

## Moses and Christ

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalm 78

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35

Last week, I preached on the important role of foreshadowing that we find in salvation history. This past week, I saw a movie that used the technique of foreshadowing in a beautiful way. The movie was entitled, “Stranger than Fiction,” and starred Will Ferrell as an IRS auditor who hears a voice in his head that narrates his life. Early in the movie, the voice offers a perfect example of foreshadowing as it says, “Little did he know that events had been set in motion that would lead to his imminent death.” This one little sentence set up the suspense and excitement of the rest of the movie; it let me know that something serious and important was coming!

We looked last week at how the prophet Elisha foreshadowed Christ. This week, we are going to look at how Moses foreshadowed Christ. I guess it would be correct to say that last week’s homily was a foreshadowing of this week’s homily! Sorry... I couldn’t resist!

Unlike the life of Elisha, Moses’ life foreshadowed Christ’s life in *numerous* ways. It would be impossible to explore in just one homily *all* of these ways, so instead, I am going to specifically concentrate on two particular ministries that both Moses and Christ shared—mediation and intercession. Interestingly, both of these ministries are aspects of the role of the priestly tribe of Levi, and continue to be aspects of Christian priesthood today.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, looking at these ministries of mediation and intercession gives us an opportunity to continue to celebrate the “Year of the Priesthood,” as announced by Pope Benedict!

Moses foreshadowed Christ his **mediation** between God and His people. A mediator is a person who intervenes between two parties. This might be done in order to restore or maintain peace and friendship, or it might be done in order to ratifying a covenant. It’s important to note that humanity’s need for a priestly mediator is not because someone needs to constantly be convincing God not to smite us, but rather, because God doesn’t want our sinfulness to keep us from encountering Him. We don’t have to fear God’s wrath; our God is a God of love. A mediator helps us to move beyond our excessive guilt, shame, and fear and back into relationship with God.

We see Moses acting as a mediator in today’s first reading. While it seems at first that the people were angry with Moses and Aaron,<sup>2</sup> we read in Exodus 16:8 that their complaint about not having good food was actually a complaint against God. Moses told them, “Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord” (Exodus 16:8b). Having brought the people’s grumblings to the Lord, Moses then shared God’s response with the people—they were to receive bread from heaven every morning and quail every evening.

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<sup>1</sup> Priests in the Old Testament were significantly different than priests in Christianity today. First, it’s important to note that there are many inconsistencies in the history of priests in the Old Testament. These inconsistencies make it very difficult to understand their history. For the sake of simplicity, we can say that the very first priests mentioned in Sacred Scripture seem to be the fathers of households. That changed, however, after the Israelites worshipped the golden calf while waiting for Moses to return from Mount Sinai. Following their unfaithfulness, they believed that God was punishing them by taking away their priestly role and giving it to the tribe of Levi for their faithfulness. The tribe of Levi then became the tribe of priests who offered sacrifices to God for the people. Levi was Moses’ grandfather.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 16:2

Jesus Christ, as the High Priest,<sup>3</sup> is also a mediator. In fact, Christ is the final, eternal, perfect Mediator. The New Testament reports this fact in numerous places including—

Now [Christ] has obtained so much more excellent a ministry as he is mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises.

-Hebrews 8:6b (also see Hebrews 9:15)

For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus...

-1 Timothy 2:5a

Not only did Moses' priestly role manifest itself in mediation, but it also manifested itself in the role of **intercession**, another foreshadowing of Christ's own priestly role of intercession. An intercessor is one who prays for someone else. Moses prayed to God for the Israelites; he interceded for them. A great example of this can be found in Exodus 32:11-14. God's wrath had flared up against the Israelites for their unfaithfulness to Him when they worshipped the golden calf. Moses pleaded for the people and God heard his prayer. We read about God's response to Moses' intercession, "So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people" (Exodus 32:14).

Jesus Christ, in His Eternal Priesthood, is the perfect intercessor. An intercessor's effectiveness is based on his or her relationship to God. Moses had a really good relationship with God the Father. Jesus Christ, however, has the *perfect* relationship with the Father and sits at His right hand. This makes Christ the perfect intercessor! Sacred Scripture attests to this fact, stating—

Those [Old Testament] priests were many because they were prevented by death from remaining in office, but [Christ], because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away. Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

-Hebrews 7:23-25

It is Christ (Jesus) who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

-Romans 8:34b

This week, I invite us to spend some time reflecting on the awesome gift we've been given in Jesus Christ, our perfect Mediator and Intercessor!

### **SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:**

- ✚ All of us love having an advocate, someone who will stand beside us and support us. Spend some time thinking about the fact that God has given us the perfect advocate, mediator, intercessor in His Son, Jesus Christ. What happens in your heart as you think about this reality?
- ✚ Read Hebrews 8:1-6. What do you most need Jesus to mediate or intercede for right now in your life?

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 4:14. For many more references to Christ's priesthood please see the entire letter to the Hebrews.