

In the name of the most high Trinity, and holy Unity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Quests are a staple of storytelling and literature. They are narratives where the hero sets out on their journey and mission to find or do something. In Arthurian legend, knights of the round table are sent by King Arthur to seek the Holy Grail, and bring it back to Camelot.

In *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her companions set off to see the wonderful Wizard of Oz, so Dorothy can go back home to Kansas.

In Tolkien's fantasy masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*, the hobbit Frodo takes the ring of power back to Mordor to destroy it.

In Disney's *Moana*, the titular character sets out on an adventure to restore life to a dying world.

And, in the 2017 movie *Wonder Woman*, the superhero Wonder Woman sets off to stop Ares, the god of War, from wreaking any more havoc and destruction.

And I could go on and on with examples, because our culture loves these adventures and quests. These brilliant and moving stories where we know the mission, and watch it get accomplished, usually through great challenge and struggle.

In our Gospel reading today from Luke, Jesus has already locked in on his mission and quest going to Jerusalem. He has chosen to accept it. He has zeroed in on his march to the cross. By this point in Luke, Jesus has set his face toward the city of Jerusalem, and he is not going to veer off course now.

Some Pharisees snidely warn Jesus that if he keeps going, his life is at risk, "Get away from here; Herod wants to kill you." And Jesus's catty response is that he is going to keep on ministering until his mission is accomplished in Jerusalem. And he adds that wonderful line, "and on the third day, I finish my work." I wonder what that could be. Perhaps a glimmer of the resurrection already peaking through?

Jesus continues, "Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem." Quick, harsh reality check. Death is absolutely in the equation. Jesus is saying "Herod might want to kill me here in Galilee, but my mission is to die in Jerusalem." Youch.

Herod's territory of Galilee is not the final focus. Jesus and his disciples are from there, and Jesus's ministry has been centered there up to this point, but Galilee is not the end goal. The end goal is Jerusalem.

So, Jesus turns to contemplate and mourn over the ancient city of Jerusalem. You can just sense Jesus's pain for this city in his lament; not pain out of fear for his life, but out of love and compassion: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" It's just heartbreaking.

This is the holy city. God's own temple is there. This is supposed to be where God's own prophets would not only be accepted, but championed. And, they're not. In fact they're killed; God's messengers are stoned to death.

God hasn't abandoned his people. Rather, Jesus has been sent by God to gather the children of Jerusalem under his wings. Yet, Jesus is acutely aware of the nature of his mission.

In fact, how is it that Jesus gathers his people under his wings? It's in his arms outstretched on the cross. His arms stretched out in love for all his people. For us. And at this point in Luke, he is definitely on his way to Golgotha.

We are now a quarter of the way on our journey through Lent. We are well on our own way with Jesus to the cross on Good Friday, but we have quite a bit to go still.

And we know where this is all headed, and what is going to happen. Betrayal, denial, torture, death, burial. Then resurrection, new life, glory, forgiveness, reconciliation. Yes, there's Good Friday, but Easter will come. Jesus did die, but he is now alive. The story definitely doesn't end with Good Friday. But, the story doesn't end at Easter either.

So, Jesus ends our Gospel reading today saying, "I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord"". On Palm Sunday, the crowds will shout those same words in praise as Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem, just days before his gruesome execution.

During the Eucharistic Prayer, as part of the "Holy, Holy, Holy" hymn, the Sanctus, we all say those same words:

8:00 "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

10:30 "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

But, we are still waiting for Christ to return in the fullness of his glory, "to judge the living and the dead".

In the meantime, as we wait for Jesus's triumphal return, we do get to see him physically present among us. Every time we participate in the Eucharist, he comes to us in the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

In the Sanctus, the statement

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starts a crucial aspect and part of the Eucharist, that of remembrance. In fact, there's a fancy term for what's going on here, it is **anamnesis** (also pronounced **anamnesis**). This is the part of the Eucharistic Prayer when we remember everything that God has done for us. We remember, so that we don't forget it. And theologically, as we call to mind the mighty deeds that God has done for us, especially Christ's sacrifice on the cross, we become participants in it.

Consider a family holiday tradition where all the extended family goes to Grandma's house year after year for Christmas.¹ She was always cooking. She always made her famous pies, that everyone would fight to get the last slice of. After everything was cleaned up, she would spend time with the family, making sure that everyone had anything they needed or wanted. And she loved telling stories, always imparting some nugget of wisdom along the way. Then one year Grandma dies. And, in the years that follow, the family still gets together for the holidays. They use the same recipes, and the food was just like Grandma used to make. And everyone shares their favorite stories both about Grandma and ones that she told. And even though Grandma isn't there anymore, by using her same recipes, and telling those stories, she is in a way still present with the family during those holidays.

How much more so is Jesus Christ present with us in the Eucharist? Each time we gather for the Eucharist, we tell the same stories and then discuss them in some way, because these ancient stories still bear much truth and wisdom for us today. There is much to learn and meditate on as we come together and share these stories as a community of faith. And then we get to do the coolest thing I think is possible, we partake in the same meal that Jesus left us, the meal of his Body and Blood. All the while, we actively remember, so we don't forget what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

In a way you can think of what is going on in this remembrance, this anamnesis, as a miraculous time warp. The Eucharist takes us and mystically transports us to the Upper Room for the Last Supper. And the Eucharist mystically transports us to Golgotha or Calvary, the place where Jesus was crucified. We participate in a real way in the last supper and Jesus's sacrifice on the cross.

And, the Eucharist also mystically unites us with every Christian who has ever participated in it, past and present. We are joined together with everyone present at St. Paul's at this moment,

¹ Inspired by a lecture by Luke Timothy Johnson.

everyone who has celebrated at this church before, everyone around the world celebrating this liturgy today, and everyone who throughout time has partaken of holy communion. And, today in the midst of the strife in Ukraine, I am especially reminded that we are joined together with our Christian brothers and sisters there. While churches and cathedrals are being damaged and destroyed by bombs, many in Ukraine are celebrating the Eucharist wherever they possibly can, even in bomb shelters. And our wondrous God mystically unites and knits us together with our fellow Christians both in Ukraine and everywhere. And I consider that a great blessing particularly at this unstable time.

In fact, I would say, the Eucharist is the most special event in the universe. There is no greater thing that we could be doing. And I would go further and say that we would be extremely lucky and fortunate enough to experience and participate in the Eucharist ONCE in our lifetime. Once in our entire lives. Of course, we do it every Sunday. And, I know at least, for myself, it is easy to take for granted. It's easy to get complacent with what we're doing here. We do it every Sunday: stand, sit, kneel, sit, stand, and on and on.

But, just think about it for a second. The sovereign, almighty, and transcendent Creator of the universe, sent his only-begotten Son to live as one of us in the person of Jesus Christ. Then, Jesus died on the cross to save us from the power of sin and death. And, that is all beyond amazing, and worth celebrating when we come together every Sunday.

And that same Jesus took bread, and said "This is my Body." And he took wine and said, "This is my Blood." And he invites us all to share in this sacred, mystical meal, "Take, eat and drink, all of you, and keep doing this to remember me."

In this Blessed Sacrament, we see Jesus in his Body and Blood. We participate in his death on the cross. We share in his glorious resurrection from the dead. And, we keep doing this until he comes again in the fullness of his majesty.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.