

**Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity**  
**November 18, 2018**  
**Homily for the Anglican Usage Mass**  
**of the**  
**St. Thomas More Catholic Parish**  
**celebrated at**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**Scranton, PA**  
**Mark 13:24-32**

In confirmation class we have in recent weeks covered the subject of Jesus as Priest, King, and Prophet. And as it turns out, the next three Sundays, including today, will see Scripture lessons that reflect those three offices. In two weeks, we have the first Sunday of Advent, where we are called to repentance by the Prophet before the Judgment. A week from today we have Christ the King Sunday, when we are reminded Jesus is Lord of the Universe. But today, we focus upon Jesus the Priest, whose sacrifice upon the altar of the cross has taken away our sins.

To explain this, I want to start by talking a little bit about our time in Jerusalem last Month. Peter Josefek and I decided to use our only free afternoon to go up to the Temple Mount. When we got in line, we noticed a sign that said the rabbinate of Jerusalem had decreed that no Jew should go up upon the Mount because of the possibility that one might trample upon Holy Ground. What is that Holy Ground? Well, we knew that the Temple once stood upon the Mount, but we don't know exactly where; and the expanse is very large, about a fifth of the size of the old City. It stands to reason that it's possible in touring the Mount that one could unintentionally walk where the Holy of Holies once stood, that place in the Temple where Jews revered the presence of God.

Peter and I walked about the Temple Mount unconcerned about this prohibition, because we know where God is present now; and it has little to do with where the Temple once stood. We heard in our Epistle today, "By a simple offering [Jesus] has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Where there is forgiveness of those, there is no longer any offering for sin." The Temple was where animals were sacrificed, but we know that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. Such sacrifices have ceased, because the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., but we cannot imagine for a second that this was a mere coincidence. That Jesus' one sacrifice for sin occurred on Calvary and then forty years later the inefficacious animal sacrifices ceased—this was God's design.

Jesus is therefore present wherever this one sacrifice for sin is re-presented—not represented, but re-presented. That is, Jesus is present, God is present, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where the sacrifice on Calvary is made present to the faithful wherever a priest stands in the person of Jesus Christ as an *alter Christus*, another Christ. God's presence, the Holy of Holies, has been transferred from the Temple Mount to every Tabernacle the world over that houses the Blessed Sacrament. Even if we did not tiptoe about the Temple Mount, we genuflect here before the real presence of God.

The key to understanding that today's lessons are about Jesus' priestly ministry is found in the Gospel, where Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you this generation will not pass away before all these things take place." The people who stood there hearing Him speak are not alive today; but a number of them were when the old dispensation ceased, when the Temple was destroyed and the animal sacrifices were no more. As Jesus promised, after the tribulation of the conquest of Jerusalem, there is only He, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who gathers His elect from the far corners of the globe through the sacrifice of Himself, re-presented to us at every Mass.

There is an organization in Jerusalem that desires to re-build the Temple and begin to offer animal sacrifices again, if only they could regain control of the Temple Mount, determine where the Temple was, and find a perfect red heifer to purify the priests who would be offering the sacrifices. As I meditated upon this fool's errand, I wondered, "How do these people imagine there has been forgiveness of sins for the last two thousand years? Since, in their estimation, no sacrifices have been offered, why has the world not imploded because of this spiritual weight? If there has been no forgiveness, why has the vengeance of God not overwhelmed us?"

The reality, of course, is that we have been forgiven, forgiven in the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. He is both Priest and Victim, and He has reconciled us to our Heavenly Father by His complete self-oblation and resurrection from the dead. By this, He lives, here in our midst, and we can flee to Him for succor. There is no place we must avoid, wondering if His altar was once there, whether we might be walking upon Holy Ground. We worship right now before the Holy of Holies, and we will every day until He returns in glory as our Judge.

But in that return, prefigured in the destruction of the Temple, we have nothing to fear, as long as we have accepted our forgiveness in the Blood of the Lamb and allowed the Great High Priest to rule our lives, mimicking in all we do the love He showed in the sacrifice of Himself. If we permit the Mass to be who we are, we will be able to greet our Judge with joy, having accomplished in our lives what He gave with His own.