inconsistent, and ambiguous Gospels are better than one. They are all so very human with each Gospel uniquely manifesting the *spirit* and *life* of the Word made flesh in the lives of their authors. When we read these Gospels, with our minds in our hearts, they *make present again* the *spirit* and the *life* of those words spoken by Jesus two thousand years ago that continue to reverberate beyond space and time.



The Jerusalem Cross and the arms of Christ and St. Francis from The Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. The Jerusalem Cross has one large central cross surrounded by four smaller crosses representing the four Gospels that have traveled to the four corners of the world starting from Jerusalem to bring the Good News of salvation to the whole world.

Jan’s Reflections #1:

As I was reflecting on the lives of Peter, Andrew, James and John I thought about their ordinary occupation as fishermen. These men had been mending their nets while listening to Jesus preach. They had just spent the whole night fishing and caught nothing. Here comes Jesus who gets on Peter’s boat and instructs him to move away from the shore. His preaching carries across the water. A little later Jesus tells Peter to go out into the deep. This is where it gets interesting. He commands Peter to let down the nets for a catch of fish. Peter was probably tired, maybe even discouraged. And he might have wondered what this carpenter knew about fishing. Peter obeys in spite of all these factors. The catch of fish is so miraculous; so beyond the natural that help is needed to prevent the boat from sinking. When they arrive back on the shore Peter kneels before the Lord. These fishermen are no

longer the same men. They know He is the Messiah who has transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary. They leave all to follow Him. This transformative experience of going out into the deep is where the miracle occurs. We go out into the deep; the unknown with Jesus and we are told, “Do not be afraid.” We need to trust and obey His command. Lord, help Kevin and I to go out into the deep with you that you may transform us for your plan and purpose.

Kevin’s Reflection #2: “The Old is Good”

³⁷ *And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, ‘The old is good.’” (Luke 5:37-39)*

I’m not much of a wine drinker so frankly I couldn’t tell the difference between a five star vintage and a “two buck chuck” from Trader Joes. Nevertheless, I am one of those that could be identified as saying, “The old is good.” I love the old, not everything that’s old, but most things. I don’t like old dentistry; definitely prefer the new. Even in my youth I loved the old. While my compatriots were listening to Jethro Tull and Lead Zepelin, I listened to Bach and Mahler. I was horrified when guitars and tambourines replaced the organ and the choir at my local Post-Vatican II parish of my childhood. I believed in chivalry much to the embarrassment and consternation of my second wave feminist high school and college girlfriends. This “old loving” trend continued through college, career and family, and even into my senior years. I kept my old slide rule firmly believing that a world based on three significant figures is superior to one based on ten. I prefer watches that you have to wind because they are beautiful and they’ll still work after an EMP. I use an old flip phone because I believe the whole point of technology is that it serves us and not the other way around. I prefer Socrates and Plato to the Modernists philosophers because I don’t believe Beauty is in the “I of the beholder,” but is an existential reality. I believe, like the realists before me, that the objective of language is to *describe* reality not to *make* reality because only God can do that, and we are not God. Okay, I could go on, but you get the idea.

Jesus is offering us the new wine of the Gospel, and for that we have to be new wineskins, so here’s the catch, can I still love old wine and be a new wine skin? Although there was definitely a prohibition against putting new wine in an old wineskin, I didn’t see anything in the scripture to suggest that you couldn’t put old wine in a new wineskin. So it doesn’t look like there is any problem with my loving my old “wine” so long as I leave some room in my new wineskin for the new wine. And I believe that this is scriptural too:

⁵² *And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (Matt 13:52)*

In fact, I’ll go so far as to say that the old is essential to verify the value of the new. Just because something is new doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s better than the old or that it should replace it. Some people thought that Jesus, with His new teaching, was trying to do just that, get rid of the old:

¹⁷ *“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matt 5:17)*

The new fulfills the old; it does not supplant it. The new is coherent with old adding to its beauty, truth and goodness. The new is not disruptive to the old, but it may be disruptive to “old wineskins” who have built their identity, and perhaps their status around a false and fossilized idea of the old. The Word of God is anything but fossilized; it is *spirit* and *life*.

In a prior reflection I commented on Isaiah 43:

¹⁸ *“Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.*

¹⁹ *Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

Now, I seem to be saying the opposite, that we should remember and value the old. That’s okay; I’m in good company as Isaiah says the same thing himself three chapters later:

⁸ *“Remember this and consider,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,*

⁹ *remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me, (Isaiah 46:8-9)*

We transgress when we don't "remember the former things of old." This occurs when we do not honor the "former things," but impose our own "new" agendas and desires on the Scriptures that are not coherent with and alien to the "old."

So then, what are we to do with these two Scriptures?

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

"Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old;

Are these scriptures just more examples of disharmony and inconsistency? Not at all. To think this way would be to suggest that the Word of God is subject to the Aristotelian Law of Non Contradiction. If you are not familiar with the Law of Non Contradiction it is simply saying that if something is black, then it is not white or if your pet is a dog, then it cannot be a cat. First, the scripture is not limited by the Law of Non Contradiction because the scripture is the Word of God and the Word of God is God as John states in his gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Second, God Himself is not subject to Aristotelian Laws of Logic. This is not to say that God is illogical; perhaps it is more appropriate to say that He is *supralogical*, above logic. A resolution to this paradox or mystery of harmonizing opposites was proposed by Nicholas of Cusa (1417-1464). Nicholas was an ordained priest and received his Doctorate in Canon Law. The Vatican sent Nicholas to Byzantium where he participated in efforts to reunite the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The following are from my notes on Nicholas of Cusa (from the Philosophy course I taught some years ago):

* * * * *

1. The thought of Nicholas was governed by the idea of unity as the harmonious synthesis of differences. On the metaphysical plane this idea is presented in his idea of God as the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the synthesis of opposites, which transcends and yet includes the distinct perfections of creatures.
 - a. God unites all oppositions in Himself in an incomprehensible manner. For example, we can say that God is the greatest of all beings, yet it would also be appropriate to say that He must also possess smallness in an infinite manner. He is therefore, the Greatest and the Smallest in a perfect synthesis of opposites.
 - b. To arrive at such a mental understanding, Nicholas proposed a synthesis of the *Via Negativa* with the *Via Positiva* which is akin to the *apophatic* and the *cataphatic* theology of the Orthodox East.
 - (1) The mind reasons discursively and is governed by the principle of noncontradiction or the mutual exclusion of opposites. The use of reason in approaching God can only lead to crude approximations.
 - (2) But the heart apprehends the *coincidentia oppositorum* of God intuitively. Yet, it cannot verbalize its apprehension since language is the tool of reason. Hence, we must resort to the use of symbols (icons).
 - c. The world is a harmonious system. It consists of a multiplicity of finite things; but its members are so related to one another and to the whole that there is a 'unity in plurality.' The one universe is the unfolding of the absolute and simple divine unity, and the whole universe is reflected or mirrored in each individual part.
2. His philosophical system led him to conclude that the unity of the Church had to rest upon the Great Councils (the Orthodox position) rather than the authority of the Papacy. The unity of the Church was seen as a synthesis of the Many, the Many being the Council and the Bishops and the people they represented. Hence, the authority of the Church rested in the faithful.

- a. He held a similar view of the State. He believed that the monarch does not receive his authority directly and immediately from God, but rather from or through the people.
- b. In either case, Nicholas did not view unity as the result of the annulment of differences, but a synthesis that can be arrived through a coincidence of opposites.

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May be this all seems a bit confusing, but what it comes down to is what we've been discussing over the past several Photo-Journal entries, that is, having the *mind in the heart*; this is where the *coincidentia oppositorum* occurs. This is where the old wine and the new wine mix provided we are humble enough to become new wineskins. It is here where we will be able to perceive the "new thing" that God is "springing forth" in our lives and in His Church.

A Cautionary Tale

Western and Eastern Christianity had grown apart for centuries and were separated by a number of theological and jurisdictional issues. This led to a climax when both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church anathematize each other in 1054 resulting in what is known as the Great Schism. While there were attempts to reconcile it wasn't until the Ottoman Turks had become an existential threat to Byzantium that a concerted effort was made to end the Schism. As mentioned earlier Nicholas of Cusa was sent in an attempt to work out a diplomatic solution to the issues that divided Western and Eastern Christendom. Those efforts failed. Rome demanded that they have jurisdictional authority over the East, and the attitude of the East was famously summarized as, "Better the Turkish Turban than the Papal Tiara." As a result, the Ottoman Turks ended a thousand years of Byzantine Christendom; in 1453, her capital fell, her churches were turned into mosques and madrassas, and her last emperor, Constantine Paleologos XI, perished in battle defending the Byzantine capital of Constantinople.

Both sides of the East and West divide demanded the annulment of differences of the other, rather than arriving at a unity that may have been achieved through a synthesis of a coincidence of opposites as Nicholas of Cusa had proposed. Did they miss the "new thing" that God wanted to do with the Church, to bring them together into a unity that did not demand conformity and the obsequence of the other? What if this could have been achieved through a *Coincidentia Oppositorum*? Might the division of Christianity been healed? Would Byzantium have fallen? Might the unity of the East and the West prevented the problems that gave rise to the Protestant Reformation? We will never know the answers to these questions, but we do know this with absolute certainty, Christ wants a unified Church who is to be His Bride. Jesus could not have been any more clear about this:

²⁰ "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²² The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. (John 17:20-23)

The New Wine of the Kingdom:

If there is a "new thing" that God is going to spring forth in His Church then I believe that it is time for the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer that we "may be perfectly one." And how is the Trinity one? *Unity in Plurality*. I pray we don't miss this opportunity as the Catholic and Orthodox churches did over half a millennium ago. It is time that the Christian community stop biting and devouring one another (Gal 5:15), rather let us through the grace of the Holy Spirit strive to be perfectly one, so that the world may know that the Father has sent the Son and hast loved us even as He has loved His Son (John 17:23). *Unity in Plurality*. What would this look like for the Body of Christ to have "unity in plurality" without the annulment of our differences? It would mean that we all don't need to be a foot or a hand, or an ear or an eye:

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single organ, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, ²⁵ that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1Cor 12:12-27)

Can we accept and be committed to being in that part of the Body as it pleases Him (1Cor 12:18), while loving and honoring the foot down the street, and the ear in the other county who have also committed themselves to where God has placed them. Or do we have to demand the annulment of differences and insist that the Body can only be one when everyone becomes just like us. I am confident we can do the former. Why? Because I have faith in man? On the contrary, history has proven that this is impossible for man. My confidence is based not on man, but in God and His word. Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt 19:26)

The oneness of the Body of Christ will be our greatest testimony of the truth of Gospel. Oneness will be our wedding gown washed in the Blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14) so that we may be presented in splendor as a Bride before Christ, our Bridegroom (Eph 5:27). I pray that we may all be "new wineskins" filled with the seemingly incompatible mix of "old" and "new" wine made miscible through the Holy Spirit and the divine love that You have given us for one another.

Jan's Reflections #2:

When the Pharisees ask Jesus why His disciples eat and drink instead of fast Jesus has a very interesting response. He replies, these are my wedding guests and I am the Bridegroom. I wonder what they thought when they heard this answer? Scripture does not tell us their thoughts. Wedding guest celebrate while they await the arrival of the bride. Isn't this an invitation to the wedding feast? I always think of wine and beautiful garments for a wedding. Jesus also tells them that an old garment will tear if you try to repair it with a piece new cloth. Likewise, we must become new wineskins for this new wine Jesus wants to give us. He is not pointing to the external material realm, but that change that is needed in our hearts and spirits that enable us to receive this new wine, the new wing that He is doing.

In Revelation 22:17 it says,

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

We, the Church, are the Bride who must make herself ready.

Lord Jesus, help us to shed the old that would blind us to the new so that we can drink the new wine of the Kingdom.