Opinion
Spirituality



by NCR Staff

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In a commentary for NCR, St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk says that on the 50th anniversary of Vatican II lectionary, it's time to update texts and translations. "The rich Biblical resources about the role of women in the Old Testament, and especially in the early Christian communities, are still simply unknown," Ursuline Sr. Eileen Schuller said in a webinar that Schenk attended. Find below responses to Schenk's commentary from NCR readers. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

I wholeheartedly concur with St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk's assessment of the need for a more inclusive lectionary in both content and language.

When earning my master's degree at Creighton University, I took an informal poll of random female students, asking them about the presence of women in the Scriptures, and the vast majority replied that the women are not there or they are seen in a subservient or sin-filled role — think the woman taken while committing adultery. I was shocked, as I felt that women play a rather significant role in both the Old and New Testaments, yet why aren't these Catholic women aware of them?



Many of the stories and miracles involving women are either not proclaimed on Sunday, or they are coupled with an account that includes no women, and the celebrant chooses to preach about one of the other readings. No doubt the male celebrant can identify better with one of the other texts, but that does not help the women in the congregation see themselves in the Scriptures.

On an even more personal note, I recall with considerable pain when Rome rejected the Catechism of the Catholic Church which made good faith efforts to use more inclusive language, but instead reversed course, making a clear choice for male dominated language. It felt like a deliberate and planned slap in the face. It was hard to continue to be a daughter of the church which so clearly rejected me, though I did so and continue to do so.

I applaud Sister Christine and so many other scholarly women who fearlessly and lovingly call the church to be faithful to its celebrated marks of being one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Honestly, where would the church be without its daughters?

KATHLEEN KELLY

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I agree and disagree with Ursuline Sr. Eileen Schuller.

Foremost among the omissions are passages about women, especially women in leadership roles. "The rich Biblical resources about the role of women in the Old Testament, and especially in the early Christian communities, are still simply unknown," Schuller said.

Agreed. I want to hear at least some of Joshua 2, beginning with verse 1, in church.

The second problematic area needing attention and revision involves the readings from the Old Testament. Schuller notes that Old Testament texts are too often "applied according to a patristic typological principle … by a simplistic prophecy-fulfillment relationship that easily slides into a supersessionism [the belief that Christianity supersedes or replaces Judaism] or, at worse, by a paradigm: 'Nice, good Jesus; mean, bad Jews.' "

I could not disagree more.

Patristic hermeneutics are consistent with the largely Judaic New Testament. Whether we read the New Testament in canonical order beginning with Matthew or in chronological order beginning with Paul, it is very clear that the authors are telling us that when we encounter the stories and figures of the Old Testament we ought to think about Jesus Christ.

St. Paul, the earliest New Testament author, clearly thinks the Old Testament is all about Jesus and the Jesus movement. It's in his every epistle, just as it is in the pseudo-Pauline epistles and the Book of Hebrews. It is from Paul that I derived a hermeneutical test that I call "The Exodus 8.3 Test." The test is simple. If Paul's interpretation of Ex. 34:29–35 and Ex. 34:34 in the third chapter of 2 Corinthians (the eighth book of the New Testament) does not work under your exegetical method, then if you a Christian something is wrong with your exegetical method.

JEFFREY JONES

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I recommend that the Catholic Church adopt the rules about clergy in the New Testament. Look it up. The leader of new congregations was to be the husband of one wife, etc. Running a successful household is also ordered.

And, the New Testament teaches that every man should have his own wife (woman in Hebrew). And every woman should have her own husband (man in Hebrew).

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