

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
Good Friday¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-second Chapter of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis.³

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted

up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh [**dgee-hoe-vah-DGEE-rah**]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.⁴

“And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith [**SETH**] the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eighteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.⁵

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron [**KEY-drahn**], where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith [**SETH**] unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I

¹⁰ Revelations.1:17 (KJV).

¹¹ I Corinthians 11:23-26.

¹² I Timothy 6:15.

¹³ Rector, St. Thomas of Canterbury Anglican Catholic Church, Roanoke, Virginia.

lost none. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus [**MOLL-kooss**]. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas [**ANN-uss**] first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas [**KYE-ah-fuss**], which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas [**KYE-ah-fuss**] was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith [**SETH**] the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith [**SETH**], I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

“The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas [**ANN-uss**] had sent him bound unto Caiaphas [**KYE-ah-fuss**] the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith [**SETH**],

Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

“Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas [**KYE-ah-fuss**] unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the two verses immediately following those appointed for today’s Second Lesson: “*Art thou the King of the Jews?*”⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

Our Lesson this morning continues with these words: “*Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?*”⁷

Most of us have likely never been in the presence of “royalty.” We likely have never been in the presence of a king or queen, or a sovereign head of state. Some of you may have been in the presence of a dignitary like a United States Senator or Representative, or a State Governor. Maybe you have met a President?

3. In the consecrated bread and wine, Jesus Christ is really and substantially present. We don’t try to explain “how” that happens, we merely believe by faith His own words that it does happen.
4. When we feed on Christ in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving, a spiritual transaction occurs which feeds our bodies and souls with the grace procured by Christ on the Cross, unto everlasting life.

May the Holy Ghost make it transparently clear to us that each time we assist at mass we come before the presence of the most Royal of royalty.

And may our actions here in this sanctuary visibly present the dignity, reverence and awe that should be presented by those entering into and receiving the real presence of Jesus Christ the King. **Amen.**

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The Rev’d Paul T. Beutell, II¹³
October 28, 2012

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Feast of Christ the King, 2012.

² *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xx (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

³ Genesis 22:1-18 (KJV).

⁴ Cf.: “So Abraham called that place The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’” Genesis 22:14 (RSV).

⁵ St. John 18:1-40 (KJV).

⁶ St. John 18:33b (KJV).

⁷ St. John 18:33-34 (KJV).

⁸ Romans 13:7 (KJV).

⁹ Acts 9:4 (KJV).

transaction.” Our bodies do not leave this place, but that does mean it is not real and substantial!

When Isaiah entered the courts of heaven and heard the *Sanctus*, he cried out, “*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.*” God then sent one of the angels that stood about the altar to touch the prophet’s lips with a coal taken from the altar of incense, and in doing so cleansed his lips. In Revelation, St. John saw the twenty-four elders fall down prostrate before the throne of God and cast their crowns before Him when they heard the *Sanctus* sung.

The *Sanctus* is the “hymn of heaven,” a spiritual “Jacob’s ladder” by which our acts of worship in this sanctuary are lifted up into the throne room of heaven to join with the host of heaven in worshipping the King of kings and Lord of lords. And our demeanor and posture therefore should model Isaiah’s, St. John’s, the angels and archangels’ and all the company of heaven’s.

In this morning’s Second Lesson, we heard that Pilate was so spiritually ignorant and blind that he could not recognize the Man of Truth, Jesus Christ, even though He was standing right in front of him. God forbid that *we* would not have the eyes of faith to “see” the Man of truth when we kneel before His Real Presence at the rail.

As confirmed Anglican Catholic Christians, we should know and by faith believe that in the Mass:

1. We are worshipping Jesus Christ, *the* King of kings and Lord of lords, in the manner He Himself commanded through St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23.
2. Our acts of worship here really enter and join with the perpetual act of worship taking place in heaven.

If you have personally met royalty or a dignitary, you surely followed the protocol required when meeting such a person. If it was a king or queen, you likely bowed. If it was a United States official, you likely addressed him or her by the proper title and shook his or her hand courteously (no matter how you may have felt about this person politically).

When my Bishop was here, I bowed to him and kissed his Episcopal ring and called him “My lord Bishop.” I did the same in another state, with the Bishop Ordinary of my former Diocese, even though I am no longer under his direct authority. In doing so, I was not saying, really or symbolically, that these men are worthy of “worship.” I simply followed traditional protocol and showed my respect, allegiance, and submission to the office they hold in our Church as its Bishops.

I was doing what St. Paul told the church in Rome: “*Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*”⁸ I trust you have, or would have, done the same.

But what if we were to meet Jesus face to face? What if we, like St. Paul while on the way to Damascus, or St. John on the island of Patmos in prayer on the Lord’s Day, saw Jesus standing before us?

The Acts of the Apostles states that when St. Paul saw the Lord, “*...he fell to the earth.*”⁹ St. John the Divine writes that when he saw Jesus, “*I fell at his feet as dead.*”¹⁰ When those two Apostles encountered the Real Presence of the ascended Lord Jesus, they were immediately driven to the ground.

What about us? What do we do when we encounter the Real Presence of the ascended Lord Jesus? Or don’t we know (or believe) that this is what we do each Sunday at Mass?

If, as I trust we do, we know that when Holy Communion is rightly and duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, Christ is really and substantially present here in this sanctuary in a way that He is not present anywhere else outside of this, or any other place, then our demeanor and our posture when we are here should be different than it is in any other place.

What we are privileged to do each time the Mass is celebrated is encounter, enter into, and then partake of, the Real Presence of the Risen and Ascended Lord Jesus in a way that we cannot encounter, enter into and partake of it (of Him) any other place on earth.

We know from Scripture that at no other time did Jesus say "*This is my Body...*" and "*This is my blood of the New Testament...*" than at the Last Supper. He, Jesus, is the One who identified the consecrated bread and wine to be His very Body and Blood.

St. Paul taught this very thing to the Church at Corinth,¹¹ and through the inspired, indefectible Scriptures to the whole Church. Scripture undoubtedly teaches that Jesus Christ is truly and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. One has to practice "linguistic gymnastics" or blatant denial to try to explain this truth away.

Knowing this truth, how does it affect our demeanor here at Mass? Do we come into the sanctuary with respect, reverence and a sense of awe, the way we would enter a State affair? Or do we saunter in here as if we were walking into a local restaurant?

The One, before whose presence we are coming in the sanctuary, is far greater than any president, head of state or mere human royalty! St. Paul identifies Jesus as "... *the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords.*"¹² Not even Solomon in all his glory, who according to Scripture

was the wisest and most honorable of all earthly kings, can come close to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!

But do we recognize this? More importantly, do we believe this by faith? And in believing it, how does it affect the way we enter this sanctuary and act during worship each time the Eucharist is celebrated?

Lex orandi, lex credendi is a principle of worship which, translated from the Latin, loosely means "*the law of prayer, is the law of belief.*" In other words, we should pray what we believe and believe what we pray. Because we are human beings, "body language," demeanor and posture are very important in communication, and therefore this principle also applies to the way we act during worship.

Knowing, as we do, that Jesus is truly and substantially present here in the Sanctuary; in the Tabernacle in the reserved sacrament, and in the bread and wine that is consecrated during the Mass, and that what we come forward to receive is our Lord's Body and Blood, we should, no we must, come forward and receive it with great reverence and awe. We cannot act casually as we come before the blessed and only Potentate. We need to come before Him believing what is true: that Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords is really, truly and substantially present!

There are two places in Scripture where God gives us a brief glimpse of the worship that is perpetually occurring in the throne room of heaven. The first is in Isaiah, chapter 6, and the second is in Revelation, chapter 4. In both accounts, the song that is perpetually being sung in the heavenly sanctuary is the *Sanctus*: "Holy, Holy, Holy."

During the Mass, when we sing those very words; our worship activities here on earth are joined with the worship that is perpetually going on in heaven. No doubt it is a "spiritual