

The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 8, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #30)

“God Ineffable—whose ways are mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence itself, and whose wisdom reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly”—having foreseen from all eternity the lamentable wretchedness of the entire human race which would result from the sin of Adam, decreed, by a plan hidden from the centuries, to complete the first work of his goodness by a mystery yet more wondrously sublime through the Incarnation of the Word.”

(Apostolic Constitution of Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus, The Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1854.)

“If a man sins against another man, one can intercede for him with the Lord; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” (1 Samuel 2:25) I want to begin our reflection today with this question. It was asked by the priest Eli of his two sons and is taken from the First Book of Samuel. The reason I begin with this question is this—all of our study, thus far, has led us to this moment. It will be a moment when God will choose to act in a most decisive way. This action on God’s part will repair the breach in the Covenant. A separation which occurred when Adam and Eve succumbed to man’s first temptation while still in the Garden.

As a brief refresher concerning the road we have travelled thus far, after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden, mankind has been plagued by the “Original Sin.” This sin, we understand, was man trying to be “like” God. Instead, the first man, and his descendants, chose to become “little gods.” Man’s life would become a statement of—not Your Will be done, dear Lord, but our own. As we reflected, this defect was not washed away in the flood. Nor was it expelled from our lives as a scapegoat in the Exodus wilderness. Although King Solomon established a Temple to God in Jerusalem where prayers and sacrifices would be offered, no person, no prayer, and no sacrifice would ever, could ever satisfy the insult man had extended and continued to extend toward God. Only God could offer a worthy apology befitting God.

For this apology to take place, God, in His Goodness, had been preparing His people without their even realizing it. Their pride had been placed in the Temple. A dwelling, made by man, where images of God would be honored. Now, at this moment of Israel’s history, God would create a new Temple. It would not be a Temple holding only images, symbols of His Goodness. This new Temple, fashioned by His hand, would be so perfectly constructed that it would house Him. He would reside in His Temple as a sacrifice worthy to ask for and receive forgiveness for the great insult where man rebuffed God. This new Temple would not be fashioned out of stone and wood, but would be a person, a woman. She would be “The Woman” prophesied long ago in the Garden who would crush the head of the serpent, the Devil. She would be Mary.

Next week, we shall explore how God would choose to create this new Temple. For it had to be a Temple worthy to receive Him. Thus, it could only be conceived by Him, as the Immaculate Conception.