

## INSTRUCTION #2 – A PLACE TO BEGIN – The Beginning

If you were here last week, you know that I talked:

- about the origin of the Traditional Latin Mass back in the period of 400 to 600 AD,
- about the Vatican II document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, from December of 1963, which did not call for the elimination of either Latin or Gregorian Chant from the liturgy, and,
- about the resurgence of the Traditional Latin Mass, beginning in 1984, at the direction of Pope St. John Paul II.

So, why this resurgence? What is the attraction of this Mass? Pope Benedict XVI said the following on this question when he was the Cardinal Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, (quote):

“While there are many motives that might have led a great number of people to seek a refuge in the traditional liturgy, the chief one is that they find the dignity of the sacred preserved there.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, I would like to start at the beginning of the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM), and see if we can observe the “dignity of the sacred preserved there.”

Like the Mass of Paul VI, the TLM begins with the sign of the cross. But there the similarity ends. The TLM continues with a recitation of Psalm 42, a Psalm of David. Why? If we remember our bible stories, David won fame by slaying the Philistine giant Goliath. David eventually became King of Israel and made it a powerful nation at the time. But all did not go well. His son Absalom usurped David's crown, and David was temporarily driven from Jerusalem. It is believed that he composed Psalm 42 during this time of exile. What does it say? (You can follow along in the St. Barnabas Hand Missal – p.3 – if you wish.)

Verse 1: Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the unholy nation, deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.

In the context of David's current exile, the opening verse of the psalm is a plea for justice. The “unholy nation” that he refers to is the faction of unfaithful Israelites that have followed the “unjust and deceitful man” - David's usurper son, Absalom. Evil is in the ascendancy. David is asking to be delivered from it.

Verse 2: For Thou, O God, art my strength, why hast Thou cast me off? And why do I go about in sadness, while the enemy afflicts me?

David feels that his God has abandoned him. He loves his God and has been, for the most part, an upright man, whom God has supported and rewarded. Now, he has been forced to leave Jerusalem. He is on the run, an outcast, with those Israelites who have remained faithful to him.

Verse 3: Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: they have conducted me and brought me unto Thy holy mount, and into Thy tabernacles.

He asks God to “send forth Thy light and Thy truth.” He would have his God enlighten

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the rebellious Israelites with the same light and truth that he says have led him to worship the one true God.

Verse 4: And I will go unto the altar of God: to God, Who gives joy to my youth.

What does David do when he is at the altar of God? He offers a bloody sacrifice, a sacrificial lamb, for the forgiveness of sin.

Verse 5: I shall praise Thee upon the harp, O God, my God. Why are you sad, O my soul, and why do you disquiet me?

Besides the bloody sacrifice, David will give praise to God in song and using his musical gift as a harpist. Then, he answers his own question in the next verse, where he says:

Verse 6: Hope in God, for I will still praise Him, the salvation of my countenance, and my God.

Despite the hard times that David has fallen upon, the Psalm ends with an affirmation of David's trust in God. Incidentally, this trust proved to be justified, for God restored the kingship to David.

So, why start the Mass with this Psalm? What will the priest do at the altar? He will sacrifice, in an unbloody way, the *Agnus Dei*, the Lamb of God, to God the Father “for the remission of sins.”<sup>2</sup> Like David, we sacrifice the best we have and sing God's praise. The Sacrifice of the Mass is our highest form of worship.

So there is a parallel here between David and the priest, and between you and the Israelites who remained faithful. But there is another parallel to observe. David is an Old Testament type of Christ – that is, he foreshadows the Messiah:

- David came from the very humble background of a shepherd, but saved the Israelites from Goliath. Christ was of the royal house of David but was a carpenter before He was a worker of miracles and the Good Shepherd.
- David became king, only to be betrayed by his son, and exiled from Jerusalem. Christ was hailed as King of the Jews on Palm Sunday, only to be betrayed by Judas, and crucified at the insistence of the Jews.
- In his time of trial, David cried “why hast Thou cast me off? And why do I go about in sadness, while the enemy afflicts me?” On the cross, Christ cried out “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”<sup>3</sup>
- David answered his question with an affirmation of God as his salvation. Christ answered His question with “Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

In only six short verses, this Psalm symbolically links the sacrificial form of worship from the Old Testament with the “Chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the New and Everlasting Testament.” It links the sacrificial lamb of David with the Lamb of God. It links the kingship of the Jews from the Old Testament with the kingship of Christ, our Savior King. And, finally, it positions the Mass at the focal point in the history of our salvation, and sets the stage for the very sacred action that is about to transpire on this altar. Perhaps we should be asking a different question - “Why would you not start the Mass with Psalm 42?”

- 1 Address to the Bishops of Chile, July 13, 1988
- 2 Matthew 26:28
- 3 Mark 15:34
- 4 Luke 23:46