

Second Sunday of Lent
March 8, 2020

“You may find cities without walls, without literature, and without the arts and sciences of civilized life, but you will never find a city without priests and altars, or which does not have sacrifices offered to the gods,”
(Plutarch, Greek historian)

As we reflected upon last month, it is natural for man to believe in a Supreme Being. It is also quite natural for man to express this belief through his action of offering a sacrifice to this Supreme Being. The offering of an item or victim expresses the sentiments of man’s heart. The example we used to illustrate this was the presentation of a ring to express the love in a person’s heart toward another.

By a careful reading of the Old Testament, we can see how almost from the beginning man offered sacrifices to God. The book of Genesis offers us the sacrifices of both Cain and Abel. We can also read of sacrifices offered by Noah, Abraham, and Melchizedek. The sacrifices of Cain and Abel also describe how God took pleasure in sacrifices offered with the proper dispositions of the offerors’ heart. God took pleasure in Abel’s offering, not with Cain’s.

Beginning with the revelation of God to Moses on Mount Sinai and continuing through later generations, we can read how God would choose one particular people (our Jewish ancestors) to offer a perpetual sacrifice. In both the books of Leviticus and Numbers, God would, in specific detail, describe how and what kind of sacrifices He wanted offered for the particular circumstances His people would live through. Both Sacred Scripture and historians record how in the Temple of God continual sacrifices were offered before a symbolic fire kept burning upon an altar to remind the people of His presence. Yet one sacrifice in particular would stand above the rest. It was the Sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. This great sacrifice would remind the people of their deliverance from slavery at the hands of the Egyptians, and prefigure another sacrifice, one which would ultimately usher in their and our redemption from the slavery of sin. This new sacrifice would be found in the Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb upon the wood of the cross.