

The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 11, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #26)

“Lex orandi; Lex credendi.” (loosely translated: “As the Church prays, she also believes.”)

We concluded last weekend with the story of Israel’s breaking of the covenant with God through the construction of and subsequent worship paid to the golden calf. Through the intercession of Moses, the covenant between God and Israel must be renewed. The beauty of this scene is captured with the description that God is so very hurt by Israel’s betrayal; He chooses to not accompany them personally on their future journeys. He would only act through an intermediary. It is Moses who pleads with God begging Him to forgive the sin of Israel and remain with them. God will do this; however, for this to become a reality, it would take almost one year of work and preparation.

During this year, Moses and Israel would prepare in a way reminiscent of what is currently present before you. Moses had been given The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) from God. God would proceed further by giving to the people, through Moses, new moral/ethical precepts and religious laws. These new covenant laws would be passed from Moses to Aaron and then to all of the Levitical priests. A tabernacle would be constructed which would house all those things sacred to Israel’s religious identity. Priestly robes or vestments would be made and worn in future religious ceremonies. Finally, when all of the preparations are completed then Sacred Scripture tells us the glory of the Lord, in the form of a cloud, descended upon the meeting tent. The cloud (presence of the Lord) would remain with them as they continued upon their journey into the Promised Land.

My dear people, what we can read at the end of the Book of Exodus is fulfilled in our Catholic Faith. God desires to be with us in a very real way. This desire is so great it literally has the power to change two common items, bread and wine, into His physical Body and Blood. Yet, this is not enough, His love wants to provide us with more. He sets members of His people aside, asking them to become a priests. Unlike the Levitical priest in Exodus which was passed from fathers to sons, this new priesthood will be offered to certain men whose lives will be a reminder of God Himself. He will provide these priests with new religious precepts which, if followed properly, would lead the priest and the people to journey together in this life as brothers and sisters, not enemies to be defeated. The family of God would offer material supplies to construct a new meeting tent, a church for God’s presence to reside. With this church, a new altar would be placed, a new tabernacle to house His presence, and a new lamp stand signifying His presence would burn brightly. Yet, God still offers more. Religious items must be constructed which will be used in the sacrifices He now wants offered. A sacred plate (paten) and a cup (chalice) will be blessed to offer the new sacrifice. Finally, His new priesthood must be adorned in proper vestments to offer the new sacrifices which He Himself will call for.

I hope you have all seen how what they did in Exodus is happening right now in our parish church and worldwide through our Catholic Faith. Just like the children of Israel in the wilderness, we too are wandering through this, our wilderness of life, seeking our own promised land. We need a visible reminder that our God, who accompanied Israel, is now walking with and guiding us. God does this and so much more as He established our Catholic Faith. You sit in the new meeting tent made possible by the gifts of people no different from yourselves. You prayerfully watch as His priest offers the new sacrifice of His Son upon a new Altar of Holocaust. You receive from this altar, not only blessed food, but Himself, His Body, His Blood to feed you upon your own journey. And yet, sadly, unlike Israel who in the wilderness will rest assured by His visible presence accompanying them, many of our fellow Catholic brothers and sisters will choose not to appreciate this moment. Instead of obeying in love His rules and ordinances, they choose their own way forgetting, Who it is that is present with us at this moment. Let us pray for them today and every day. May their eyes be open to God’s presence residing with humanity now in our wilderness in this and every Catholic church where our Blessed Lord remains in the tabernacle for love of us.