

Association of Hebrew Catholics Lecture Series  
*The Mystery of Israel and the Church*

Spring 2016 – Series 17

*On the Eucharist*

Talk #3

*Figures of the Eucharist in the Old Testament*



© **Dr. Lawrence Feingold STD**  
Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy  
Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri

Note: *This document contains the unedited text of Dr. Feingold's talk. It will eventually undergo final editing for inclusion in the series of books being published by The Miriam Press under the series title: "The Mystery of Israel and the Church". If you find errors of any type, please send your observations to [lfeingold@hebrewcatholic.org](mailto:lfeingold@hebrewcatholic.org)*

*This document may be copied and given to others. It may not be modified, sold, or placed on any web site. The actual recording of this talk, as well as the talks from all series, may be found on the AHC website at: <http://www.hebrewcatholic.net/studies/mystery-of-israel-church/>*



Association of Hebrew Catholics • 4120 W Pine Blvd • Saint Louis MO 63108  
[www.hebrewcatholic.net](http://www.hebrewcatholic.net) • [ahc@hebrewcatholic.org](mailto:ahc@hebrewcatholic.org)

# *Figures of the Eucharist in the Old Testament*

The Eucharist, as the great sacrament of the New Covenant and the masterwork of God, is abundantly prefigured in the Old Testament and in the religions of mankind. All the sacrifices and offerings of the patriarchs and of Israel were figures of the Eucharist.

The figures of the Eucharist can be conveniently divided according to the three fundamental aspects of the Eucharist: sacrament of spiritual nourishment; sacrament of God's intimate dwelling with us in the Real Presence; and the sacrifice of our Redemption.<sup>1</sup> All three of these aspects were prefigured in manifold ways.

## **Figures of the Eucharist as Spiritual Nourishment under the Sacramental Signs of Bread and Wine**

### *Manna*

The manna that nourished the Israelites for forty years as they wandered in the desert is a magnificent figure of the Eucharist as a sacrament of spiritual nourishment. The event is described in Exodus 16:4–35. After the people blamed Moses for taking them out of Egypt where they “sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full,” the Lord said to Moses:

“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord. . . . in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When

---

1 St. Thomas Aquinas classifies the different categories of Old Testament types of the Eucharist according to a different threefold division, according to which the Eucharist can be viewed with regard to the sacramental signs of bread and wine, the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood, and the grace given through the Eucharist. See *ST III*, q. 73, a. 6: “We can consider three things in this sacrament: namely, that which is sacrament only, and this is the bread and wine; that which is both reality and sacrament, to wit, Christ’s true body; and lastly that which is reality only, namely, the effect of this sacrament. Consequently, in relation to what is sacrament only, the chief figure of this sacrament was the oblation of Melchizedek, who offered up bread and wine. In relation to Christ crucified, Who is contained in this sacrament, its figures were all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, especially the sacrifice of expiation, which was the most solemn of all. While with regard to its effect, the chief figure was the Manna, ‘having in it the sweetness of every taste’ (Wisdom 16:20), just as the grace of this sacrament refreshes the soul in all respects.”

the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an omer apiece, according to the number of the persons whom each of you has in his tent.’” And the people of Israel did so; they gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; each gathered according to what he could eat. And Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it till the morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. . . . Now the house of Israel called its name manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” And the people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land; they ate the manna, till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

The manna is a figure of the Eucharist in various respects. First, because it is “*bread from heaven*.” Normal bread comes from the earth, in that it is made from grains of wheat. This bread was rained down on Israel from above. Thus it is a natural symbol of the fact that the Eucharist nourishes us with a reality that is not from this earth nor even from the natural order, but supremely from above. It is in fact the Word Incarnate. Jesus brings out this figure in John 6:48–51:

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

The manna also was not the product of human toil like normal bread, but came down from above as the dewfall. This prefigures the fact that the Eucharist in its interior reality is not the fruit of human technology or accomplishment, but is the supremely gratuitous gift of God.

The manna is a figure of the Eucharist also through the fact that it was something utterly *unknown* to the Israelites. This is indicated by the name “*manna*,” which means “*what is it?*” This prefigures the Eucharist because it is the reality of the New Covenant most veiled in mystery. Transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, and Holy Communion, although not contradictory, utterly transcend everything that pertains to our ordinary experience. The

mysteriousness of the manna as a figure of the supernatural mystery of the Eucharist is also indicated in Deuteronomy 8:3: “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the manna is a figure of the effects of grace of the Eucharist in that God gave them each only so much as they needed each day. Those who gathered a greater physical quantity did not receive more, and those who gathered a lesser physical amount, did not receive less than they needed. This is a figure of two aspects of the Eucharist. First, the tiniest particle of the consecrated bread and wine contains the whole Christ, just as much as the largest quantity. Secondly, the Eucharist nourishes the recipient with grace according to the level of his own spiritual state and fervor, and not according to the quantity received.

Another aspect of the symbolism of the manna with regard to the effects of the Eucharist is that it was “suited to every taste,” according to Wisdom 16:20–21:

Instead of these things thou didst give thy people food of angels, and without their toil thou didst supply them from heaven with bread ready to eat, providing every pleasure and suited to every taste. For thy sustenance manifested thy sweetness toward thy children; and the bread, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, was changed to suit every one’s liking.

As the manna was suited to every sensible taste, so the Eucharist is suited to every spiritual taste, because it gives us the supreme reality of Christ’s life and charity. The grace of God communicated in the Eucharist is always perfectly adapted to our personal spiritual needs. This is also expressed in Psalm 34:8: “O taste and see that the Lord is good.”

This symbolism of the sweetness of the manna has been incorporated into the office of Corpus Christi written by St. Thomas Aquinas, and the rite of Eucharistic Benediction. The antiphon to the Magnificat of St. Thomas’ office of Corpus Christi for first vespers also brings out this symbolism: “Oh how tasty is your Spirit, Lord. To show your sweetness to your children, you fill the hungry with the tastiest bread come down from heaven, and send the fastidious rich away empty.”<sup>3</sup>

The manna is described in Psalm 78:25 as the “bread of angels.” This was not literally true of the manna, for it was a material food that angels cannot partake in. It was angelic

only in its supernatural origin. The Eucharist, however, is indeed “bread of angels” in its interior effect (*res tantum*), for in it we are nourished in sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4). Like us, the holy angels have been given a participation in the divine nature through grace and glory, and thus they too partake of this “bread.”<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the manna prefigures the Eucharist in that it was food only for the pilgrimage in the desert. After the Israelites entered into the Chosen Land, the manna ceased. Similarly, the Eucharist is spiritual nourishment only for the state of this present life. Once the faithful enter into the true promised land, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Eucharistic nourishment will cease together with the other sacraments, because God will be seen face to face. (However, like the angels, we will continue to partake of its effect of grace.)

The aspect of Eucharistic adoration was also prefigured by the jar of manna conserved in the Ark of the Covenant and put in the Holy of Holies, in which God’s presence was adored. The manna itself, however, was not properly the object of adoration, for it was a purely material reality, although of supernatural origin. Its placement in the Holy of Holies was a type of the Eucharist in the tabernacle, which alone is the proper object of adoration.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Offering of Melchizedek*

The sacramental sign of the Eucharist is prefigured also by the offering of bread and wine by Melchizedek, related in Genesis 14:17–20:

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”

The name “Melchizedek” means “king of righteousness,” and the city of which he was king, “Salem,” means “peace.” It is probably to be identified with the city that later became Jerusalem. The significance of this text might have been missed, if it had not been taken up later by the psalmist in Psalm 110:4, which says of the Messiah: “The

4 See Paschasius Radbertus (785–865), *De Corpore et sanguine Domini Liber 5.1*, in *PL* 120:1280: “Ac per hoc unde vivunt angeli, vivit et homo, quia totum spiritale est et divinum in eo quod percipit homo.” (“Thus by what the angels live, man also lives, for there is a totally spiritual and divine reality in that which man receives [i.e., the Eucharist].”)

5 With regard to the symbolism of the manna in relation to the Eucharist, see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2011), 77–115. Pitre argues that there are expectations in the Jewish tradition that the Messiah will feed the Israelites with manna from heaven in the Messianic age.

2 See also Deuteronomy 8:16, in which Moses told the people that God “fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.”

3 First Vespers of Corpus Christi, translated by Joseph Kenny, available online at <http://dhsprory.org/thomas/CorpusChristi.htm>.

Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” The Messiah thus is foretold to possess a priesthood prefigured by Melchizedek. One clear aspect of this prefiguration is the fact that Melchizedek offered bread and wine to God. Hebrews 7 further develops this figure.

### *The Bread of Presence*

In addition to the manna in the Ark of the Covenant, the Tent of Meeting (and later the Holy Place in the Temple) held another figure of the Eucharist in the “bread of the Presence”<sup>6</sup> and in libations of wine. The “bread of the presence” is a translation of the Hebrew expression *lechem haPanim*, which literally means “bread of the face [of God],” because it was offered before the face of God in the sanctuary. God commanded Moses to place in the tabernacle a table plated with gold on which the Israelites were to “set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always” (Ex 25:30), and to pour libations in flagons of pure gold.

Further details of the offering of the “bread of the Presence” are given in Leviticus and Numbers. Leviticus 24:5–9 describes the offering of bread every Sabbath:

And you shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the table of pure gold. And you shall put pure frankincense with each row, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord continually on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the offerings by fire to the Lord, a perpetual due.

Exodus 29:40<sup>7</sup> and Numbers 28:4–7 describes a daily offering of bread and wine, and specifies that it is to accompany the daily offering of two unblemished one-year-old male lambs, one in the morning and the other in the evening:

The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; also a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a cereal offering, mixed with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the Lord. Its drink offering shall be a fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the holy place you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

6 See the treatment of this figure in Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2011), 116–146, to which I am indebted.

7 “With the first lamb [you shall offer] a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil and a fourth of a hin of wine for a libation.”

8 Num 28:4–7. See also Num 15:5–7, which prescribes offerings of bread and wine to accompany the sacrifices of lambs, rams, and bulls.

The “bread of the Presence” comes up in 1 Samuel 21:4–6, when David and his men were fleeing from the persecution of Saul. David asked Ahimelech, the high priest, for bread, and the priest responded that the only bread he had was the “holy bread” that had been set before the Lord. Ahimelech gave it to David and his men, since they fulfilled the one condition that they be pure from sexual intercourse.

Jesus referred to this episode in Matthew 12:3–6,<sup>9</sup> saying:

He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath,<sup>10</sup> and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

The bread of the Presence was consecrated to the Lord and thus normally could be eaten only by the consecrated descendants of Aaron. The story is a figure of the extension of those who could partake in the consecrated bread to all the faithful of the New Israel. What in the Old Covenant had been reserved for the consecrated sons of Aaron is extended in the Church to all who have been consecrated by Baptism.

This “bread of the Presence” and the libations of wine in the tabernacle prefigure the Eucharist in four fundamental ways. First, they prefigure the sacramental sign of the Eucharist in their matter of bread and wine that was consecrated and set aside from ordinary use. Second, they prefigure Holy Communion in that they were consumed by the priests as a sign of communion with God. Third, they are sacrificial offerings that accompanied the daily sacrifice of the unblemished lamb, which is also a figure of Christ’s sacrifice. Thus they also prefigure the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. Finally, they prefigure the adoration of the Eucharist, in that they were placed with the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle.

Brant Pitre has shown that there was even a tradition of blessing the people of Israel who came to the Temple on the pilgrimage feasts with the bread of the Presence. The Babylonian Talmud records that the priests “used to lift it [the golden Table] up and exhibit the Bread of the Presence on it to those who came up for the festivals, saying to them, “Behold, God’s love for you!””<sup>11</sup> This was probably understood in the sense that the oblation of the consecrated bread was a sign of the covenant, which is a manifestation of God’s love for man.

9 The parallel texts are Mk 2:25–26 and Lk 6:1–5.

10 The priests worked on the Sabbath by preparing and offering the bread of the Presence and the other sacrifices.

11 Babylonian Talmud, Menahoth 29a, quoted in Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 130–31.

Although a marvelous figure, it must be remembered that the bread of the Presence and the libations of wine were but bread and wine. They prefigured something infinitely greater than their own reality. St. Cyril of Jerusalem brings out the figure in his catechetical lecture on the Eucharist:

Even in the Old Testament there were “Loaves of the Presence,” but since they belonged to the old dispensation they have come to fulfillment. But in the New Testament the bread is of heaven and the chalice brings salvation, and they sanctify the soul and the body. . . . Do not, then, regard the bread and wine as nothing but bread and wine, for they are the body and blood of Christ as the master himself has proclaimed.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Unleavened Bread of the Passover and the Four Cups of Wine***

Although not offered as an oblation, unleavened bread (*matzah*) and wine plays an important role in the Jewish Passover. The Jews were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses and to eat only unleavened bread for the seven days of Passover. This was a memorial of the first Passover, when they ate unleavened bread because they left Egypt in haste. In the Jewish Passover *seder*, there is the custom (perhaps of later date than the time of Jesus) of having the youngest child in the family ask why unleavened bread is eaten during Passover. The father responds: “This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in Egypt. He who is hungry, come and eat.”<sup>13</sup> *Matzah* is also a sign of the purity of heart, for unleavened bread is the simplest possible form of bread. Furthermore, leaven puffs up and serves as a natural symbol of pride and hypocrisy.

The unleavened bread of Passover is a figure of the Eucharist in these two respects. As a memorial of the food of the Exodus, it is a fitting figure of the Eucharist, which is the spiritual nourishment for those who are renewed by the new Exodus, which is insertion into Christ’s paschal mystery by the waters of Baptism. Secondly, the unleavened bread is a figure of the Eucharist in symbolizing the purity of heart that is efficaciously produced by worthy reception of the Eucharist.

The Passover *seder* also combines wine with the unleavened bread, stipulating the drinking of four cups of wine that represent redemption from slavery, while saying Psalm 116:13: “I lift up the cup of salvation.”<sup>14</sup>

12 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses*, Sermon 4.5–6, in Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 85.

13 Quoted in Roch Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago: LTP/Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 25.

14 See David Arnow, *My People’s Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries*, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman and David Arnow (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 136.

## **Other Figures of the Eucharist as Spiritual Nourishment**

### ***The Tree of Life***

The Old Testament contains figures not only of the sacramental signs of bread and wine in the Eucharist, but also of the supernatural life communicated by Holy Communion. The most important figure of the spiritual effects of the Eucharist is the tree of life. After the original sin, God expelled man from the Garden of Eden (see Gen 3:22–24) so that he could no longer eat from the tree of life, for he had deserved to experience death by his sin:

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” -- therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

The tree of life indicates the gift of physical immortality, given in Eden as a preternatural gift, and lost by original sin. It also represents the sharing in the divine life made possible by sanctifying grace, and which will be perfected in glory.

In both respects, the tree of life prefigures the Eucharist, which is both the pledge of the future Resurrection and a present provider of the nourishment of sanctifying grace. The access to the tree of life that was lost after the original sin is restored through the Eucharist—the bread of life. Christ brings out this aspect of the Eucharist in the bread of life discourse in John 6:50–51:

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, in one of the first post-biblical reflections on the Eucharist, brings out the parallel of the Eucharist with the tree of life, speaking of it as a “medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

### ***Yearning of the Prophets for Union with God***

Another figure of the interior effect of the Eucharist is the aspiration of the prophets and saints of the Old Covenant for union with God. The Psalmist speaks for Israel when he says: “As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living

15 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians* 20, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 199. This analogy between the tree of life and the Eucharist is found, for example, in St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 86.1, and in the ninth century in Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini* 1.6, PL 120:1272.

God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” (Ps 42:1–2). Although we cannot yet behold the face of God on this side of death, we can receive Him in the Eucharist under the veils of the Eucharistic species. This yearning is perhaps most poignantly expressed in Isaiah 64:1: “O that you would tear the heavens and come down.” This yearning finds its realization in the Incarnation and the Eucharist. Isaiah (55:1–3) is referring to the Eucharist when he prophesies: “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” Prophetically foreseeing the fulfillment of this yearning, the Psalmist exclaims: “Taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Ps 34:8).

### **The Shekinah: Figure of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist**

The mystery of the Incarnation and the substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist—Body, Blood, soul and divinity—was prefigured in the Old Covenant in a special presence of God manifested at certain times by a visible glory overshadowing the holy place. This overshadowing presence of God is referred to by Jews as the *shekinah*, which is derived from the Hebrew verb *shachan*: “to dwell or abide.” The *shekinah* was manifested first on Mt. Sinai in a cloud of glory and a devouring fire, out of which God spoke to Moses.<sup>16</sup> The cloud of glory marking God’s “dwelling” with Israel later covered the Tent of Meeting that housed the Ark of the Covenant.

The liturgy of the Old Covenant centered on the Ark of the Covenant, which was a magnificent type of Christ and His presence in the Eucharist, for it contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and the rod of Aaron that blossomed as a sign of his election to the high priesthood. The tablets of the Law prefigure Christ as the living Torah who reveals the will of God not in abstract commandments, but in every aspect of His life, and particularly in His Passion. The manna prefigures Christ who is the true Bread from heaven who gives life to the world. The rod of Aaron prefigures Christ who is true High Priest, but according to the line of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 9:2–7 gives a description of the Tabernacle housing the Ark:

For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with

<sup>16</sup> See Ex 24:16–17: “The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.”

gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.

The Tabernacle housing the Ark of the Covenant, also called the Sanctuary or Tent of Meeting, was to be the privileged place in which God dwelt with His people. In Exodus 25:8, God says to Moses: “And let them make me a *sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst*. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.”

Exodus 29:43–46 speaks of the Tent of Meeting as the place of Israel’s encounter with the personal presence of God dwelling among them:

There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

When the Tent of Meeting was finished and consecrated (1400 BC?), Exodus 40:34–38 describes how the glory of the Lord visibly descended on it and remained, except when they were to travel:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would go onward; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not go onward till the day that it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Through the presence of the sanctuary, the whole of Israel was sanctified with God’s indwelling presence. In Numbers 35:34, God says: “You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”

During the time of Eli, the high priest, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. The special presence of the Lord was manifested no longer in visible glory, but rather in the destruction of the Philistine idols and in a plague on the Philistines.

When Solomon constructed the Temple in Jerusalem (c. 1000 BC), the Ark of the Covenant was installed in the Holy of Holies, which was the heart of worship in the

Temple. When Solomon dedicated the Temple, the glory of God descended on it:

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house.<sup>17</sup>

The visible manifestation of God's presence in the *shekinah* was one of the glories of Israel, showing the nearness of God to Israel. As Moses said to Israel: "What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him?" (Deut 4:7).

God's mysterious indwelling in the Tent of Meeting and in the Holy of Holies in the Temple was a figure of the supreme indwelling that is totally unique: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). It is not by accident that John chose the word "dwell" (from the root σκηνη), which literally means to "dwell as in a tent." This term recalls the dwelling of God with His people through the shekinah in the tabernacle (translated into Greek by the term σκηνη) that housed the Ark.<sup>18</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger, in *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, comments on John 1:14:

The man Jesus is the dwelling-place of the Word, the eternal divine Word, in this world. Jesus' "flesh," his human existence, is the "dwelling" or "tent" of the Word: the reference to the sacred tent of Israel in the wilderness is unmistakable. Jesus is, so to speak, the tent of meeting—he is the reality for which the tent and the later Temple could only serve as signs.<sup>19</sup>

And since the humanity of Jesus is truly and substantially contained in the Blessed Sacrament, the Tent of Meeting is a sign prefiguring not only the Incarnation, but also the Eucharist and every church housing the Blessed Sacrament through which Christ "dwells" with the entire Church militant.

Jesus demonstrates that the Temple is a type of Him in John 2:19–21 when He was asked for a sign for chasing out the money-changers from the Temple, and He answered: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John clarifies that "he spoke of the temple of his body." Through the Eucharist, this Temple of Christ's Body is made present in every tabernacle containing a consecrated host. Every church with the Blessed Sacrament is infinitely holier than the Temple in Jerusalem, for that was but a type or figure of the Real Presence of the Word Incarnate.

The Temple is also the type of the Christian who receives Christ in Holy Communion and of the divine Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the souls of the just. St. Paul speaks of the Temple with reference to the Christian in 1 Corinthians 6:13–20:

The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. . . . Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a great price. So glorify God in your body.

The Temple is also a type of the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church's sacrifice was prefigured in the Mosaic Law which stipulated that all sacrifice was to be done in the Temple in Jerusalem. This commandment, on the one hand, was a great difficulty for the Jewish people, requiring them to travel to Jerusalem three times a year. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, this commandment meant that the entire sacrificial system of Mosaic Judaism could no longer be observed.

Why did God command that all sacrifice be offered in the Temple? First of all, the Temple was a visible symbol of the unity that God wanted in His liturgy. Secondly, it helped preserve the unity of faith and worship in Israel, since all sacrifice was offered in one place under the oversight of the High Priest. Beyond these reasons, however, the precept that all sacrifice had to be offered in the Temple was a great symbol prefiguring the unity of worship in the New Covenant.

Although sacrifice is offered everywhere in the Catholic world, from the rising of the sun to its setting,<sup>20</sup> nevertheless, the worship of the Church is even more unified than that of Israel. Everywhere in the Catholic Church, *one and the same sacrifice*—the sacrifice of Calvary—is offered until the end of time in the Holy Mass. In Israel, many animal sacrifices were offered in only one place (the Temple), whereas in the Church, one and the same sacrifice is offered in every place under the sun.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Chr 7:1–2.

<sup>18</sup> Jn 1:14 also recalls Sir 24:8: "Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'"

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (New York: Image, 2012), 11.

<sup>20</sup> See Mal 1:11: "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts."