

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 27, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #24)

“Sometimes it’s easier to be a lemming than a leader.” (Scott Hahn, A Father Who Keeps His Promises, p. 152)

We ended our reflection last weekend with the children of Israel camped out at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses has ascended Sinai to speak with God. During this interaction, God will present Moses with a series of laws which the nation of Israel would be required to uphold as a sign of their participation in the covenant between God and humanity. The most famous of these laws, or moral code, we refer to as “The Decalogue” or the “Ten Commandments.” The Ten Commandments would serve as the basis for all Israelite moral, ethical, and legal interactions throughout the Old Testament. As an important side note, they would not lose any of their value in the New Testament with Our Lord Jesus reinforcing them throughout His public life and ministry.

It is the next action in this covenant between God and Israel upon which I would like to focus our attention. Moses has descended Sinai with the words of the covenant; not yet chiseled into the stone tablets as we are most familiar. He constructs an altar, offers sacrifices, reads and instructs the people concerning the ordinances of God, asks them to make a profession or statement of faith adhering to what they have just heard proclaimed, sprinkles blood upon both the altar and the people to signify the bond they have entered into with God, and then sits down and shares a sacred meal with the elders and the people. Before I proceed, does any of this seem familiar? It should because we are participating in this moment right now.

These events in the life of the children of Israel symbolically foreshadow the one truly redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the altar of the cross. Moses, in his role as intercessor between God and the people, prefigures Jesus the true high priest who perpetually intercedes to His Father for us. The modern parish priest, acting in the person of Christ, continues this salvific action even to this moment. Let us walk through what we have just and will experience in this liturgy often referred to as “The Sacrifice of the Mass.”

Moses ascended Sinai to intercede with God on behalf of the children of Israel. You witnessed this as I ascended this new Sinai, the Sanctuary, to intercede with God on behalf of you. Moses received, read, and then instructed the people concerning what God expected from them. You have already heard His words read for you today in our Old Testament reading, Responsorial Psalm, New Testament reading. Each Sunday you listen as these words are explained to you in the homilies offered. As the people made a profession/statement of faith signifying that they would hold to and live by the precepts of God they had just heard, you too will make your own profession of faith stating you will adhere to the beliefs we profess as God’s children in our Nicene Creed. Lastly, a sacrificial meal will be shared. One not consisting of goats and bulls, but the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we share this most sacred meal, let me not fail to remind you that the same idea which was present during the sacrifice and meal at Sinai is still alive and active in our midst. This unspoken idea is such: “If I (your name or my name) fail in my duty to live by the laws given to us by God, may I be separated from Him as the blood was separated from those animals used in the sacrifice.”

My dear family, if I may be so bold, I realize that many houses of worship have stressed a communal celebration filled with words, sound, and movement. If we wanted, we could join with them. Yet, being honest with you, what frightens me is our becoming a very poor imitation of any musical you would find offered at the Chickasaw theater. What happened at Sinai was a solemn sacred event in the lives of the people. What happened upon Calvary was also a solemn sacred event which still impacts our lives today. Can I, now possessing this knowledge, offer you anything less than a serious sacred religious experience which will strengthen your resolve to live the Christian life as you exit those doors? To quote Captain America from the Avengers Endgame: “No, no I don’t think I will.”