

Homily for the First Sunday of Lent
March 10, 2019
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You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, say to the Lord, “My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust.” Be alert, be aware, “confess with your mouth,” “believe in your heart” because our deliverance is at hand. In just minutes the offertory of the Mass is coming. The very center of the paschal sacrifice, our Eucharistic celebration. It will be time for us to bow before God’s authority and recognize His power as creator of heaven and earth. The bread, the wine will be processed forward. And we will smother them like biscuits and gravy with our earthly attachments, our venial sins and our spiritual and corporal acts of mercy so that they become saturated with the stuff of our souls. “The priest shall receive the basket from us and shall set it in front of the altar of the Lord our God (Dt 26:4).”

We are part of salvation history. We remember, just as Moses calls the Israelites to remember. Our savior, our redeemer has come and reopened the gates of paradise for us. We remember His life, His death, His resurrection, His forgiveness, His Mercy and because we cling to him psalm 91 tells us, he will deliver us, set us on high because he acknowledges our name. The name proclaimed by our parents at our

Baptism, the name we chose at Confirmation, the name each of our Elect at 9:30 this morning will write in the book of the living as we send them to the Bishop in preparation to receive the Easter sacraments. Therefore, we are called by name to provide the sacrifice, to become the gift, to be the offering both the sin offering and the peace offering. We will place both our venial sins and our first fruits, our corporal and spiritual acts upon the gifts as they process forward from among God's holy people, the products of our soil, our very souls are thrown by us onto the bread and wine the work of human hands. "And having set them before the Lord, our God, we will bow down in His presence (Ps 95)"

There are five separate and distinct offerings that are introduced in the first five chapters of Leviticus and spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy. These five offerings of the law referred to as The Levitical Sacrificial System provide a threefold approach to gaining heaven. First, they provide a pathway of life for the Israelites and for us to make and keep a right relationship with God. Second, they provide a reflection of Jesus Christ through which to view His life, a detailed description of His sacrifice for us. Third, they provide a pattern for our own approach to God. They, much like our offertory procession, mark a progression of closeness to God with the first offering mentioned being the closest to God and the last offering being the first step we make in approaching God. In revealing himself to us in scripture God usually begins from His

perspective, not ours that is Him looking down at us from where we want to be. He holds on to the top step of the rope ladder which is our GPS to heaven. He slowly lets down the ladder until it reaches earth. Like a game board, instructions are written on each step. High up He shows us the glory of heaven first and then the not so glorious earth thus motivating us to make the climb. We are called to climb up. Satan on the other hand tempts Jesus in today's Gospel from the human perspective looking up the ladder. First: He offers Jesus food symbolizing the fulfillment of Jesus' human need for earthly nourishment. The devil says don't climb you have everything you need right here. Second: He offers Jesus power and authority symbolizing the fulfillment of Jesus' human need for self-sufficiency and dominance. The devil says stay here I'll let you be in charge no need to climb. Finally, From the pinnacle of the temple, atop God's own house Satan attempts to plant doubt in God symbolizing the fulfillment of Jesus' human need for faith in His father's love. The devil says depend on your own senses, don't climb after what you can't hope to reach, force God to come to you. Jesus in his divinity and humanity refuses Satan's temptation because after all Jesus is the ladder.

First then let us, consider the order of the Levitical Offerings as they point to the sacrifice of Christ for us, for all humanity. God the Father lets down the ladder for us. Jesus the anointed comes down to assist us.

Burnt Offering: In heaven all earthly desire is consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit: Christ surrendered Himself entirely to God being fully consumed in His commitment. Meat Offering: We participate in Resurrection, become immortal. No death of the sacrifice is required rather a living sacrifice occurs. Christ rises from the dead. He gave Himself as a living sacrifice continually doing the will of the Father. Peace Offering: In Eucharist we savor a share in the kingdom of God. Christ made peace with God on the behalf of man. We become one with him. Sin Offering: Offertory of the Mass we make a communal sacrifice for the benefit of us all. We sacrifice ourselves. Christ atoned for our fallen sinful nature on the cross and satisfied the wrath of God. Trespass Offering: Reconciliation, atonement that only Jesus can provide face to face. Christ paid for our individual sins in His death on the cross.

The ladder has been completely lowered by Christ. He fills us with the Holy Spirit the desire to climb. When we come to God, we must do so in reverse order. We begin our climb. Trespass Offering: Reconciliation: We realize the guilt of our sins and our need for forgiveness of these sins in Jesus Christ. Sin Offering: We place our communal sins on the offerings. We need a power that can even conquer our sinful nature or else we will lose our salvation as soon as we gain it. Peace Offering: We place our works of mercy on the offerings. We find that through the cross of Christ He opened the way for true

fellowship with God. Meat Offering: We are made into a worthy sacrifice. Through His obedient life, Christ shows us the way to be a living sacrifice for God. Burnt Offering: We are washed clean of earthly desire. We find the greatest blessing in being fully consumed in our commitment to God.

So then before the sin offering begins, we must ask ourselves: Have I made my trespass offering? Have I made my atonement to God for my mortal sins? What will I place on the bread and wine? What will my sin offering be so that my sinfulness will be consumed, so that, I am reconciled? Have I made peace with God as the Holy Spirit descends on the gifts to make them a worthy sacrifice? Then, what are my first fruits, the good works of my hands, the meat offering, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy I have performed? What are these works of my heart and mind and hands? What will mark me as a defender of God? So that God shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in distress; I will deliver him to his people and glorify him with my life. Are we ready to place our actions, our hearts on the gifts because in only moments the climb will begin, the offertory will begin?