

On Mount Sinai, God commanded Moses to build the Ark of the Covenant. “The Ark of the Lord was the mark of the Lord’s presence among his people ... When the Israelites made camp, the ark was placed in the holy of holies of the Tabernacle and there Moses conversed with God” (Hahn 69). Tabernacle translates to tent. As the Israelites wandered through the desert for 40 years, this tent-sanctuary served as their central place of worship (884). It was built to the exact specifications of God and serves as an architectural model for how churches are to be built according to God’s design.

When King David captured Jerusalem, he brought the Ark of the Covenant and constructed a new tent shelter for it (Hahn 885). In today’s first reading, the Lord is not pleased when David put’s forward his own plan to house the Ark in a more permanent structure. He tells the Prophet Nathan to warn David against his plans. “I have never dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up from Egypt to this day, but I have been going about in a tent or a tabernacle. As long as I have wandered about among the Israelites, did I ever say a word to any of the judges whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel: Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” (2 Sam 7:6-7). The Lord has a plan for the placement of the Ark, and the mighty King David is not to alter the Lord’s plans. The Ark of the Covenant carried the Old Covenant. It is no mere coincidence that this Old Testament reading is paired up with Luke’s Gospel on the Annunciation.

As we await the second coming of our Lord and Savior, we hear the story of how the Angel Gabriel came to Mary asking her to be the bearer of the New Covenant. “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus” Lk 1:30-31). If we meditate on the life of Jesus, we see that which was contained in the Old Ark of the Covenant is a prefiguring of the greater mystery in the womb of Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant.

Placed inside the Old Testament Ark were the two stone tablets on which God had inscribed the 10 commandments. Growing within the womb of Mary is the Messiah who comes to fulfill the Law. In the Sermon on the Mount, he will teach, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). Jesus will enter the world in poverty. Jesus will teach us of the preferential option for the poor. No wonder, God is not pleased with David’s plan for a more comfortable resting place for the Ark of the Covenant. “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head” (Mt 8:20).

Placed inside the Old Testament Ark at the command of Moses was a golden vessel of manna (Han 69). Manna in the desert calls to mind the feeding of the Israelites with their daily bread, a prefiguring of the Eucharist in which Jesus feeds the multitudes. Mary’s womb is a Tabernacle containing the Bread of Life. Mary nourishes the infant within ... with her own body and blood. Jesus will nourish us with his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. We provide for those who cannot join us in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by reserving the Precious Body of Our Lord in our own church tabernacle.

Placed inside the Old Testament Ark again at the command of Moses is the Rod of Aaron (Hahn 4). When the Israelites escaped slavery in Egypt, they were pursued by Pharaoh’s charioteers all the way to the Red Sea. Moses with rod in hand stretched out his arms over the Red Sea to split it in two. The Israelites would pass through the sea on dry land as they began an epic journey towards the Promised Land (Ex 14:15-21).

- In the womb, the Ark of the New Covenant, Mary carries the Good Shepherd. The Rod of Aaron becomes the Staff of the Good Shepherd who defends his flock against the wolves and goes off in search of the lost sheep (Hahn 779).

“The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me” (Ps 23:1, 4).

- In the womb, the Ark of the New Covenant, Mary carries Jesus who will one day stretch out his arms on the cross. He will die on the cross and descend to the dead, burst open the gates of hell and allow the dead to rise with him to new life on an even more epic journey to the shores of eternity.

Are you like David? Do you sit in comfort, while the Lord dwells in a tent? Do you have grand designs that are your plans but not the Lord’s?

Or are you like Mary? Do you trust the messengers that God sends you? Are you willing to say yes to Jesus? “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Are you willing to receive Jesus into your heart, mind, and soul that your own body becomes a tabernacle for the Lord?

Let me close by offering a bit of poetry from Saint Therese of Lisieuxⁱ for you to meditate on:

Living on Love is living on your life,
Glorious King delight of the elect.
You live for me, hidden in a host.
I want to hide myself for you, O Jesus!
Lovers must have solitude.
A heart-to-heart lasting night and day.
Just one glance of yours makes my beatitudes.
I live on Love!

ⁱ blog.littleflower.org/st-therese/living-on-love-hidden-in-a-host/