

## Weekly Bulletin Typology Series

As I mentioned in my first bulletin article, I have a background in Literature and a particular interest in Sacred Scripture. For me, one of the most interesting ways of studying the Bible is studying the spiritual meaning of Scripture, and specifically the allegorical or typological meanings. I would like to share with you some of the amazing and beautiful symbols that are part of this method of learning from the Scripture. First, however, let me explain what exactly I'm talking about.

Because the Bible was primarily written by God Himself—the Holy Spirit inspiring the secondary, human authors—the Sacred Scriptures can have more than one legitimate meaning. Of course, the foundational meaning is the *literal* sense of the words; as St. Thomas Aquinas says, “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* par. 115). Beyond that, however, there are the spiritual senses of Scripture. These can be categorized under the three general headings of the *moral* sense (which teaches us how we should live), the *anagogical* or *eschatological* sense (which teaches us about eternal realities), and the *allegorical* or *typological* sense. This final sense is the one that I am particularly interested in. The allegorical sense of Sacred Scripture is when, for example, a person or event in the Old Testament prefigures something about Jesus Christ and His Church in the New Testament. That is, when we see all things in their fullness by viewing reality through Jesus Christ. Typology can also mean using non-scriptural sources as symbols of Jesus and the Church, for example, the butterfly as a sign of Resurrection.

The allegorical interpretation of Scripture was used a lot by the Early Church Fathers, but they did not invent it. Actually, Jewish Scripture scholars had developed this sort of interpretation before Jesus ever became incarnate. There are even some places in the Sacred Scriptures themselves where typology is used. Consider the following passages from Jesus Himself, as well as St. Paul:

- “But [Jesus] answered them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’” (Matthew 12:39-40)
- “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15)
- “...Adam [...] was a **type** of the one who was to come [i.e., Jesus].” (Romans 5:14b)
- “It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an **allegory**: these women are two covenants.” (Galatians 4:22-24)

It has been the Church's method for centuries to help her children understand the Bible and the faith better through the use of typological symbols. What I hope to do is provide a regular bulletin column (not normally this long) that will reintroduce you to some of the ancient and universal images and symbols that the Church has used. This will help you be able not only to

read Sacred Scripture better, but also to understand more about the sacred liturgy, to ‘read’ more easily the images in stained glass windows and religious art, and it can even spice up your meditations and prayer life! So, be on the lookout next weekend for our first typology lesson.

### Bees and the Beehive

The beehive is an ancient symbol, or type, of the Church, the People of God. This is because it is a hierarchically arrayed community that exists in perfect harmony. Each member has its own job and contributes to the building up of the hive as a whole. Obviously, this is how the Church is meant function as well. In fact, the Church Triumphant in Heaven already does exist in this ordered and harmonious way. We, the Church Militant on earth, must still strive to grow in our communion of love and obedience.

Bees themselves are also types of the Christian life since, as science has demonstrated, they guide themselves by the sun. Likewise, the Christian guides himself by the true Sun, the Son of God, Who is the Light of the world. Furthermore, bees make wax and honey. This wax is used to make candles. In fact, you will notice at the Easter Vigil that the passage about the bees has been put back into the *Exultet* chant thanks to the new translation of the liturgy. Come to Easter Vigil Mass and you will hear: “...O holy Father, accept this candle, a solemn offering, the work of bees and of your servants’ hands...” In the liturgy, candles represent Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. This is why we, as Christians, also carry candles during the Easter Vigil and at Baptism—because, as Christians, Christ is in us, and we also become the light of the world: “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

Finally, bees make honey, which is, in one sense, a typological symbol of the Blood of Jesus Christ given to us in the Most Holy Eucharist. Thus, we read, “I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you” (Ps. 81:16). Just as the beehive is full of honey that the bees drink, so Mother Church is the storehouse of the Precious Blood of Christ that we Christians drink and are sustained by.

### The Rainbow

The rainbow makes its first appearance in salvation history after God destroys all the evil men on the earth, and with them all other life, except for Noah and his family and the animals with him on the ark. The rainbow becomes the sign of the new covenant that God makes with Noah—a sign of the Lord’s mercy and protection:

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living

creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” (Gen. 9:12-16)

Of course, the true New Covenant, the definitive and everlasting one, is the one God makes with us in Jesus Christ. So, the sign of the rainbow finds its fulfillment in Jesus, the ultimate symbol of God and of the Covenant. In other words, the rainbow is a type, a foreshadowing of Christ’s New Covenant; that’s typology.

But let’s dig deeper. We can understand and experience more about pure light by using a prism to split it into the seven visible light spectra of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). In fact, rainbows are actually formed because tiny drops of water that are up in the air act just like prisms and split the light into its seven spectra. In a similar way, we can come to understand and experience more about Jesus Christ, Who is “the true light that enlightens every man” (Jn. 1:9), because He has ‘split up,’ so to speak, His unapproachable light into seven beautiful streams of His grace. Or, we might say, that He has poured out the infinite ocean (or flood!) of His grace into seven streams. These seven wonderful streams are, of course, the Seven Sacraments that He has entrusted to His Church.

It is unfortunate that in contemporary society the rainbow has become associated with certain immoral philosophies of life. While we cannot stop people from adding meanings to ancient symbols that are contrary to the meanings that they have for us, it is important for Catholics to remember the true meaning that the symbol of the rainbow has, rooted in God’s revelation and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, so that its beauty and significance is not lost for us.

### Gideon the Judge and the Virginal Conception of Holy Mary

So far, we’ve been looking at natural symbols, but now we turn to a symbol that comes from a particular moment in salvation history. In the Book of Judges, chapters 6-8, we hear how the Lord raises up Gideon, the least member of the weakest family of the weakest tribe (i.e., Manasseh), to save Israel (see Judg. 6:15). We could definitely talk about how Gideon’s being raised by God from lowliness to the role of a savior makes him a type, a prefiguration, of Jesus Christ. However, there is a particular typological image that is usually highlighted in the story, namely, the miracle of the fleece.

In order to make sure that his calling is truly from God, Gideon asks God to give him a sign (see 6:36-38): he will lay the fleece of a sheep out on the ground overnight. If in the morning there is no dew on the ground, but there is miraculously dew in the fleece, he will know that this is God’s will. (Actually, he still isn’t convinced, but asks for the miracle to be repeated in reverse, with the fleece dry and the ground wet, but it is the first miracle that becomes significant as a typological symbol.) God does miraculously bedew the fleece alone, acting beyond the purely natural order.

Fast forward a couple thousand years. God again mysteriously acts beyond the natural order to bring forth a sign of salvation where one could not be expected from the human point of view. This time, however, it is not moisture without the dewfall; it is the Conception of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, in the virginal womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Without a husband, there was no natural way for Mary to conceive the Savior of the world promised by the

Archangel Gabriel, which is why she asked, “How can this be since I have no relations with a man?” (Lk. 1:34) God’s answer to this human impossibility was the great mystery of the Incarnation. Thus, Gideon’s miraculous dew, conceived in the fleece by grace, is the type of when the Fullness of Grace, God Himself, became Incarnate and was virginally conceived in the womb of His Holy Mother Mary.

### The Two Adams and What Came from Their Sides

Today we look at another person from salvation history who is a type of Christ, this time going right back to the very beginning. Adam was the first man ever created, right? Certainly he was, in the normal sense in which we speak, as chapters 1-2 of Genesis relate. He was the first man in the temporal order. But it is eternity, not time, that is the ultimate reality. And in the order of being, the ontological order, Adam was not the first man—Jesus Christ was: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15-17).

And so, Adam, the first and perfect man, who was given dominion over the world, was the type, the foreshadowing, of Jesus. That is why St. Paul says, “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.” Yet despite calling Adam a type of Christ, St. Paul compares the two in a negative fashion, pointing out that, although similar, they are very different. He continues, “But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [...] Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:14-15, 18-19). Complicated enough? Thank you St. Paul. Seriously though, St. Paul’s comparison reminds us that, even though there is always a similarity, a participation, of the symbol in the reality (here Adam in Christ), the reality is always greater than the symbol—the difference is always greater than the similarity.

So, Adam is a type of Christ for the above reasons; however, there is another, very important reason that Adam prefigures Christ. It is the fact that Eve was taken from the side of Adam while he slept (Gen. 2:21-22). This is significant because, as Vatican II’s *Sacrosanctum concilium* says, quoting St. Augustine, “For it was from the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth ‘the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church’” (par. 5.2). Thus, the spouses (Eve/the Church) of both Adam and Christ were drawn from their sides while they slept. And so, the creation of Eve from Adam prefigured the pouring forth of the Church from Christ on the cross, to become the new “mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20b).

Well, after the couple of more complicated examples of typology from salvation history that we've been looking at, I thought we'd relax this week with something a little simpler. Numerology, that is, the use of numbers to symbolize things, is not the same as typology, which is what we are focusing on, but in some cases they overlap. In Sacred Scripture, the number 7 often has the symbolic meaning of completion. This is because 7 was the number of days that it took God to create the Heavens and the earth, including that Seventh Day on which He rested to enjoy the goodness of His work. It was also on the seventh day that Moses received the (then) new Law (see Exod. 24:16). The true typological fulfillment of this day of the completion of creation, this day of covenants, will have to be considered next week when we examine the number 8. However, the meaning of 7 as "completion" was taken up by Christ and the Church in the Christian Dispensation. ("Completion," by the way, is the more original meaning of the word "perfection," rather than the meaning that we sometimes use: "without fault; unable to be improved upon.")

As we already discussed a few months back in discussing the 7 colors of the rainbow, the 7 Sacraments are the 'new week' of spiritual recreation for the Catholic, through which Jesus makes Himself present to us and in us. Also, we can experience the Holy Spirit working in our lives through His 7 Gifts (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord). In fact, those fundamental virtues (habits, dispositions) that connect us to God are 7, namely: the 3 Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope, and Love) and the 4 Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance). These counter, by the way, the 7 Deadly Sins (pride, lust, wrath, envy, greed, sloth, and gluttony). Further, there are the 7 Corporal and 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy that help guide us in living a moral life. There are 7 petitions in the Our Father. Although we usually speak of the 8 Beatitudes, there are really from 7 to 9 Beatitudes in Matt. 5, depending on how you count them. Counting with St. Augustine, we can say that there are 7 Beatitudes that speak to us about how to actively shape ourselves, while the eight (and ninth) are about how to suffer persecution. Finally, look at the Book of Revelation—a book rich in numerology (think 666). Christ sits enthroned with 7 spirits and the 7 lampstands before Him, speaking to the 7 churches (Rev. 1). Throughout the course of the book, there are 7 seals to be opened as God's plan of salvation unfolds to its utter completion, 7 trumpets to be sounded, and 7 bowls with 7 plagues to be poured out. And so, my friends, next time you hear the number 7 in the Bible, the liturgy, or in some other religious context, think about completion, and see if that doesn't throw some light on your meditations!

### More Numerology

As promised, we continue our discussion of numerology, the symbolism of numbers, this week. Since the vast majority of numbers do not have quite the same mass of connections that our old friend 7 has, I will combine some of the most significant into this one article.

As we mentioned last week, if the number 7 means creation and completion because of the days of the week, then the number 8 means new creation and redemption in Christ, which is the fullness of completion. Why is this? Because Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, is the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

So, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, that day became also the 8<sup>th</sup> day, The Day of eternity and the Kingdom of God on earth. It was also on Sunday that the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost. This is why the Church marks the most important celebrations of the year with an octave, eight days all of which count as one day (thereby making it the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup>). This is why the days of the octave of Christmas (Dec. 25-Jan. 1) are all celebrated with the same liturgical solemnity as Christmas itself, as are the days in the octave of Easter (dates vary, of course). This is also why Baptisms ought to be celebrated on Sunday, the 8<sup>th</sup> day, when possible, and why baptismal fonts, wherein we receive the new life of Christ's resurrection, are traditionally octagonal—ours is; check it out sometime. As St. Peter reminds us concerning 8, "...God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:20b-21a). And, of course, we mentioned how we usually count 8 Beatitudes. Now, what other numbers?

The number 10, being the nice, round number that it is, is also a number symbolizing perfection and fullness. Hence, the 10 Commandments—which, by the way, are divided (according to Catholic counting) into 3 about God (think Trinity) and 7 about neighbor (love that 7!). Also, God tells Abraham that He'll spare Sodom and Gomorra if there are 10 righteous men (Gen. 18:32)—which there aren't. Daniel and his three friends were tested for 10 days, and were healthier afterwards (Dan. 1:12). There are 10 plagues that smite Egypt. Both Satan and the Beast in Revelation are presented as having 7 heads and 10 horns, which, although representing evil, represent 'perfect evil,' as it were.

12 is another important number because of the 12 Tribes of Israel. Jesus, of course, chooses 12 Apostles. In Revelation (see 21:12-14, 21, and 22:2) there are 12 foundation stones in the New Jerusalem, 12 gates made of 12 pears, and 12 angels to guard them. There are also trees that bear fruit every month—meaning 12 times a year. Also, the Woman standing on the moon and clothed in the sun has a crown of 12 stars (Rev. 12:1).

A final number that's important to consider is 40, which is a number that represents preparation, often involving suffering and purification. It rained 40 days and 40 nights when God cleansed the world of sinful men at Noah's Flood. It was 40 years after Moses left Egypt that he encountered the Burning Bush (Acts 7:30). Moses was up on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights (without food!) to receive God's Law. The Israelites were in the desert, eating manna, for 40 years. Likewise, Elijah traveled 40 days and 40 nights across the desert to Mt. Sinai while searching for God's will (1 Kg. 19:8). The city of Nineveh is given 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4). And, of course, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert before beginning His public ministry; hence, our 40 days of Lent. Also, interestingly enough, Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection for 40 days—a joyful preparation, but a preparation nevertheless for His impending Ascension (Acts 1:3).

And there we have it, folks! You never knew numbers told you so much about Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation, did you?

## God Rocks!

OK, bad pun, but it's true: one very common symbol for God is the rock. God is first referred to as the "Rock of Israel" in Genesis 49:24, but there are tons more references (see e.g., Deut. 32; Ps. 18; Ps. 28:1; Ps. 42:9; Ps. 144:1; Is. 17:10 and 26:4; Hab. 1:12). This symbolizes God's strength in defending and upholding His people. God's Revelation is also often connect with rocks, or stones, such as the dream of Jacob's Ladder, which he has when he uses a stone for a pillow (Gen. 28:18). Also, the 10 Commandments are written on tablets of stone. Further, when God reveals His glory to Moses, He tells him, "while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock" (Exod. 33:22) so that God's glory doesn't kill him.

The rock or stone is not only a symbol of God, but a typological symbol of Jesus. For example, the Prophet Daniel sees in a dream a rock "hewn not by human hands" that destroys a huge statue that represents the kingdoms of the earth; the rock then becomes a mountain (see Dan. 2). This represents the coming of Christ, the King of kings, Lord of time and history. Again, in the desert, God provides water for the wandering Israelites by giving them "honey from the rock" (Deut. 32:13) and "water from the rock" (cf. Exod. 17, Num. 20, Deut. 8:15; Pss. 105, 114, and 144). This last rock especially, from which water pours out when its side is opened by the wood of Moses' staff, is a typological image of Jesus Christ, Who, on the wood of the cross, had His side opened by the lance of (soon-to-be) St. Longinus, whence poured out blood and water. As St. Paul tells us about the wandering Israelites, "all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). Jesus Christ is not only the supernatural Rock; He is also "The stone which the builders rejected [Who] has become the cornerstone" (Matt. 21:42).

Interestingly enough, however, God's rock symbolism is not always about His protection of us. Sometimes, it is an image of how we hurt or destroy ourselves when we rebel against Him. For example, the Prophet Isaiah says that God will be "a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel" (8:14) because of their sins (see also Rom. 9:33, 1 Pet. 2:8). And Jesus even says about Himself, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on anyone it will crush him" (Lk. 20:18). It is actually very common for any given symbol to have both a positive and a negative use, so be on the lookout for that in the weeks ahead.

Finally, the rock can be a type of not only Jesus Christ, but of His Mystical Body, the Church. Thus, God says through the Prophet Zechariah "I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves" (12:3). Both in the Old Testament and in the New, God's holy people, the Church, become rock themselves as they gain a participation in God's Own Nature through grace. Thus also, the Lord Jesus says to St. Peter, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). "Peter" is Greek for "rock," and Jesus here is saying that He gives some of His Own rock-like power to Peter so that he can become, like Jesus, the bedrock of the Catholic Church.

The Good, the Bad, and the Snake

As we discussed last time, many typological symbols have more than one meaning and sometimes have both a “good” and a “bad” meaning. The snake is a perfect example of this dual typology. Under its “bad” role, which is the most common, the snake represents the Devil and sin. We see this imagery at both the beginning and ending of the Bible. In Genesis 3, the Devil tempts Eve to sin while in the form of a snake or serpent. In Revelation 12, the Devil appears as a great dragon, which in the ancient languages was a much looser term meaning something like a giant serpent (“that ancient serpent” [Rev. 12:9]), snake, or sea monster (“drake” and “worm” both work this way too). These images, coupled with the fact that snakes are perceived as nasty and poisonous creatures (e.g. Lk. 11:11, Ps. 58:4), has made the snake mainly a typological symbol of Satan.

However, even in the Old Testament, the snake gets used two ways. In Exodus 7, Moses and Aaron battle with Pharaoh’s magicians. All parties turn their staves into snakes, but Moses’ snake eats all of the others. Also, in Numbers 21, God sends fiery serpents to afflict the Israelites because of their sins. Thus again, they can be seen to represent both man’s sin and God’s justice.

The snake’s real salvation, though, (like ours) is Jesus Christ. Again in Numbers 21, God commands Moses to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole to save those poisoned by the serpents. Here, the snake represents God’s mercy and healing (and hence the snake-on-a-pole symbol on ambulances). More importantly, this serpent on a pole is a type of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ Himself gives this typology when He says, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14-15). The snake is a perfect type because it is so associated with sin; Jesus takes upon Himself the sins of the world, even, as it were, becoming sin: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). And in fact, this is why crucifixes are sometimes designed with the Body of Christ contorted into an “S” or a “Z” shape, to make that connection with the snake.

Finally, in later typology, the snake was sometimes also used as a type of the Christian. Like the snake that sheds its skin, the repentant sinner sheds his old life and sinful ways in the Sacrament of Penance. (It does this, by the way, by rubbing against a rock; remember last week!) Also, just as the snake coils its body when attacked, exposing everything else to protect its head, so Christians should be willing to sacrifice everything, even their very lives, to protect the sacredness and proclaim the truth of their Head, Jesus Christ.

### Christ the Pelican

This week, I thought we’d look at a simple typological image. This one is not scriptural, but has a long history in church symbolism. This is the image of the pelican. According to ancient legend, in time of famine the pelican would feed its young by wounding itself and allowing its young to drink its own blood. Not surprisingly, this is seen as a type of Jesus Christ, Who gave us blood and water from His Own pierced side to save us from the famine of Hell and nourish us with everlasting life. The Christological pelican is a very common symbol. In one of

his famous hymns, “Adorate devote,” St. Thomas Aquinas calls on Christ as “Pie pellicane, Iesu Domine,” that is, “Lord Jesus, loving pelican,” Whom he asks to wash us in His Blood. Also, you may have noticed the last time you were at our beautiful cathedral basilica that the image on the front of the altar is that of the pelican. So, the next time you are meditating on the Precious Blood that Our Lord has poured out for the salvation of the world, you too can praise Him as the divine Pelican. You can ask to be made part of Him, His ‘blood-brother,’ to share in the divine consanguinity of His Nature by the reception of His Body and Blood.

### The Arising of the Fire Bird

Yes, today we examine the mythical symbol of the phoenix. No, not the X-Man Jean Gray in her psycho, all-powerful mode, but the magical bird that is consumed in fire when it dies and then is reborn from its own ashes. This bird, which rises again from the dead, became a typological symbol of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the earliest years of the Church. Although not a scriptural image, it was already used by St. Clement of Rome, who lived around the year A.D. 80. St. Clement was an Apostolic Father and the fourth pope of the Church, ordained, some say, by St. Peter himself. In his Letter to the Corinthians, following up on St. Paul’s letters to that same community, St. Clement recounts the legend of the phoenix, which, while a little different than the simplified, modern version of the legend as seen in *Harry Potter*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and elsewhere, still contains the same main idea:

“Let us consider that wonderful sign [of the resurrection] which takes place in Eastern lands, that is, in Arabia and the countries round about. There is a certain bird which is called a phoenix. This is the only one of its kind, and lives five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it builds itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when the time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as the flesh decays a certain kind of worm is produced, which, being nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brings forth feathers. Then, when it has acquired strength, it takes up that nest in which are the bones of its parent, and bearing these it passes from the land of Arabia into Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis. And, in open day, flying in the sight of all men, it places them on the altar of the sun, and having done this, hastens back to its former abode. The priests then inspect the registers of the dates, and find that it has returned exactly as the five hundredth year was completed.

“Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those who have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfil His promise? For [the Scripture] says in a certain place, ‘You shall raise me up, and I shall confess to You;’ and again, ‘I laid down, and slept; I awaked, because You are with me;’ and again, Job says, ‘you shall raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things.’” (Letter to the Corinthians, chapters 25 and 26)

As you can see, for St. Clement, the phoenix is the type not only of Jesus’ Resurrection, but of the resurrection of each Christian in Christ. And so, as this fiery bird dies and rises, may the fires of divine charity in our hearts teach us to die to self that we may rise again with Christ.

## Textual Typology

So far, when looking at the Scriptures, we have been looking at Old Testament *events* that parallel New Testament *events*. But there are many parts of Sacred Scripture that aren't stories, but are prophecies, psalms, and just stuff people said. These *texts* can also prefigure, in a sense prophesy, what Jesus will do when He comes. For an example, let us consider Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. (I'd refresh your memory, but to save me space you're going to have to read it yourselves. See Matt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-10; Lk. 19:28-44; & Jn. 12:12-19.)

Now, we certainly can, and should, compare this happening with Old Testament happenings. For example: "At the approach of Saul and David, on David's return after striking down the Philistine, women came out from all the cities of Israel to meet Saul the king, singing and dancing, with tambourines, joyful songs, and stringed instruments. The women played and sang: 'Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands'" (1 Sam. 18:6-7). For both David and Jesus, there is even a hint of their hidden kingship in these passages. Then, there is the passage where the Prophet Elisha is honored by the guild prophets (see 2 Kings 2:15). Consider also what is done when a guy named Jehu is anointed king: "At once each took his garment, spread it under Jehu on the bare steps, blew the horn, and cried out, 'Jehu is king!'" (2 Kings 9:13). Finally, there is the Wedding Procession of King Solomon from the beautiful poem, the Song of Songs: "Daughters of Zion, go out and look upon King Solomon in the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his marriage, on the day of the joy of his heart" (Song 3:11). Clearly, these passages are types of Christ's kingly entry into Jerusalem.

Yet, with this last passage, we begin to see something different. The wedding procession was assumedly an actual event, but the passage doesn't narrate what happens, it only speaks words about it: words which can be apply applied to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and so words that themselves become types, prophecies of the event. And there are many such typological passages in Scripture, even about this single even in Our Lord's life. Consider:

- Zech. 9:9—"Exult greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This passage is actually quoted in the Gospel texts themselves by the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. John.
- Is. 62:11b—"Say to daughter Zion, 'See, your savior comes! See, his reward is with him, his recompense before him.'"
- Ps. 149:2—"Let Israel be glad in its maker, the people of Zion rejoice in their king."
- Ps. 118: 26-27—"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God and has enlightened us. Join in procession with leafy branches up to the horns of the altar." This passage is actually being partially quoted by the crowds in the Gospels, who are also taking up palm branches.

There are a whole bunch of other examples I could give, especially based off of St. Luke's account, but alas! I lack space. Nevertheless, I hope it is clear to you now how passages of Scripture can themselves be types of the life of Christ.

## Textual Typology: Tier Two

Yeah, gotta love that alliteration! So, I thought it important to say a little more about what I have dubbed ‘textual typology.’ Allow me, then, to continue where we left off last week by giving a couple more examples of how certain saying or prophecies in the Old Testament find their full meaning in Jesus Christ. Again, I return to the example of our Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem—this time specifically from St. Luke’s Gospel.

As the crowds in Jerusalem cry out, acclaiming Christ as King, some of the Pharisees tell Jesus to stop them, but “He said in reply, ‘I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!’” (Lk. 19:40). For one fluent in the Sacred Scriptures, this exchange brings to mind the words of the Prophet Habakkuk. “You have devised shame for your household, cutting off many peoples, forfeiting your own life; for the stone in the wall shall cry out, and the beam in the frame shall answer it!” (Hab. 2:10-11). Within a typological understanding of these words, Habakkuk’s prophecy can be seen as a rebuke against the unbelieving Pharisees, who were trying to keep the people of Israel from accepting Jesus as Messiah.

As St. Luke’s account continues, Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem and says, “For the days are coming upon you when your enemies will raise a palisade against you; they will encircle you and hem you in on all sides” (Lk. 19:43). This lament brings to mind the prophecies of several prophets (only one of which I quote to save space): “I will encamp like David against you; I will circle you with outposts and set up siege works against you” (Isa. 29:3). See also Jer. 6:6 and Ezek. 4:1c-2. All of these prophecies were fulfilled, of course, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Now, this is all very well if you find the explanation convincing; however, one might legitimately ask: Aren’t the similarities between these Old and New Testament passages coincidental? Weren’t the prophets, psalmists, etc. referring to concrete, historical events that were totally unrelated to Jesus’ future entry into Jerusalem? Couldn’t the three prophecies above refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and not the Romans? The answer is: Yes, they could and they were. We presume that the human authors of Scripture were not usually having visions of the future deeds of Jesus of Nazareth (although in some instances, we might not want to entirely rule that out), but were speaking about events in their own day and age. Nevertheless, the primary author of every book of the Bible, including those of the Old Testament, is God the Holy Spirit. While the human authors might not—probably could not—have understood the full, future ramifications of what they were saying, their words were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit so that they did, in fact, correctly prophesy the coming Messiah and His deeds. And so, these texts are truly typological, finding their full and perfect meaning, as always intended by their Divine Author, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of David Who comes in the Name of the Lord.

## Move Like a Butterfly: the Typology of Nature

Today, we consider a typological image that is purely natural. The lowly, crawling

caterpillar, having eaten all it needs, spins a cocoon around itself. It leaves the light, the activity of life behind and enters into a state resembling death. Yet, it is not dead, but emerges to a new birth. And it is changed from the rather ugly, worm-like, crawling creature that it began its life as, to a beautiful butterfly that flits and flies effortlessly from flower to flower. The typological parallel between the caterpillar-turned-butterfly and the Resurrection is obvious. Not only did Jesus Christ die and rise again, “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18), but each of us is called to share His death in order that we might share His Resurrection and receive back a transformed and glorified body.

However, is this really typology? The butterfly is certainly not in the Old Testament. Under the strictest, academic definition of “typology,” perhaps this image would not be called a “type.” And yet, Sacred Scripture is not the only source of Revelation that has God as its primary Author. God is also the Author of the ‘book’ of nature. He did not make the world without reference to the Incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, St. Paul tells us that the world was made through Christ: “For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16-17).

Is it not legitimate, then, to consider the works of nature also to be types of Jesus Christ—written into the fabric of creation by the Incarnate Word Himself as a sign of the world’s redemption in Himself? Certainly, medieval peoples thought along these lines. That is why they gave typological meaning in so many plants, animal, etc., such as the bee and the pelican that we have already considered. I am inclined to agree. I am heartened when I think that the reason holly berries are red is because Christ shed His Sacred Blood for us. And pine trees are evergreen because we rise in Christ to eternal life. These are not the scientific reasons for these natural phenomena, of course, but are they not the truer, deeper reasons in the Mind of the Creator?

### Some Typology to Prepare for Christmas

During this Advent season, I thought it might be useful to review some typology related to the Incarnation and Nativity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here are two Old Testament types that find their fulfillment in Mary’s virginal conception and birth of Jesus, and also a famous verse that is typologically applied to that first Christmas.

First is the famous Burning Bush that Moses encounters in Exod. 3:2. The bush is on fire but is not consumed, and from it comes the voice, that is, the Word of God. This event was what set in motion God’s plan to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. All of this is fulfilled in Mary when she conceived Our Lord at His Incarnation. Like the bush that burned but was not consumed, she conceived and gave birth, all without violating the virginal integrity of her body. (This, by the way, along with the fact that she never had later relations with St. Joseph or had other children, is known as the dogma of Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is, a truth divinely revealed by God.)

In a second typological episode from Num. 17, God showed His choice of Aaron and the Tribe of Levi to be priests and ministers in the sanctuary by having them leave 12 rods (one for each tribe) in the tent with the Ark of the Covenant. “And on the morrow Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds, and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds” (Num. 17:8). The barren rod that miraculously brought forth blossoms and seeds is a type of the Virgin Mary again, since she brought forth the divine Seed without male seed or the loss of her virginity.

Finally, we consider the famous verse from the beginning of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib” (Isa. 1:3a). It is from the typological association of this verse with the Birth of Christ and His being laid in a manger, or crib, that Nativity scenes always include an ox and an ass. The irony is that the animals knew Jesus as their “Owner” and “Master” when His Own people did not. Also, the ox and ass are sometimes considered typological symbols of the Jews and Gentiles respectively who believed in Jesus Christ. Let us use these types that God has given us in His holy Word, then, as we meditate on Jesus Christ’s first coming as Savior and Redeemer of the world in this season of Advent.

#### A Cunning Little Devil

I figured I’d just do a short typology blurb this week since I’ve already got an article in this week on the March for Life. So, let’s talk about another medieval typology figure: the fox. (To see a good example of this, read Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.) The fox is a type of the Devil because both are sly, crafty, sneaky, and so on. Foxes are, of course, well known for their cunning. Foxes notoriously rob henhouses, and hens are sometimes used as a symbol for the Church or for individual Christians (a typology that we can return to in a later article). There is another method sometimes used by the fox to catch food: he will lie perfectly still for a long time in a ditch or someplace, pretending to be dead. Then, when carrion birds land on him, snap! quick as a flash, he jumps up and catches one. This reminds us of the great patience that Satan and the demons use in trying to make sin look appealing to us. Then, just when we think all is safe and we take the bait—the jaws of sin snap shut around us, and the Devil has captured another soul. So remember, when it comes to the Devil, don’t be outfoxed!

#### The Noblest of Birds, part 1

Well, let’s get back to some typology! One very common symbolic animal is the eagle. Its power among birds, its graceful flight, and its striking feathers and appearance have caused it to be adopted as the symbol of such mighty nations as Rome, the United States of America, and Nazi Germany, to name only a few. It is not surprising, then, that Christians would adopt the noble eagle as a symbol as well.

In the Sacred Scriptures, there is actually not much said about the eagle. It is mainly used as a symbol of the speed and power of war (see, e.g., Deut. 28:49, Jer. 49:22, 2 Sam. 1:23, & Hab. 1:8). Sometimes, particularly in reference to the wings of the eagle, this carries over into

God's saving power (Exod. 19:4, Isa. 40:31, & Rev. 12:14). St. John also uses the eagle as a messenger of woe in Revelation 8:13 (a common symbol in the pagan cultures of the time, as in Homer's *The Iliad*). Perhaps most memorably, the Prophet Ezekiel reports (1:10, cf. 10:14) that there are four creatures that stand in the presence of God who each have four faces (man, lion, ox, and, you guessed it, eagle). St. John in Revelation reports this also (4:7), although he sees each one with only one of the four faces. These four faces became the symbols associated with each of the four Evangelists, and the eagle became the symbol for St. John (more below).

It was in later times, especially medieval times, that the eagle became used as a type, properly speaking. There was actually a pretty extensive legend developed around the eagle, based on what medieval peoples knew, or thought they knew, about the eagle. According to some legends, the eagle was the first bird created by God on the fifth day of Creation, just as Christ is "firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). It could also fly higher and see farther than any other bird. So keen was its eyesight that it could see fish in the streams and animals in the woods even from a great height. Because of this, the eagle symbolizes God, Who can see all of the hidden thoughts (the fish) and the actions (the animals) of men. Also, it is on this account that the eagle was chosen as the symbol for St. John the Evangelist, since in his Gospel he 'flies higher' and 'sees most deeply' into the divinity of Jesus Christ, compared to the other Gospels.

The real typology stuff, however, involves how the eagle raises its young and how the eagle renews its youth. However, we'll have to return to that in next week's lesson, and maybe the week after that. There's a lot to say about this particular animal.

## The Noblest of Birds, part 2

Today we return to considering the typology of the eagle. So, let's consider how the eagle produces and raises its young and what this can teach us about Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. According to the legend, the eagle produces three eggs. When the eaglets have hatched, the eagle makes them look directly at the sun. If any hatchling will not look into the sun, then the eagle throws it out of the nest to perish. When the eaglets are grown, then the eagle flies above the nest to show them how to fly. So runs the legend.

The typological interpretation runs thus: The three eggs represent how Jesus Christ is the father of three sorts of men—Christians by the New Covenant, Jews by the Old Covenant, and all other men by the fact that He is their Creator and by His coming to save all men (see 2 Cor. 5:15). It is *only* in the New Covenant that Christ forged that we have a *full understanding* of how to be saved and are clearly offered that saving, or sanctifying, grace through the Seven Sacraments. However, God, Who is not bound by His Own Sacraments, can and does offer sanctifying grace to everyone that believes in Him through faith (insofar as one can conceive of Him) and that lives a holy life. (Obviously, the Jews have a better chance here than the pagans since they know and follow God's Law, at least as it was revealed through Moses.)

But, even though salvation is open to all in principle, no one, not even a Christian, can be saved unless he personally receives Jesus Christ as his Savior. This is the meaning of the eagle forcing its offspring to look at the sun (the sun also being a type of the Son—more on that in a

later lesson). Unless someone is willing to open their eyes from the darkness and look upon the light of Christ, allowing something like the pain of eyes adjusting to bright light, then that person will perish for eternity in Hell. And so, having accepted Christ through a life of faith and works, the Christian is then taught by Christ how to ‘fly’ to Heaven by a virtuous life. This is the meaning of the eagle teaching its offspring to fly. Thus, the Lord says in Scripture, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” (Exod. 19:4, cf. Ps. 91:4). Just as the eagle teaches its young to fly by giving them the example of its own flight, so Christ gave us in His life on earth the ultimate example of the life of virtue so that we may imitate Him. (Notice also how the eagle is here a type of both Christ and the Christian.)

We’ll stop there for now, but don’t get your feathers ruffled! Next time we will conclude our consideration of the eagle as a type by examining the legend of how the eagle renews its youth.

### The Noblest of Birds, part 3

For our last segment in consideration of the eagle as a type, we want to look at the legend concerning how the eagle renews its youth. While the legend itself is not biblical, the idea is found in Psalm 103, where the psalmist says, “Bless the Lord... who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (vv. 1a, 5). The legend runs thus:

When the eagle gets old, his powerful sight begins to fail, his feather become shabby, and his beak has grown so much that it is curved and crooked and makes eating difficult. Then, the eagle feels within himself the desire to renew his youth. So, the eagle begins to search for a spring of water that is never dried up, but is always flowing. When he finds this stream, the eagle plunges himself three times into it. Then, he flies up as high as he can, above the clouds, to where he can feel the heat of the sun. There, in the sunlight, he beats his wings hard, and his feathers are dried by the heat of the sun and the vehemence of his beating. The old feathers fall out because of the water and the heat. Further, his eyesight is renewed by the sun’s brightness so that he can see again with the clarity of his youth. Then, the eagle dives back to the earth and finds a great rock in the midst of the same stream. On this rock, he strikes and rubs his beak until it is trimmed enough for him to eat his food with ease again. So it is that the eagle renews his youth.

What could this legend possible mean typologically? Well, you may remember that last time we said that the eagle is a type not only of Christ Jesus, but of the Christian as well. The way in which the eagle renews its youth teaches us Christians how we must go about repenting from sin. The oldness of the eagle represents our sinfulness, as when St. Paul speaks about putting off the “old man” (see Col. 3:9; also Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). The eagle’s blindness is, again, the blindness of sin. As the Lord Jesus says, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness” (Matt. 6:22-23). The eagle’s disheveled and loose feathers represent how sin creates disorder in our soul, mind, and body. And the overgrown beak shows how sin makes it difficult to receive the spiritual nourishment of grace, and in particular

for those in mortal sin, impossible to receive the nourishment of the Most Holy Eucharist.

The only remedy to this situation is repentance, coupled with the Sacrament either of Baptism or Confession. And that is just what the eagle's actions teach us. The unquenchable stream is the water of Baptism, wherein the infinite merits of Our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection are poured out for our salvation. The three plunges of the eagle represent the three times water is poured over the head or the three times the person is immersed under the water, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Or, in regard to Confession where the graces of Baptism are renewed and strengthened, the three plunges represent the three steps needed for forgiveness: contrition, confession, and penance.

The eagle's next move teaches us about the cooperation between God's grace and man's free response to that grace. Flying up close to the sun, the eagle flaps its wings hard. This shows us that the grace of Christ, shown by the heat of the sun, working through the Sacrament of either Baptism or Confession, shown by the water, forgives sins (that's God's part). But only as long as the person does penance and tries hard to live a holy life, as is shown by the beating of the wings (that's man's free cooperation). The old feathers fall away just as sin falls away. The light from the sun which restores the eagle's sight also shows how the light of Christ's grace renews sinners spiritually.

Finally, as the legend concludes, the eagle returns to the stream and finds a rock in the midst of it. The rock, as you may recall from prior typology lessons, represents Jesus Christ and also the Church, especially Peter (whose name means "rock") and the Apostles, as well as their descendants, the pope, bishops, and priests. So, the eagle striking and filing down his beak on the rock also represents repentance and the use of the Sacrament of Confession, through which the Church uses the "keys of the Kingdom" given to Peter to loose from sin (see Matt. 16:18). Once the 'overgrowth' from sin has been chipped off, the sinner can again fully receive the nourishing grace of God, and the mortal sinner can once again receive the source of all grace in Holy Communion. And so, as the eagle's physical youth is renewed, so the Christian's spiritual youth is renewed. Thus, the eagle becomes a lesson and a type for us in the ways of our own daily conversion from sin and daily conversion towards Christ.

### Announcing the Dawning of the Son

As was exemplified in the legend about the eagle from the other month, the sun has always been an apt symbol for God, giving light and heat to all and sustaining all life. Indeed, many pagan peoples worshiped the sun as a god. But the sun is also an important typological symbol not simply of God but of Jesus Christ. He, the Son, is the true Sun (oh happy coincidence of the English language!). This is not only because He is the source of all grace to us and the light of the world, but also because He died and arose again, just as the sun sets and arises each morning.

Unlike the sun, of course, Christ rose never to 'set' again, but the symbolism has always been so powerful that it has influenced Christian prayer for centuries. It is because the sun rises in the East that Christians in ancient times use to turn from West to East at their Baptism as they

renounced the darkness of the Devil and confessed their belief in the Triune God. It is also for this reason that churches are traditionally built facing East. This is from the days when the priest and the people would all face the same direction: *ad orientem*, towards the Orient, i.e., the East. In other words, priest and people would face the Son (Sun) of God together as they worshiped Him at Holy Mass.

In fact, one quick flower typology that comes from the sun as a type of Christ is that the sunflower is a type of the Christian, who must follow the Son just as the head of the sunflower always turns to follow the sun. But the more interesting and complex typological symbol that I want to discuss today is the rooster. Similar to the sunflower, is the rooster or cock. The rooster watches for the dawn and heralds the arising of the sun with his cockcrow. Thus, he is a type of the Christian, who is called to keep watch for the dawning of that great Day when Christ will come again and to announce the Gospel of His Coming to the world. As the Lord says, “Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep” (Mk. 13:35-36).

As you may be thinking, however, the cock also has a more tragic meaning because he has forever become associated with St. Peter and his less-than-saintly denial of Our Lord. Jesus warned Peter of this at the Last Supper: “Peter said to him, ‘Even though they all fall away, I will not.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times’” (Mk. 14:29-30). And so Peter did (see Mk. 14:72). Interestingly, despite this tragic typology, the rooster has also become a symbol of the priesthood, assumedly because St. Peter was the first pope (see Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* for an example). This is a providential connection because it reminds everyone, including us priests, of how human and sinful priests are, just as St. Peter himself was.

It is not uncommon to find a rooster among the different symbols of the Passion of Jesus Christ on the cross. Here, the immediate reference is to the pain that St. Peter’s denials caused Our Lord. However, there is also the hint here of the more redeeming typologies: here hangs Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest, Who has been raised up into the sky on the cross. No wonder the natural sun was eclipsed, for it was none other than its Creator and Master Who took its place in the sky.

One final comment. I made my first Cursillo last year—which is to say that I became a part of the Cursillo community by taking part in retreat number 95 (table of St. Elmo’s Fire for all you cursillistas). One of the big symbols for the Cursillo Movement is the rooster. No one really ever gave me a direct explanation as to why, but I think it’s kind of clear: it is because of the beautiful, many-colored feathers and tail of the rooster. This reminds one of all the colors of the light spectrum, which is to say, the rainbow. This diversity of color, as you may remember from our discussion of the rainbow, puts one in mind of the Seven Sacraments, which are the source of Christ’s grace for us. And receiving and acting upon the grace of Christ is the whole focus of the Cursillo Movement. And so, “De Colores” (as we cursillistas say), and also, “Sings the rooster!”

## Isaac as a Type of Christ

The first reading of last Sunday's Holy Mass recounted God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. It brought to my mind a beautiful typological analysis of Genesis 22 by Origen, an Early Church Father. Now that you've heard so many typology lessons from me, I think you're ready to hear some from the true masters, the Church Fathers. Also, this topic of sacrificing one's son is very pertinent to our Lenten meditations. So, enjoy!

"Abraham took wood for the burnt offering and placed it upon Isaac his son, and he took fire and a sword in his hands, and together they went off. Isaac himself carries the wood for his own holocaust: this is a figure of Christ. For he bore the burden of the cross, and yet to carry the wood for the holocaust is really the duty of the priest. He is then both victim and priest. This is the meaning of the expression: together they went off. For when Abraham, who was to perform the sacrifice, carried the fire and the knife, Isaac did not walk behind him, but with him. In this way he showed that he exercised the priesthood equally with Abraham.

"What happens after this? Isaac said to Abraham his father: 'Father.' This plea from the son was at that instant the voice of temptation. For do you not think the voice of the son who was about to be sacrificed struck a responsive chord in the heart of the father? Although Abraham did not waver because of his faith, he responded with a voice full of affection and asked: 'What is it, my son?' Isaac answered him: 'Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the holocaust?' And Abraham replied: 'God will provide for himself a sheep for the holocaust, my son.' The careful yet loving response of Abraham moves me greatly. I do not know what he saw in spirit, because he did not speak of the present but of the future: God will provide for himself a sheep. His reply concerns the future, yet his son inquires about the present. Indeed the Lord himself provided a sheep for himself in Christ.

"Abraham extended his hand to take the sword and slay his son, and the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said: 'Abraham, Abraham.' And he responded: 'Here I am.' And the angel said: 'Do not put your hand upon the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God.' Compare these words to those of the Apostle when he speaks of God: 'He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.' God emulates man with magnificent generosity. Abraham offered to God his mortal son who did not die, and God gave up his immortal Son who died for all of us. And Abraham, looking about him, saw a ram caught by the horns in a bush. We said before that Isaac is a type of Christ. Yet this also seems true of the ram. To understand how both are figures of Christ—Isaac who was not slain and the ram who was—is well worth our inquiry.

"Christ is the Word of God, but the Word became flesh. Christ therefore suffered and died, but in the flesh. In this respect, the ram is the type, just as John said: 'Behold the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world.' The Word, however, remained incorruptible. This is Christ according to the spirit, and Isaac is the type. Therefore, Christ himself is both victim and priest according to the spirit. For he offers the victim to the Father according to the flesh, and he is himself offered on the altar of the cross."

## King of Every Creature, part 1

Alright! I'm finally back to writing again now that the business of Lent and the Triduum are over. So, I thought we'd start back with a very common symbol, yet a polyvalent one (that means one with a lot of different uses): the lion—the king of beasts and so a fitting symbol of the King of kings. This symbolism has been capitalized upon in recent times in C. S. Lewis' now famous *The Chronicles of Narnia*, wherein Aslan the Great Lion (who is also the true King and the Son of the Emperor over the sea) is clearly the symbol of Jesus Christ.

Known for his strength, ferocity, mighty roar, and hunting skills, the lion is a common symbol of power and wrath. In the Sacred Scriptures, it is used at different times as an image of the strength of: God, the Israelites, and many of the enemies of Israel. However, the lion as a type of Christ comes from three very specific passages of Scripture. The first is in Genesis 49. As the ancient and dying Patriarch Jacob gives his last blessing (or curse!) to his twelve sons, he gives very high praise and a prophetic blessing to Judah, comparing him to a lion. He says, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen. 49:9-10). The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, descended from the Tribe of Judah, and He is one foretold, to Whom the ruler's staff and the obedience of the peoples belong.

This leonine typology is further bolstered by the famous Prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24. The prophet, who has been hired to curse the Israelites, blesses them instead. He compares Israel to a lion: "He couched, he lay down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?" (Num. 24:9). And yet, although he begins by speaking about the whole people, he later speaks of one who will come as ruler: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh: a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). Again, this is typology pure and simple—the lion becomes not only the symbol of Judah or Israel, but of Christ the King Who is to come. The Apostles themselves were already making this typological connection, as we can see in St. John's final book, Revelation. St. John recounts his distress that no one is found worthy to open a heavenly scroll. "Then," he says, "one of the elders said to me, 'Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals'" (Rev. 5:5). And so we see how ancient the lion as a type of Christ is, and how it fulfills two even more ancient prophecies.

There is more to say about the other persons the lion can symbolize, but we'll follow up with that in next week's article, including the medieval legend of the lion. Until then, make sure to call upon Our Lord Jesus Christ as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah when you find yourself in need of God's mighty strength and protection.

## King of Every Creature, part 2

In our last article, we discussed how the lion is a type of Christ, the mighty and true King.

However, the lion, as used in Scripture, can also represent at least three other persons. First off, like so many symbols, the lion has a dark side: it can be used as a type of the Devil. Thus, St. Peter warns, “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). This symbolism is perhaps most commonly evoked in the popular St. Michael Prayer, where Satan and his minions are said to “prowl about the world, seeking the ruin of souls.”

Beyond that, the lion represents two great Saints as well. As you may recall from our discussion of the eagle, the lion is one of the faces of the four creatures that stand in the presence of God, as reported by the Prophet Ezekiel (1:10, cf. 10:14) and St. John (Rev. 4:7). And it is from these faces that we derived the symbols for the Four Evangelists. The lion is the symbol of St. Mark, because he abruptly begins his Gospel with St. John the Baptist crying out in the wilderness, like the roaring of some mighty lion. For this same reason, St. John the Baptist himself is sometimes represented as a roaring lion (per this week’s picture, which is from the chapel of my old seminary; the Latin inscription reads “the voice crying out in the wilderness”).

The final typological uses of the lion come from the “beastiaries” of the Middle Ages, which are books dedicated to teaching the typology and symbolism of different animals. Therein are found this legend of the lion: The lion dwells on the highest peak of his mountain, and when he sleeps his eyes always remain fully open. As he goes down to hunt for food, he wipes out his footprints behind him with his tail so that no hunters can track him. Further, the cubs of the lion are always stillborn, but after three days the lion roars mightily upon them and they come to life (this particular legendary attribute is actually far more ancient than the Middle Ages, dating back to ancient Greece; naturally, Christians found it significant). And that is the legend.

In this legend, the lion is again a symbol of Jesus Christ and God the Father. Like the lion on the mountain peak, Christ dwells in highest Heaven. Just as the eyes of the lion remain open in sleep, so, even when Jesus’ human nature slept in death upon the cross, His divinity kept watch. Further, as the lion raises its stillborn cubs on the third day after birth, so God the Father raised up Jesus Christ on the third day to make Him King of the living and the dead.

The final attribute of the lion may take some explanation, that is, why he wipes out his tracks to hide himself from hunters. This explanation may seem odd at first, but bear with me. The Church Fathers and other ancient theologians were very aware of something that our age is all too often forgetful of: namely, that Satan and the demons are fallen angels, vastly more intelligent and powerful than we human beings. Therefore (many suggest) if Satan had actually understood that Jesus Christ was God Himself Incarnate, he would never have allowed Christ to die for our sins upon the cross (1 Cor. 2:8 is sometimes interpreted this way). Certainly, the demons knew and often proclaimed that Jesus was the “holy one,” the “son of God,” as the Gospels recount. However, this may only mean that they thought Him to be the Messiah, God’s next great prophet and/or king. One good reason to interpret the demons’ words in this way is the simple fact that the ultimate pride and hatred that characterizes Satan and his minions would have made the humility and mercy that God displayed in the Incarnation completely unthinkable, unfathomable to them. And so we may believe, as many in the Church have, that God did not

give Satan a ‘heads up’ about the Incarnation, but rather took on flesh in Holy Mary’s womb secretly. Jesus then, so to speak, surprised the Hell out of the kingdom of darkness and broke the power of Satan, death, and evil by sort of tricked Satan into killing Him and so ironically bringing about his own downfall. It is this theological thought that is at play in the legend about how the lion hides his tracks.

So, there we have it folks! The mightiest of beasts is truly an apt symbol for the Almighty God—King of kings and Lord of lords. And He shall reign forever and ever!



O Deer! (Is Heaven a Stag Party?), part 1

OK, sorry about the title; couldn’t resist ☺. As you know, one very common, ancient Christian symbol is the deer. The deer really has two typologies: it can represent on the one hand the Christian, and on the other hand Christ Himself. These typologies have their sources both in the Bible and in medieval traditions.

Let's begin with the deer (also called a hart) as a type of the Christian. This typology finds its source in the famous begin of Ps. 42: "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God" (v. 1). The flowing stream is clearly a symbol of life, which in the spiritual realm translates into the Sacrament of Baptism or Reconciliation. It can also be a reference to the Holy Spirit, as when Jesus says in St. John's Gospel: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" To which St. John adds, "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive" (Jn. 7:37b-39a). (Interestingly, the very early instructional document known as the *Didachē* directs that living, or running, water is preferable for Baptism to stagnant water.) These different 'streams' are the things for which the Christian longs, just as the hart.

Medieval typology adds the following attributes of the deer that make it like the Christian. First, it seeks out snakes—of which it is a great enemy—and eats them. When it feels the burning of the snakes poison, then it searches out a stream to drink enough water to quell the poison. Thus healed, the deer (apparently a stag) sheds its heavy antlers and its strength is renewed. This is like the Christian who, like all men, is attracted to sin (even though he is supposed to be its enemy), but having ingested the poison of sin, repents and finds healing in the streams of grace. This accomplished, the weight of sin is dropped even as the deer's antlers and his strength is renewed. Second, when a herd of deer cross a large river, they swim single file with the head of each deer supported on the rump of the one in front of it. When the lead deer tires, it swims to the back of the line. In this way, they support each other, especially those whose heads are weighed down with antlers. This is a lesson on how Christians should bear each other's burdens out of love as they go from the bank of this life across the river to the bank of our heavenly homeland.

Well, we'll have to stop there so that this doesn't become too long. So we'll discuss how the deer, specifically the stag, is a type of Christ next week. Until then, stay athirst for those living streams of grace, my deers!



O Deer! (Is Heaven a Stag Party?), part 2

OK, last week we discussed how the deer or hart or stag is a type of the Christian,

longing for flowing streams, eating snakes, dropping antlers, etc. Today we examine how the stag is a type of Jesus Christ Himself. Here again we start with Sacred Scripture; this time the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon). The spiritual sense of this ancient love poem is that Jesus Christ is the Beloved, the Bridegroom, wooing His Bride the Church. The woman, i.e., the Church, speaks: “Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle, or a young stag” (Song 2:8b-9a; see also 2:17 & 8:14). And so the young stag, the light-footed lover, becomes the image Our Lord, Who incarnated Himself, suffered, died, and rose again all out of love for us.

Going back to the medieval legend, the whole idea of the stag as the mortal enemy of the serpent points towards the stag as a type of Christ. Just as the stag seeks out the serpent to kill him and swallow him up, so Our Lord by His Incarnation sought out the Devil, who was guarding humanity as a strong man guards his possessions (cf. Lk. 11:21), and destroyed his power and the reign of death.

Of course, making something white is often a way of making it a symbol of the divine (based on many Scripture passages, e.g., Christ’s head and hair [Rev. 1:14], His horse [Rev. 19:11], and His throne [Rev. 20:11]; but especially see Christ’s Transfiguration). Especially in Arthurian legend, then, the *white* stag, which cannot be caught, became the symbol of man’s spiritual journey: following—or chasing—after Christ, the True Stag. C. S. Lewis adopts this Christological symbol again in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, where the white stag is the one who leads the four (at that point) adult kings and queens back out of Narnia to resume their life as children in our world. There is also, perhaps, some reference to this typology in Harry Potter’s “patronus,” which is a luminous stag.

And so, my deers, let us also follow Christ, the White Stag, in the way to Heaven. He came to win our hearts by His sacrifice of love on the cross (which we have daily access to in Holy Mass), and now bounds away before us, beckoning us to follow Him with swift feet in living the life of virtue.



“The Israel of God”

Well, this week we need to talk about one of the most important typologies in the Scriptures because if you don't understand this typology, many, many things in the Bible and in the liturgy will not make sense. The typology that I am talking about is how the People of God in the Old Testament is a type of the People of God in the New Testament. That might sound really obvious, but what if I put it this way: the Hebrew people, the Kingdom of Israel (or later the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel), the Jewish nation—all references to these different incarnations of God's chosen people are also typological references to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Also, by extension, references to Jerusalem, the capital city of the Israelite kingdom, or to Mt. Zion, the hill that Jerusalem sits on, are also typological references to the Church, the true City of God and God's Holy Mountain.

Now, I want to point out that, while this typology is heavily used by the Church Fathers and still is today in the sacred liturgy, it began with the very first generation of Christians and is already in use in the New Testament Scriptures. St. Paul makes clear typological use of the term "Israel" in at least two places where he refers it to the Church. In concluding the Letter to the Galatians, he says, "Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). This is a reference, of course, to the Christians to whom he is writing, not to the nation of Israel or even a Jewish community.

Likewise, in the Letter to the Romans he writes, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel [...] it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants" (9:6b, 8). Now, in interpreting this passage, it is important to avoid thinking that God has rejected the Jewish people because their leaders put Christ to death. Remember, after all, that it was each of our sins that caused Christ's death; He was not helpless before political authority (see Matt. 26:53) but rather chose to die for our sakes (see Jn. 10:18). Unfortunately, there has historically been a long string of anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians because of such interpretations of Scripture. Please realize that St. Paul is not saying that the Jewish people are no longer God's children and chosen people. In fact, he goes on to say, "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (Rom. 11:2a).

But what he is very clearly saying is that, compared with the new and wonderful kind of adoption available to humanity through Jesus Christ, it's almost (but not completely) as if the Old Covenant is gone. This is what St. Paul is say, for example, in 2 Corinthians: "If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now *in comparison* with the surpassing glory" (3:9-10, my emphasis). The Letter to the Hebrews says something similar: "In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

And so it is that all that is spoken about God's People in the Old Testament applies also to we who are under the New Testament. (This is also why, by the way, all the apocalyptic prophecies in Revelation do not necessarily have anything to do with the modern nation-state of Israel, contrary to what our more literalistic Protestant brethren may sometimes tell you.) This typological connection is both good and bad. It means that the many times God laments

(through the Prophets) His People's unfaithfulness, He is also lamenting ours. And yet, it also means that the promises He has made through the Prophets are equally ours. In fact, some prophecies, for example the ones that depict a time of ideal peace, joy, and harmony, will never be completely fulfilled until the Second Coming of Christ.

And so, remember, that the Church is the New Israel, the New Jerusalem. We should strive to see her with the eyes of St. John in his vision: "and [the angel] showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:10). The raised sanctuary and altar in our churches is not only the Hill of Calvary, but the New Mt. Zion, whereon dwell we who are, as it were, the 'new Jews,' God's New People under the New Covenant, the "Israel of God."



“Nine, Ten, the Di-vine Hen”

Back when I did the article on the fox and again in the article on the rooster, I promised an explanation of the typology of the hen, and so I wanted to fulfill that promise. The hen has two typologies, one from Scripture and one from cultural traditions.

In Scripture, there is really only one typological reference to the hen, and it is from Our Lord Himself, Who uses the hen as a type of Himself, especially in reference to His divinity. He does this as He laments over Jerusalem, saying: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” (Matt. 23:37, cf. Lk. 13:34). I have always been struck by how amazing this statement of Jesus is given its context. Different Gospels place the saying after different accounts—in St. Matthew's Gospel it follows directly Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees and in St. Luke's it comes after a parable. In any case, however, Jesus seems simply to be talking as a prophetic or authoritative teacher.

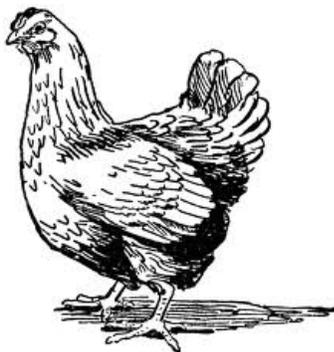
Suddenly, however, He makes the above statement which completely changes the implications of Who is talking. Why would Jesus, the 30-some-year-old from Nazareth, Who

has been preaching His new message for only a couple of years—or really any human being—say in reference to Jerusalem (and by extension to all Israel), “How often would I have gathered your children together [...] and you would not!” When had Jesus tried to gather the people of Jerusalem? When had Jerusalem rejected Him? It is clear that here Christ speaks not from His human nature, but from His Divine Nature as God.

And so, Jesus compares His unfathomable love, the divine love of the Triune God, to the mother hen, whose instinct to care for and protect her brood is so well known to all. Like a mother hen, God keeps us all near Him, provides us with spiritual nourishment in the Sacraments, and protects us from spiritual and (sometimes) physical harm. It is also worth noting that in “The Twelve Days of Christmas” (wherein the different gifts are meant to correspond to different doctrines of the faith), the Three French Hens are said to represent the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Now, in later Christian traditions, the hen becomes a symbol of the Church, the Bride of Christ. This is, more than likely, because the rooster is a type of Christ, and so the rooster’s ‘wife,’ the hen, gets matched with Christ’s Bride. A good example of this is in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. In “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” the rooster Chanticleer is (at least in his rooster-ness, if not in his wisdom) a symbol of Christ. He has 7 hens, who are both his sisters and his wives. This fact seems odd and somewhat risqué unless one understands the scriptural hint that Chaucer is giving here. In Revelation, St. John gives messages from Jesus Christ to seven early Churches (the term “church” being given more to Local Churches at that time than the Church Universal). Thus, the reference to 7 hens could be a reference to this scriptural source, or, since 7 symbolizes “fullness,” even simply to the Church Universal. Now the description makes sense, because it is true that the Church (in the humanity of her members) is both the sister and the spouse of Jesus Christ. This also makes significant the fact that Chanticleer asks one hen to interpret his dream, since Mother Church is the sole authoritative interpreter of the Faith.

Thus, the hen also becomes the symbol of the Church or the members of the Church. And this is why the murder and theft of hens from the henhouse by foxes (like the one in Chaucer) becomes emblematic of the Devil, the Thief of Souls, and his temptations. So, there you have it. Remarkably, we Christians can be fearless and, at the same time, profess to be chickens, for we are members of the henhouse of the Church, but dwell also under the protective wings our God, the Divine Mother Hen.



## Typology from the Masters

It's been a long time since I put any typology articles in the bulletin, but I want to share with you a passage from the Liturgy of the Hours for Good Friday. This passage is from St. John Chrysostom's book, the *Catecheses*. No one does typology like the Church Fathers, among whom we count Chrysostom. So, sit back and enjoy and think about how well this teaching from the early 400s ties into St. Faustina's message of Divine Mercy from the early 1900s. Can you say "the analogy of faith"?

"If we wish to understand the power of Christ's blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. *Sacrifice a lamb without blemish*, commanded Moses, *and sprinkle its blood on your doors*. If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord's blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ."

"If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master's side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood of the holy Eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord's side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it."

"*There flowed from his side water and blood*. Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, *the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit*, and from the holy Eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the Eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!* As God then took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and water after his own death."

"Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life."