

Homily 30th Sunday OT; B-cycle

“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

I heard this passage from the letter to the Hebrews when I first entered seminary.

It was a passage chosen for the opening ceremonies of the new academic year.

And if you're like me, you're sitting there wondering, *‘who the heck is*

Melchizedek?’ It's a good question.

So what do we know about Melchizedek?

We see Melchizedek in the book of Genesis.

Melchizedek is the King of Salem, a fortified city in the land of Canaan.

And Abraham, goes to Melchizedek for a blessing after Abraham does battle with
and is victorious over several Canaanite Kings.

And to celebrate the victory, Melchizedek offers a sacrifice of bread of wine to
the Lord, (a sacrifice of bread and wine—hope you caught that.)

And Abraham gives Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils he wins from the battle,
and from then on starts paying tithes to Melchizedek, that means Abraham
starts giving Melchizedek a portion of his annual wealth.

So who the heck is Melchizedek? And why would Abraham go to him for a blessing, and
start paying *him* tithes? Theory one; Melchizedek was an angel or the Lord himself.

Doesn't work for me. If it was God, it defeats the purpose of the incarnation, and
if an angel, what use would an angel have for tithes.

Theory number two; Melchizedek was just a revered Canaanite king and priest
that Abraham respected. Also doesn't work for me.

Because then why would Abraham go to a pagan king for a blessing?

And another thing to note is that this is not just any blessing, like ahhh, God
bless you. This is *the* blessing.

This was the blessing that's passed on to the sons of every generation.

And if that's the case, that means Melchizedek had to be someone in Abraham's
family tree, and guess what, he is.

That's what theory number three says; Melchizedek is none other than Shem, the
oldest son of Noah who had built the ark.

So this blessing was passed from God to Adam, from Adam to Seth, from Seth to Noah, from Noah to Shem, and from Shem to Abraham.

Well then why call him Melchizedek? Why not just call him Shem?

Melchizedek is a title name, like we call the Pope, Francis I.

Francis isn't his real name. It's a title name. The name signifies his office.

The same is true of Melchizedek; it literally means "king of righteousness."

And shortly after this incident, the name of the city that Melchizedek is king of,

the city of Salem, which means city of peace, after the Hebrew word

Shalom, is also changed from the city of peace to the city of God's peace.

No longer Salem, but (*Yah-Ru Salem.*) Jerusalem.

Now why bother telling you all of is?

Because it's important to understand that blessings don't just fall out of the sky.

Blessings have power because of who they're coming from.

If you read the beginning of Matthew's gospel he goes through the whole

genealogy of Jesus.

We'll be hearing it shortly, it's always read during Advent.

But why does Matthew bother recording Jesus' family tree?

Because he wants to show that Jesus was a direct descendant of David, who was a

descendant of Abraham, who was a descendant of Shem, Melchizedek.

So a Jewish audience would know right from the start that Jesus was descended of

a high priest and a king, so Jesus could also be a high priest and a king,

because as a man he could inherit the blessing, and as God he could bring

it to perfection.

And once Jesus had this blessing and perfected it, he passed it on to his apostles,

who passed it on to their disciples, and so on through the generations to

form the Roman Catholic priesthood.

When I bless you, it has no power because of me. This -nothing to do with Mike Sisco.

My blessing has power because it's an extension of the Bishop's blessing.

And his blessing is an extension of the blessing passed down through Bishop's

over the centuries beginning with Peter and the twelve.

And their blessing came from Jesus, which is connected to the blessing that David gave Solomon and Melchizedek gave Abraham, and Adam gave Seth, and God the Father gave to Adam, because the line has remained unbroken.

And this is why the Church came out with a document several years ago, *Dominus Iesus*, that reaffirmed that we are the one true Church, because we have inherited the blessing.

That doesn't mean that we're the best organized, or we don't have our share of injustices and political blunders.

But that means we remain the true Church because we have inherited the blessing.

And inheriting that means we have the power to pass the blessing to others.

People of other religions don't have the blessing, because in splitting with the line of succession that is now the Church, they've cut themselves off from the blessing that we receive when we partake in the sacrifice of what?

Bread and wine? No. Now body and blood, under the appearance of bread and wine within the Mass.

Remember that Jesus being the King and high priest not only perfected the blessing, he also perfected the sacrifice!

That does not mean that people of other religions can't or won't get to heaven.

But it does mean if they've lived a just life, the only reason they can be granted salvation is because of US. That's right! US! Why?

Because we do NOT just pray for ourselves. We pray for the salvation of the world! We do NOT just offer the sacrifice for ourselves.

We offer the sacrifice for the salvation of the world!

(When I was in my last year of seminary I had to take my Mass practicum course.

That basically meant that the seminarians played priest and said Mass before the faculty members to make sure we doing everything right, so we'd be ready to do the real thing once we got ordained.

After we completed the "Lamb of God," I held up the broken host and said, "Behold the lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sin of the

world. Blessed are WE, who are called to this supper.”

Why did I say, “blessed are WE”, and not “blessed are THOSE,” as it is written in the book?

Because that was how I how I heard my pastor say it all the years I grew up and so I used to hearing it that way.

My instructor, Father Gross, flipped out! “NO! NO! NO!

“By changing that one word, you just excommunicated everyone who wasn’t sitting in YOUR congregation!

“THOSE who are called to sit at the supper of the lamb, include more than just WE in the congregation. It also includes the souls in purgatory.

“It includes the communion of saints in heaven.

“It includes Catholics living all around the world, and it includes people who do not yet know Christ, but will come to be saved by him through the offering of this sacrifice.

“By changing ‘those,’ to ‘we,’ you excommunicated all those people.”)

Never made THAT mistake again! So pat yourselves on the back.

When you come to Mass, you help save the world, because we offer this sacrifice for the salvation of the world.

We can invoke the name of God in power, because we have the blessing.

Well if that’s the case Father, why is the world going down the toilet?

Because people have stopped coming to Mass! And some that DO come are here physically, but are mentally and spiritually miles away.

Having that blessing means we have a responsibility to challenge and change the world. Jesus was not a pacifist, and Jesus did not found a church of pacifists.

Jesus said “Do not think that I have come to bring peace. I have not come to bring peace but division.” One of our models is the Church militant.

That means we have a bloodless, non violent, military mission to spread this message to the world, so the blessing can be always expanding.

We just can’t sit around and wait for Jesus to return and fix everything.

The kingdom of God is something to be continually built, and worked for. That means we have to get active religiously, that is on our knees, and also contribute some of our earnings to the Church the way Abraham contributed to Melchizedek.

Take this to serious prayer my brothers and sisters, and see if the Lord is calling you to tithe. I've been tithing since I was ordained a deacon and the spiritual blessings I've received have been incredible.

Now maybe you're thinking, "Oh get real Father. I can't afford to tithe, and give ten percent of my gross income with the cost of living right now."

OK, maybe you can't. Maybe your financial burden IS too great.

But whatever you put in the envelope, should be a sacrifice. Not the left over.

I think it's safe to say a one dollar bill isn't much of a sacrifice for MOST people these days. You know some people think the collection is for the priest. I don't get the collection. The collection is for the parish and the larger Catholic Church.

But a worthy offering, must be a sacrificial offering, because we're building a kingdom.

That means we have to get active socially, and get involved with the problems that face our communities and our world, like hunger and health care, the fair treatment of immigrants, legal and illegal; abortion--look-ism, sex-ism, materialism.

It means praying for what's moral, but also standing up for what's moral, as politely and as charitably as we can, because we must love all people.

Because we are building a kingdom.

And because we have been blessed and want to share that blessing.

A blessing that comes from God the Father, through the sacrifice of the eternal priesthood of the Son, in the order of Melchizedek.