Analysis of the complex issues in actualizing the Johannine passion narrative

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On March 12, 2000 Pope John Paul II prayed for God's forgiveness for Christian behaviors that "in the course of history have caused these children of yours ["the People of Israel"] to suffer."[1] As the pope had earlier observed, "In the Christian world . . . erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility towards this people."[2]

This destructive capacity of certain New Testament texts is evident in the long history of Christian attacks on Jews during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday. The pope acknowledged this during his 1998 Good Friday meditations. "Oh no, not the Jewish people, crucified by us for so long," he observed, "not them, but all of us, each one of us [killed Christ], because we are all murderers of love."[3]

The Johannine passion narrative, proclaimed annually on Good Friday, poses particular difficulties. As one pastor wrote recently to the U.S. Bishops Conference, "The insistence on reading St. John's Gospel with its many pejorative references to 'the Jews' diminishes the Church's credibility when it claims it is not antisemitic. . . . The fact that there have to be explanations in the missalette (which not everyone reads), shows that the reading is confusing and capable of misinterpretation."[4]

At the 2000 and 2001 annual meetings of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, this issue was studied in great detail by the Continuing Seminar on Biblical Issues in Jewish-Christian Relations that is co-convened by John Clabeaux and myself.[5] The conversation produced several strategies that future editions of the lectionary might employ to address such concerns. The lectionary could offer the celebrant a number of options for the Gospel Reading on Good Friday:

Option 1: proclaim the full Johannine passion narrative as currently defined with the instruction that the homilist must address those passages with the potential to promote anti-Jewish sentiments.

Option 2: proclaim a short form of the Johannine passion narrative thereby avoiding the most problematic passages. E.g., 19:16b ("So they took Jesus . . .") to 19:30 ("… he handed over his spirit").

Option 3: Proclaim a thematically constructed Johannine catena as a lection that is not limited to the passion narrative but instead draws together Johannine soteriological perspectives from throughout the Gospel. For example,

[Jesus said,] "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep and I will lay down my life for the sheep. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of scripture might be fulfilled [that says]: "They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots." This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. [John 10:11,15b,18; 15:12-13; 3:16-17; 11:51b; 19:16-30.]

Option 4: Proclaim a synoptic passion narrative in either a short or long form. Although none of them have the same difficulties with the term *hoi Ioudaioi* as the Gospel of John, care would need to be taken with their own anti-Jewish polemical features.

Option 5: proclaim a carefully excerpted lection that presents the Johannine passion narrative almost in its entirety but elides certain polemical elements. This options presumes the continuance of the tradition of reading the Johannine narrative more or less in its entirety.

This essay will offer a sample lectionary reading for Good Friday as in option 5. It was developed in the course of the Seminar's work over 2000-2001. The paper will first highlight relevant principles in official Catholic instructions to date. Then it will sketch out various techniques currently used in the Roman Lectionary to excerpt scriptural passages. After considering the particular theological and terminological issues in the Johannine text, it will offer a revised lection of the passion narrative for Good Friday based on *The New American Bible* 1986 translation of the New Testament, the authorized translation for Catholic lectionary use in the United States. Hopefully, this will be of service to the competent ecclesiastical authorities when the lectionary is next revised.

It must be stressed at the outset that there are more than exegetical or translational issues involved. The proclamation of excerpted biblical texts during the liturgy is a part of the process of actualizing the scriptures in the particularly potent setting of worship. Therefore, an axiom put forth in 1993 by the Pontifical Biblical Commission is very pertinent:

> Particular attention is necessary, according to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (*Nostra Aetate*, 4), to avoid absolutely any actualization of certain texts of the New Testament which could provoke or reinforce unfavorable attitudes to the Jewish people. The tragic events of the past must, on the contrary, impel all to keep unceasingly in mind that, according to the New Testament, the Jews remain 'beloved' of God, 'since the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable' (Rom. 11:28-29).[6]

1. Relevant Instructions from Post-Conciliar Catholic Documents

The 1965 Vatican II Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, was truly revolutionary. It was the first Catholic magisterial text to consider the Church's theological relationship with Judaism. Previous papal or conciliar decrees had simply delineated the status of Jews in Christian society. As Eugene J. Fisher has observed:

It may also be said that the reason that neither popes nor councils, over the centuries, felt called upon to decree officially on the church's doctrinal position with regard to Judaism was most likely that no one questioned the negative portrait of the Jewish religion drawn by the church fathers in the early centuries. With no Christians rising to question the distorted image of Judaism provided in the patristic texts, this ancient Christian "teaching of contempt" did not have to be officially defined but simply presumed by just about all Christian thinkers until the [twentieth] century.[7]

This also explains a rather unusual characteristic of *Nostra Aetate*. Unlike other Catholic documents, the declaration did not cite numerous ecclesiastical texts of prior councils or popes. It had to leap all the way back to the Apostle Paul to discuss Judaism theologically and affirmatively. Its comments on the alleged "Jewish" responsibility for the death of Jesus thus reversed standard Christian thinking that had held sway for eighteen centuries:

Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (see Jn 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture. Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.[8]

Such a reorientation of longstanding Christian assumptions inevitably has implications that take time to be appreciated fully. The repercussions of *Nostra Aetate* are still being discovered. This post-conciliar work on the level of the universal Catholic magisterium has been carried out most directly by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and by the addresses of Pope John Paul II.[9]

A 1974 document prepared by this Commission to implement *Nostra Aetate* made explicit reference to the Johannine passion narrative:

> Commissions entrusted with the task of liturgical translation will pay particular attention to the way in which they express those phrases and passages which Christians, if not well informed, might misunderstand because of prejudice. Obviously, one cannot alter the text of the Bible. The point is that, with a version destined for liturgical use, there should be an overriding preoccupation to bring out explicitly the meaning of a text,* while taking scriptural studies into account.
>
> * Thus the formula "the Jews," in St. John, sometimes according to the context means "the leaders of the Jews," or "the adversaries of Jesus," terms which express better thought of the evangelist and avoid appearing to arraign the Jewish people as such.[10]

The Commission here states that biblical texts cannot be "altered" in the process of translation. Judging by the footnote this means that paraphrases or the substitution of terms foreign to the text are to be avoided when rendering a biblical translation. This translational point should be carefully distinguished from how biblical texts are *excerpted* for lectionary use, which is a different process than preparing a new biblical translation (see below). Even so, the Commission does urge even translators to render the problematic Johannine *hoi Ioudaioi* in ways that respect the text's intentions but ameliorate its antisemitic potential.

These ideas have been reiterated recently by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Its May 7, 2001 instruction on the translation of liturgical texts, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, states:

> It is the task of the homily and of catechesis to set forth the meaning of the liturgical texts, illuminating with precision the church's understanding regarding the members of ... Jewish communities.... Similarly, it is the task of catechists or of the homilist to transmit that right interpretation of the texts that excludes any prejudice or unjust discrimination on the basis of persons, gender, social condition, race or other criteria which has no foundation at all in the texts of the sacred liturgy. Although considerations such as these may sometimes help one in choosing among various translations of a certain expression, they are not to be considered reasons for altering either a biblical text or a liturgical text that has been duly promulgated.[11]

The Congregation here maintains that the potential for antisemitic interpretations does not justify the substitution of foreign words in biblical texts used liturgically. However, certain phrases, for example *hoi Ioudaioi*, can be translated with an eye to their pastoral impact. The Congregation feels that problematic biblical texts should be handled homiletically and educationally.[12]

Thus, in terms of translational strategies to deal with potentially anti-Jewish readings, Catholic magisterial documents hold that such efforts must remain faithful to the scriptural text and not "alter" it, but legitimate renderings of the existing Greek text that are alert to the potential for anti-Jewish construals are permissible.

2. How the Current Roman Lectionary Excerpts Biblical Texts

This brings us to the distinct question of how the lectionary excerpts biblical texts for liturgical proclamation. The broad-based team of scripture scholars, liturgists, catechetical experts, and pastors that organized the Roman lectionary in the mid-1960s had the aim of presenting "the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation" in the readings.[13] In their selection of passages, they omitted those "that require a complex exegetical or literal explanation before any spiritual application is possible," though this did not mean that all difficult texts were to be excluded.[14] For very long readings, the lectionary was to "indicate how the passage [might] be shortened in a way that retains the essential parts of the pericope."[15] Not surprisingly, since the wider implications of *Nostra Aetate* would take time to emerge, there is no evidence that the lectionary planners reckoned with potentially "anti-Jewish" polemical elements in their preparation of difficult or long passages such as the passion narrative lections.

As eventually promulgated, the lectionary does not simply extract self-contained scriptural pericopes. It sometimes begins and/or ends a lection at points other than at the biblical text's natural limits. For example, the first reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent in Cycle A ends the lection at Isaiah 7:14, "the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel," even though the Isaian text more naturally continues until at least vs. 16. The reason for this is to pair this reading more closely with the Gospel portion from Matthew 1:18-24.

The lectionary also does not always present continuous verses within its selected starting and ending points. Sometimes verses are skipped to have a shorter reading, as is apparently the case on the 2nd Sunday of Lent in Cycle B when the first reading extracts Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18. Elsewhere it seems to be done to focus on a certain theological point or out of pastoral concerns, as on the 7th Sunday of Easter in Cycle C whose second reading is Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20. The omitted verses are not Jesus-centered and condemn outsiders and (ironically!) those who add to or delete from the "words in this book" (22:18-19). Sometimes large portions of a biblical book can be elided, as on Saturday of the 20th Week in Ordinary Time that offers Ruth 2:1-3,8-11; 4:13-17 as the first reading.

Finally, the lectionary occasionally inserts verses from earlier in the biblical book to help situate or shed light on the main portion of the lection. For instance, the first reading for Cycle A on the 4th Sunday of Easter begins with Acts 2:14, depicting Peter's rising to give a speech, but then leaps over twenty verses to the speech's conclusion and aftermath in verses 36-41. Similarly, the first reading for the 6th Sunday of Easter in Cycle C starts at Acts 15:1-2, introducing the problem of how Gentiles should be admitted into the Church. It then jumps over the sending of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem and the debate that occurs there, and proceeds to the resolution of the issue in verses 22-29.

Thus, there are lectionary precedents to deal with the pastoral issue of the anti-Jewish potential of the passion narratives by the strategic beginning or ending of a lection, by omitting problematic verses, and by incorporating relevant verses from earlier in the biblical book to situate the lection. Future lectionary revisions could draw upon these precedents.

However, Raymond Brown has raised a significant question:

> [M]odern apprehensions about the anti-Jewish impact of the passion narratives are not groundless. One solution that has been proposed is to remove the "anti-Semitic" passages from the liturgical readings of the passion during Holy Week, a type of "Speak no evil; see no evil; hear no evil" response. But removing offensive passages is a dangerous procedure which enables hearers of bowdlerized versions to accept unthinkingly everything in the Bible. Accounts "improved" by excision perpetuate the fallacy that what one hears in the Bible is always to be imitated because it is "revealed" by God, and the fallacy that every position taken by an author of Scripture is inerrant. In my opinion, a truer response is to continue to read unabridged passion accounts in Holy Week, not subjecting them to excisions that seem wise to us--but once having read them, to preach forcefully that such hostility between Christian and Jew cannot be continued today and is against our fundamental understanding of Christianity. Sooner or later Christian believers must wrestle with the limitations imposed on the Scriptures by the circumstances in which they were written. They must be brought to see that some attitudes found in the Scriptures, however explicable in the times in which they originated, may be wrong attitudes if repeated today. They must reckon with the implications inherent in the fact that God has revealed in words of men.[16]

Lawrence Frizzell recently noted another dimension to this subject. While recognizing that a judicious use of excerptions, "may deal with the problem for the liturgical reading of the Gospel," he goes on to say that, "simplified or ‘sanitized’ translations of the New Testament are not helpful. If Christians are unaware of complications that demand an exegetical response, someone from a fundamentalist background will show them ‘the real Gospel.’ Then they would be overwhelmed by the dismal portrayal of ‘the Pharisees’ or ‘the Jews.’ There is no substitute for ongoing education of Christians concerning Jews and Judaism!"[17]

However, as Brown declared, "to include [in the lectionary] the passages that have an anti-Jewish import and not to comment on them is irresponsible proclamation that will detract from a mature understanding of our Lord’s death."[18] Therefore, it must be asked if it is realistic to expect that every year preachers will deal with the problems of anti-Judaism after the lengthy passion narratives have been proclaimed or even enacted? Would this not divert their limited preaching time from the soteriological themes that should be the primary focus on Good Friday? An excerpted lection would free the preacher from an annual responsibility to deal with the texts’ potential for being actualized antisemitically.[19]

Furthermore, since in many churches the congregation would be reading along with the extended lection, a note at the beginning of the text would be helpful. For those congregants concerned about the precise biblical text, this note would explain that the reading has been excerpted in order to focus more intensely on the spiritual or theological significance of the death of Jesus.[20]

Such an approach seems especially necessary for twenty-first century western congregations. Since our culture tends to equate historicity with truth, typical congregants hear the theologically-driven biblical narratives as historical facts. Given the antisemitic dangers that arise from hearing the passion narratives as "histories," it seems incumbent on the Church to reckon with this reality. Moreover, western preoccupation with history can inhibit the perception of the sacred writers’ theological insights. The prudent removal of distracting polemical phrases

can actually serve to make the evangelists' religious message more accessible. In addition, if the preacher were to allude briefly to this procedure every so often, Brown's concerns about encouraging fundamentalist biblical attitudes would be ameliorated.

An important conclusion from this discussion is that lectionary excerptions of apologetic or polemical "anti-Jewish" passages should be done so as to free the evangelists' theological perspectives from potentially misleading disputatious trappings.

3. Issues Specific to the Johannine Passion Narrative

As has already been mentioned numerous times above, the most problematic aspect of the Johannine passion narrative is its frequent use of the phrase *hoi Ioudaioi*, which the revised New Testament N.A.B. uniformly translates as "the Jews."

While *hoi Ioudaioi* can be used in a neutral manner (as in the "Jewish rites of purification" in John 2:6), it is often used polemically to refer to the forces opposed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel's dualistic cosmic drama of light vs. darkness, goodness vs. evil, truth vs. falsehood. It is a virtually unanimous consensus in Johannine scholarship that this polemical usage of *hoi Ioudaioi* is related to the separation of the Johannine community from the local Jewish community.[21] As George Smiga explains, this polemical sense:

> occurs in at least 31 of the 71 instances of *hoi Ioudaioi* within the gospel. The polemical use is characterized by a hostility towards Jesus. Those who are described in this sense try to slander, attack, and kill Jesus. Sometimes the stance is lessened to only skepticism or disagreement. But those who are described by the polemical usage are clearly Jesus' opponents. They are never portrayed in a positive light. Moreover, within the text of John the polemical sense can suddenly emerge as a replacement for another more traditional Jewish group. The Pharisees can find themselves abruptly dismissed from a particular story and replaced by *hoi Ioudaioi* (8:22; 9:18). This same unexpected exchange occurs with the crowd in 6:41. Throughout the passion narrative, roles which within the synoptic gospels are played by the chief priests, elders and scribes are filled in John by *hoi Ioudaioi*. They are the ones who send their police to arrest Jesus (18:12), who call for his death (19:7, 12, 14) and into whose hands Jesus says he will be handed over (18:36).

Therefore, in scenes throughout the gospel when there is opposition to Jesus, the evangelist shows remarkable freedom in inserting *hoi Ioudaioi* as a replacement for opposition groups which are described with much more specificity in the synoptics and even in other places in John's own gospel.[22]

In a recent literary-critical study of the Fourth Gospel, Adele Reinhartz offers what she terms compliant, resistant, sympathetic, and engaged readings of the text. Her comments about the compliant approach are especially pertinent to the liturgical focus of this paper because "when the sacred scriptures are read in church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his word, is proclaiming his Gospel."[23] Obviously, in the context of worship the

congregation is meant to "comply with the directions that the implied author [of the Gospel reading] provides."[24] By its very nature liturgy expects congregations to be "compliant" in their encounter with the lectionary readings. Reinhartz explains the significance of a compliant stance toward the Fourth Gospel:

The Beloved Disciple defines "good" as accepting the gift of eternal life and, through a rhetoric of binary opposition, labels as "bad" all those who refuse the gift. A compliant reader, by the very fact of his or her compliance with the Beloved Disciple's perspective and acceptance of the gift, will take on this assessment as well. Within the narrative and discourse of the Gospel, those who refuse, and therefore are "bad," are also labeled as "Jews." . . . Even if the content of the label "the Jews" in the Gospel is deemed to be ahistorical, idiosyncratic, and even incorrect, the identification of the Jews with the negative pole of the Gospel's rhetoric of binary opposition is dangerous precisely because there exists a "real" group that shares the same "Jewish" label. A compliant reader is not at all unlikely to transfer the negative assessment and hostility that he or she would absorb toward the Gospel's Jews to that group in his or her own world that shares this label.[25]

This leads Reinhartz to make the literary observation that "It is difficult to imagine that these words and, indeed the manifold repetition of the term *Ioudaios* itself are not calculated to breed not only distance but also hatred, just as the words of rival political and religious groups do today."[26]

The possibility that the Johannine text may intend to promote hostility toward *hoi Ioudaioi* in the hearts of its readers or hearers poses vexing pastoral and liturgical problems for a Church that teaches its members "to avoid absolutely any actualization of certain texts of the New Testament which could provoke or reinforce unfavorable attitudes to the Jewish people."[27] It raises an especially pointed challenge given the already cited formulation of *Liturgiam Authenticam*.[28] Since it is the "task of the homily and of catechesis to set forth the meaning of the liturgical texts," in the case of the Johannine text that "ideal meaning," as Sandra Schneiders terms it,[29] may in fact be contradictory to "the church's understanding [of the] Jewish communities" of today.

More specifically, if the author(s) of the Fourth Gospel intended to encourage antagonism for Jews by using *hoi Ioudaioi* so often and so sweepingly, then a lectionary[30] rendering of the phrase today in the sweeping manner of "the Jews" would, by its efforts to be faithful to the text, actually abet a purpose our community has condemned as "a sin against God and humanity."[31] The more than a dozen polemical appearances of *hoi Ioudaioi* (not including its six additional mentions in the phrase "king of the Jews") in the Good Friday lection has demonstrably generated antisemitism in Christian history. It would appear to be an inescapable conclusion that we have no choice today but to translate *hoi Ioudaioi* in ways that reduce its sweeping and universalizing polemic, and least if we are to be faithful to official commitments to deplore "all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source."[32]

Therefore, in the model lection that appears below, *hoi Ioudaioi* has either been elided or rendered as "the chief priests" throughout. This is in keeping with the Johannine passion

narrative itself, which occasionally almost alternates *hoi Ioudaioi* and chief priests in successive sentences (19:6,7; 14,15) and is consistent with the role these characters play in the synoptic narratives. Rendering *hoi Ioudaioi* in the Johannine passion narrative as "the chief priests" in no way compromises the text's soteriology. It simply defangs its universalizing polemic.

Anti-Jewish polemic manifests itself in other ways in the Johannine passion narrative. These manifestations include the teaming of Pharisees with the chief priests (18:3); negative characterizations of Jewish figures in the third person plural (18:28,35,36,38,40; 19:16,18); references to Jesus being handed over by his own "nation" (18:35); and Pilate's determination to release Jesus (18:38-40; 19:4,6,8,12). The 1988 NCCB document *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion* cited the 1974 Pontifical Commission *Guidelines* when it advised:

The greatest caution is advised in all cases where "it is a question of passages that seem to show the Jewish people as such in an unfavorable light" (*Guidelines* II). A general principle might, therefore, be suggested that if one cannot show beyond reasonable doubt that the particular gospel element selected or paraphrased will not be offensive or have the potential for negative influence on the audience for whom the presentation is intended, that element cannot, in good conscience, be used.[33]

Now, while this admonition appears in an instruction devoted to passion plays, "The principles [it] invoked are applicable as the *Guidelines* suggest (ch. III) to 'all levels of Christian instruction and education,' whether written (textbooks, teachers manuals, etc.) or oral (preaching, the mass media)."[34] The liturgical proclamation of the Johannine passion narrative would reasonably be included as one "level of Christian instruction."

Therefore, since the above Johannine features are polemical moves of dubious historicity that do not advance Johannine theology, and since they risk perpetuating hostility to Jews by being heard as "history" by today's congregations, they have been partially elided in the following lection. As noted above, the existing lectionary omits certain verses from lections for pastoral and theological reasons, so this procedure has ample precedent.

John 19:7 presents particular challenges. The 1986 New Testament NAB renders it as follows. "The Jews answered, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.'" In addition to the sweeping use of *hoi Ioudaioi*, the verse can be readily understood to legitimate the ancient but now condemned deicide charge because it portrays Jews asserting that one claiming divine sonship should be executed.

The thorny problem is that the Johannine passion narrative is in reality a cosmic drama, but today's congregations inevitably hear it as a historical chronicle. This verse anachronistically portrays people prior to the resurrection debating Jesus' status as a divine being. Such disputes, however, really have their "historical context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community" in "Stage 3",[35] and could not have contributed to Jesus' death in "Stage 1".[36]

Perhaps more importantly, the passage portrays "the Jews" as motivated by a law to kill Jesus. Without careful explanation, the liturgical proclamation of this verse risks perpetuating Christian caricatures of Jewish fidelity to the Torah as well as casting Jews as murderous because of this

fidelity. Therefore, following the admonition of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy cited above, this verse has been elided from the exemplar lection that follows.

John 19:15 ["They cried out, 'Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your king?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar,'"] stimulated intense discussion during the Seminar's deliberations. Some members pointed out that the text here depicts the leaders of Israel renouncing God has their king, thereby annulling Israel's covenant with God. This narrative theological assertion is directly contradicted by numerous recent official Catholic statements, such as the papal description of Jews today as "partners in a covenant of eternal love which was never revoked."[37] The verse was seen as instance in which slavish adherence to the text could promote theological intentions that today's Church as renounced. Therefore, it ought to be omitted from lectionary proclamation. On the other hand, the dramatic climax to the narrative's structure that the verse represents, together with the powerful pastoral challenge for contemporary congregations as to whether they worship other "gods," were potent arguments for its retention. Given the focus of the text on the chief priests and not on *hoi Ioudaioi*, it was decided by the Seminar to retain the passage in the exemplar lection.

Finally, it should be noted that the lectionary's method of incorporating into a lection a passage from elsewhere in the same biblical book in order to establish the background is employed below in John 18:14. A phrase from John 11:48, "lest the Romans come and take away both the land and the nation" augments the already present Johannine reference back to Caiaphas' counsel in the earlier passage. The expansion of the existing cross-reference provides the stated reason why Caiaphas thinks "it is better that one man should die rather than the people."

As stated above, it is hoped that the following lection will be of service to the competent ecclesiastical authorities when the lectionary is next revised. To summarize the procedures used below:

1. The lection offers the full passion narrative from the Gospel of John according to its traditional use during the Good Friday liturgy.
2. The lection has been designed to present and respect the text's theological characteristics and insights and the dramatic structure and interactions within the text without the distractions of anti-Jewish or potentially anti-Jewish phrases that do not add to its theological import.
3. Anti-Jewish or potentially anti-Jewish phrases are addressed as follows:
    A. The recurring polemical expression *hoi Ioudaioi* has been rendered in the passion narrative lection as "the chief priests" or elided.
    B. Polemical or ambiguous use of the third person plural pronoun "they" has been made specific according to context.
    C. Certain polemical or apologetic passages of dubious historicity have been elided. These include explicit declarations of Pilate's determination to free Jesus and Jesus described as "handed over by his own nation."
    D. In one case a phrase from elsewhere in the Gospel of John has been added to provide additional Johannine background.

NOTES

1. "Service Requesting Pardon," in *Origins* 29/40 (March 23, 2000: 647.
2. Pope John Paul II, "Speech to Symposium on the Roots of Anti-Judaism," 31 October 1997, 1: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 November 1997, p. 6.
3. https://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/pope-john-paul-ii/jp2-98apr10
4. Private correspondence to Eugene J. Fisher, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, NCCB, dated May 29, 2001.
5. My thanks to John Clabeaux for his aid with this paper. The following seminar members contributed to this project: Regina Boisclair, Patrick Castles, John Clabeaux, Robert Connolly, Philip A. Cunningham, David P. Efroymson, Lawrence Frizzell, John Gilchrist, Marie Goldstein, Dennis Hamm, Judith Kolasny, Amy-Jill Levine, Kenneth Morman, Brian M. Nolan, James Polich, Gilbert Romero, Richard J. Sklba, Gerard Sloyan, George Smiga, Linda Taggart, and Anthony Tambasco.
6. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993, IV, A, 3.
7. Eugene J. Fisher, "Official Roman Catholic Teaching on Jews and Judaism: Commentary and Context," in Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, eds., *In Our Time: The Flowering of Jewish-Catholic Dialogue* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press/Stimulus Books, 1990), 4.
8. Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* (1965), 4.
9. The relevant texts may be found on the website of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations (www.dialogika.us)
10. Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration* Nostra Aetate, *No.4* (1974), III.
11. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, 29 in *Origins* 31/2 (May 24, 2001): 22.
12. Elsewhere *Liturgiam Authenticam* seems unaware of a liturgical issue relevant to Christian-Jewish relations that might be noted here. "The effort should be made to ensure that the translations [of liturgical biblical texts] be conformed to that understanding of biblical passages which has been handed down by liturgical use and by the tradition of the fathers of the church . . . the greatest care is to be taken that the translation express the traditional Christological, typological and spiritual sense, and manifest the unity and interrelatedness of the two testaments" [41]. The problem is that patristic theology was tainted with anti-Jewish perspectives because of its supersessionist presuppositions. As Pier Francesco Fumagalli observed, "The Fathers of the Church of the first centuries, as much in the East as in the West, were in agreement in showing the Jewish people as 'repudiated' definitively by God, and the Church as the selected people in 'substitution' to bring salvation to everyone" ["*Nostra Aetate*: A Milestone," delivered at the Vatican Symposium on "The Roots of Anti-Judaism in the Christian Environment," October 31, 1997]. *Liturgiam Authenticam*'s call for fidelity to the patristic heritage needs to be related to the Church's recognition that "an anti-Jewish tradition stamped its mark in different ways on Christian doctrine and teaching" [Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, "Reflections: The Vatican Statement on the *Shoah*" in *Origins* 28/2 (May 28, 1998): 31]. Otherwise, the liturgy may enshrine and perpetuate theologies and attitudes toward Jews and Judaism that the Church has officially repudiated.
13. Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 410.
14. Ibid., 418.
15. Ibid., 419.
16. Raymond E. Brown, *A Crucified Christ in Holy Week: Essays on the Four Gospel Passion Narratives* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1986), 15-16. It might be wondered if Brown's critique would also apply to the lectionary's excerptions of "Old Testament" passages that sometimes reduce those texts to a univocal prediction-fulfillment pattern. Such a practice would also seem to promote an uncritical fundamentalist mentality.

17. Lawrence Frizzell, "What Does the Current Roman Rite Convey about Judaism?" paper prepared for the Liturgical Issues in Christian-Jewish Relations conference, Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, June 10-11, 2001, 9.
18. Brown, 16.
19. The U.S. bishops have stressed this obligation: "A full and precise explanation of the use of the expression 'the Jews' by St. John and other New Testament references which appear to place all Jews in a negative light [is needed]. (These expressions and references should be fully and precisely clarified in accordance with the intent of the Statement that Jews are not to be 'presented as rejected or accursed by God as if this followed from holy scripture')" [Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, *Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish Relations*, 1967, Recommended Programs, 10g].
20. I might note in passing the positive wording used here. Framing it negatively, as in trying to avoid texts that historically have fostered anti-Jewish attitudes and actions, runs the risk of suggesting that the editing has been done simply to placate Jews. It must be stressed instead that these suggestions in lectionary preparation are motivated by a concern to be faithful to the Christian message as understood in the Catholic community today.
21. See for example: Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1979); J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology of the Fourth Gospel* (Rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979); and Jerome H, Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001) questions the current scholarly consensus that there was a historical "expulsion" of Johannine Jews from the local synagogue in the last decade of the first century. She suggests that "the exclusion passages may have provided the Johannine community not with a direct reflection of their historical experience but rather with a divinely ordained etiology in the time of Jesus for a situation of separation which was part of their own experience [p. 50]. However the separation of the two groups may have occurred, Johannine polemic is still the result of tensions between Jews who are adherents of Jesus Christ and those who are not.
22. George Smiga, unpublished manuscript offered for the August 6-8, 2000 meeting of the Continuing Seminar on Biblical Issues in Jewish-Christian Relations, the Catholic Biblical Association of America.
23. *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, II, 9.
24. Reinhartz, 54.
25. Reinhartz, 79-80.
26. Reinhartz, 78.
27. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, IV, A, 3.
28. *Liturgiam Authenticam*, 29.
29. Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (2nd ed.; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 144-148.
30. The lectionary rendering should always be distinguished from biblical translations where footnotes can be more effectively employed
31. E.g., John Paul II, "Address to the British Council for Christians and Jews," November 16, 1990.
32. *Nostra Aetate*, 4. These words were reiterated by John Paul II during his historic visit to the chief synagogue of Rome on April 13, 1986.
33. Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), C,1,d.
34. Ibid., Preliminary Considerations.
35. Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985), 21, A.

36. The language of "stages" of Gospel development comes from the 1964 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels*.

37. John Paul II, "Address to Jewish Leaders in Miami" (September 11, 1987) in Fisher and Klenicki, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 105-109.