

***Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
February 11, 2024  
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist  
Reflection #7***

*“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.’”  
(Genesis 12:1-3)*

When one thinks of the Eucharist, the country of Iraq does not, normally, come to mind. And yet, it will be here where God initiates the next phase of His self-revelation to mankind. Nestled upon the banks of the Euphrates River, in southern Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), stood the city of Ur. Within the area of this city, dwelt a husband and wife, Abram and Sarai. As you may recall, Abram and Sarai are both advanced in years and childless. Nevertheless, God chooses to establish a covenant with Abram which will bless all nations through his descendants.

There are significant moments in the life of Abram, which instruct us in our Christian life with God. I will highlight one of these. Abram and Sarai are traveling with his brother’s son, Lot. At this time a war is waging between kingdoms both north and south of their locations. After one of the major battles, as the kings of the north are returning home, they capture Lot, his family and possessions. Abram, made aware of the situation, races north, with his armed servants to free his nephew. He catches up with the caravan, defeats the armies of the kings, frees Lot, collects the spoils of victory and returns home. As he arrives home, he is greeted by Melchizedek the king of Salem and priest of God Most High. Melchizedek offers a sacrifice of bread and wine to bless Abram and honor God.

The mysterious figure of Melchizedek grew to acquire a special meaning for both Jewish and Christian scholars. He is the king of Salem which will later be known as Jerusalem. This is the foundation of our understanding which states: God dwells with his people in His city of Jerusalem. He blesses Abram for his victory. This would remind later generations that God’s blessings first come from Jerusalem. The sacrifice he offers for this occasion – bread and wine. Bread and wine were first-fruits of the land. You may recall these from their use, or abuse, by both Cain and Noah. As they were used to honor God offered by the hands of Melchizedek, we can rightly say they are now appropriate for use in our worshiping of God. After receiving the blessing, Abram presents to Melchizedek a tenth of what he had won in the battle. This tithe would remind later generations that God is deserving of the first and best tenth of your possessions for it is He who wins the battles we face.

The Fathers of the Church would later teach this event prefigured the Eucharistic liturgy. They would further associate the priesthood of Jesus Christ with the priesthood of Melchizedek separating this priesthood from the Jewish priesthood associated with Aaron. The beautiful Psalm 110 speaks directly of this in the line: “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:4).