

July 6, 2003
Sisoës the Great

Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

Alone among the four evangelists, Luke tells the story of Jesus' judicial appearance before Herod Antipas on the day of the crucifixion (23:6-12). This is the same Herod whom Luke mentions closer to the beginning of his gospel, at the inauguration of the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1). Thus, in Luke's literary construction these two references to Herod Antipas serve to frame Jesus' public ministry, which, as that evangelist was careful to note, extended "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us" (Acts 1:21-22).

Luke also tells how the animosity of Herod Antipas toward Jesus (cf. Luke 13:31) was later directed against Jesus' disciples (cf. Acts 12:1,11). Indeed, Luke regarded the collusion of Antipas and Pontius Pilate, which was sealed at Jesus' trial (Luke 23:12), as the fulfillment of David's prophecy (Psalm 2:1-2) of the gathering of the world's leaders "against the Lord and against His Christ" (Acts 4:25-27).

It is significant that Luke, when he tells us of Jesus' appearance before Antipas on Good Friday, does more than state the bare event. He goes into some detail about how "Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate" (Luke 23:11). This description implies that Luke had access to an eye-witness account of the event, an event at which, as far as we know, no Christian disciple was present. The historian rightly inquires how Luke knew all this.

Moreover, in addition to these external items of the narrative, Luke even addresses the motive and internal dispositions of Antipas, saying that "he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him" (23:8). Once again the historian properly wonders how Luke was privy to these sentiments. What was his "source" for this material, a source apparently not available to the other evangelists?

Luke himself provides a hint toward answering this historical question, when he mentions a certain Chuza, described as a

"steward" of Herod Antipas. The underlying Greek noun is *epitropos*, the same word that refers to the vineyard foreman in Matthew 20:8, but in the Lukan context it more likely points to a high political office, such as a chief of staff.

It does not tax belief to imagine that such a person would be present at Jesus' arraignment before Herod Antipas. Indeed, this would be exactly the sort of person we would expect to be present on that occasion, when Herod was in Jerusalem to observe the Passover. Furthermore, Chuza is also the sort of person we would expect to be familiar with Herod's own thoughts, sentiments, and motives with respect to Jesus.

And how did Chuza's information come to Luke? Most certainly through Chuza's wife, Joanna, whom Luke includes among the Galilean women who traveled with Jesus and the apostles, providing for Him "from their substance" (Luke 8:3). Joanna was surely Luke's special channel of information that only he, among the evangelists, seems to have had. Married to a well placed political figure in the Galilean court, Joanna was apparently a lady of some means, who used her resources to provide for the traveling ministry of Jesus and the apostles. Acting in this capacity, she must have been very well known among the earliest Christians. Only Luke, however, speaks of her by name, a fact that seems to indicate that he had interviewed her in the composition of his gospel.

We can guess that Joanna's adherence to Jesus was not without its difficulties for her domestic life. Here she was, the wife of a high political official, providing support for someone who would die as a political criminal.

Her loyalty was supremely rewarded, however, because the risen Lord saw fit to number Joanna among the holy Myrrhbearers, those surprised women who "came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared," found the stone rolled away from the tomb, then prostrated before the two herald angels of the Pascha, and subsequently "told these things to the apostles" (24:1,5-7,10). One suspects that Joanna also had a thing or two to tell her husband Chuza later that day.

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