

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord
March 31, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #14

*“However, **after** the twelve tribes of Israel left Egypt and made their covenant with God, the very first thing God did was command his people to build him one place of worship—the Tabernacle—in which the priests of Israel would worship God by means of sacrifice.” (Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, p.33)*

The Book of Exodus offers us the first meeting between Moses and Pharaoh. It presents a marked difference between the saving plan of God and the construction projects of Pharaoh. *“Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’ But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should heed his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go.’”* (Exodus 5:1-2). Because Pharaoh does not know the God of Israel, his objections stem from economic interest rather than anti-religious sentiment. Whereas God chooses to reveal to His people the perfect way He desires for them to offer their adoration and worship to Him. Thus, He intends to continue the process (His Divine Plan) which will offer them freedom. This freedom will not, solely, be from the hand of Egypt. Rather, it lays the foundation of liturgical worship which intends to offer freedom to all bound by the wages of sin.

Brant Pitre, in his book, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, instructs his readers, *“almost half the Book of Exodus is devoted to describing the Tabernacle and how it was built, often in painful detail—see Exodus 25–40.”* (p.33). Let us take this moment to remind ourselves of two important points. When God acts, His actions are both intentional and meaningful. For His children to offer Him right and praiseworthy worship, they must first construct a “Holy Structure” which will be specifically used to offer that worship. Mr. Pitre explains it best as he writes: *“According to the Book of Exodus, it [the Tabernacle] consisted of three parts. First, there was the so-called Outer Court, which contained the Bronze Altar of sacrifice on which the priests would offer animal sacrifices to God. Second, moving inward, there was the Holy Place, which contained three sacred objects: the golden Lampstand (in Hebrew, the menorah), the golden Altar of Incense, and the golden table of twelve cakes of bread, known as the Bread of the Presence (see Exodus 25). In this Holy Place, the priests of Israel would worship God through the unbloody offering of incense, bread, and wine. Third and finally, there was the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum that housed the golden Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, an urn of the manna, and the staff of Aaron (see Hebrews 9:1-5). Apart from being the place of worship, the reason the Tabernacle was so important to the ancient Israelites was that they saw it as the dwelling place of God on earth. That’s why they called it the Tent of Meeting: there, God would ‘meet’ with them, in the form of a cloud of ‘glory’ descending from heaven (see Exodus 40:34-38).”* (p.33-34).

My dear family, the Tabernacle, which contained God’s Presence in the wilderness, foreshadowed the Temple of Jerusalem where His Presence would come to reside. If anything, this action of God should remind each individual of an important first point concerning worship of Him. God desires to be worshipped by His children in a sacred structure designed for that worship. If He desired His children to worship Him out in the field, in a boat, in your home, on the golf course, at the beach, (you get my point), in any other way, then do you not think He would have said so?