Diocese of San José • Institute for Leadership in Ministry

"Old" Testament
Instructor: Dr. Catherine M. Murphy

Fall 2002

Required Texts:

A copy of the Bible (NRSV or NAB are preferred)

Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist, 1984).

Barbara Green, O.P., Carleen Mandolfo and Catherine M. Murphy. *From Earth's Creation to John's Revelation: The INTERFACES Biblical Storyline Companion* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001.

Please read the Old Testament portion of *From Earth's Creation to John's Revelation* before the first class to become familiar with the story-line of the Old Testament.

Week 1: Overview and Origins

Biblical Texts: Genesis 1–11
Boadt: Chapters 1 and 6
Optional: Chapters 2–5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:
1. What are the main elements of the creation stories? How do you decide what those main elements are?
2. According to Genesis 1–11, what is the cause of evil in the world?
3. When scholars approach these stories of origin, in what ways do they analyze them?
4. How do we read these texts in conjunction with scientific views of the origins of our world?

Week 2: Exodus and Covenant

Biblical Texts: Exodus 1–20, Deuteronomy 6; 30
Boadt: Chapters 8–9, 17
Optional: Chapters 10–12, 18

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:
1. What are the main motifs of the exodus account? Once again, how do you decide what the main motifs are?
2. When and why was Deuteronomy written, and how does it reframe the Exodus covenant?
3. How do we read these texts he context of contemporary oppression?

Week 3: Justice and Peace

Biblical Texts: Amos, Isaiah 6–11; Jeremiah 25; 31:15-40; Isaiah 40–45; Ezekiel 37
Boadt: Chapters 15–16, 19
Optional: Chapters 18, 20–21

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:
1. How would you characterize Amos' tone, and what is he so angry about?
2. Integrating your reading from Boadt with the reading from Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, how do the circumstances of warfare and exile affect the tone and message of these prophets?
3. How do we read these texts in the context of the present war?

Week 4: God's Power and Human Wisdom

Biblical Texts: Proverbs 1–4; 22:17–23:35; Job 1–7; 38–42
Boadt: Chapter 23
Optional: Chapter 22

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:
1. How do you find the "wisdom" in Proverbs and Job? Does it provide satisfactory advice or answers?
2. What proverbial wisdom do you find yourself relying on?
3. How do you deal with the problem of the suffering of the innocent?

Week 5: God's Power and Human Suffering

Biblical Texts: Psalms 22; 137; 1 Maccabees, Daniel
Boadt: Chapter 24
Optional: Chapters 25–27

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:
1. What, in these books, is God's response to human suffering?
2. How does the revelation of wisdom in Daniel differ from the revelation of God's word in the classic prophets (Isaiah–Malachi)?
3. In what contexts do apocalyptic themes appear in our culture?

Final Assignment

Your education committee in the parish has asked you to design a session for adults (or another age group, if you prefer), on an aspect of the Old Testament. Perhaps it is the attitudes towards covenant, or war, or peace, or love. Your final paper for this class will be the outline of the session you will present. It should include introductory and concluding elements as you would incorporate them (such as specific prayers), but the core of it will be the material you present. Remember that you are teaching people whose only knowledge of the Bible may be what they have gained from Sunday readings in church. Teach them three things: 1) the historical background of the text; 2) the literary shape and themes of the

text; and 3) your theological reflection on the history and themes. A few successful sample papers will be posted online at the following url:

http://www-relg-studies.scu.edu/facstaff/murphy/courses/ilm

Please submit this on 2-3 sheets of paper, typed and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins at top and bottom and 1.25-inch margins on the sides.