

Psalm 23

Notice the intimacy of David's language here. Not 'The Lord is *a* shepherd', or 'The Lord is *our* shepherd', but 'The Lord is *my* shepherd'. David knows the Lord of all creation not as a distant higher power, or as an ineffective old man in the sky, but as his shepherd. He knows this God personally, as the one in whom he can put his trust. David can be at peace, because he can entrust every day, every step, to the one who guides his feet, and leads him along right paths. Sometimes what lies ahead will be tranquil, and full of joy – the green pastures and the still waters; sometimes what lies ahead will be far harder – the darkest valley, even death itself. But wherever that path leads, David declares to God, 'you are with me'. We too can trust God with our life, and with our death, knowing that he is our Good Shepherd. For in Christ, he has walked our path ahead of us, and laid down his life for us, so that we might dwell in his house forever.

Elements of the Mass

Tabernacle

The word Tabernacle literally means a 'dwelling place' or 'tent'. In the Old Testament this would be the tent of meeting or the tent in which the Ark of the Covenant was stored. In churches the Tabernacle is where the Blessed Sacrament is stored. It can be a very elaborate or very simple large locked box placed upon the main altar of the church or on a side altar. The Tabernacle might be highly decorated in itself but very often it is covered with cloth made in various liturgical colours (but never black). Inside the Tabernacle there is a silk curtain behind which the Blessed Sacrament is placed and the box is lined in white cloth or silk. This is reminiscent of the Jerusalem Temple where the Holy of Holies is found behind the curtain. It is normal in churches where there is a Tabernacle for people to genuflect towards it in honour the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It contains the most precious thing to be found in each church, the Blessed Sacrament, it is thus central to our life of worship and faith.

O Sing Unto the Lord

Sometime Bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Wordsworth (1807-85), is the author of several well-known hymns. *Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to heaven and voices raise* (NEH 103) was one of two he wrote for Easter Day. The hymn proclaims the Resurrection, looks forward to the harvest of the Second Coming, asks God's blessing on the worshippers, and concludes with a doxology. The hymn is particularly lovely due to the harvest imagery used to convey a sense of brightness and joy. The lively tune generally used *Lux Eoi*, is by the great Victorian composer Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), best known for his comic operettas in partnership with the lyricist W. S. Gilbert.

The Priest

Alter Christus – Another Christ. I am still humbled when I see heads bobbing when I walk past in the procession to and from the altar. Already there are too many 'I's in that sentence, for those heads faithfully bowing when the priest passes point to deeper truth; it is not Father X that passes by, but Christ himself heading once more to Golgotha to celebrate once again the sacrificial giving of



himself for his people. The priest at the altar utters the words of Our Lord and Saviour and says 'Take eat, this is my body'. These words we hear day by day, week by week, year by year, have echoed through the past two millennia just as alive and as powerful as when Christ himself said them, for indeed it is Christ speaking those words directly to you at each offering of the mass. It is not the priest speaking, but Christ. It is not the priest's body that is offered up, but Christ's. At the altar we have another Christ – the priest stands in the place of Our Lord and Saviour and offers afresh the paschal mysteries of our salvation. If you don't already bow at the passing of Christ in your midst, perhaps consider taking up this pious practice, for it is none less than Christ that you are honouring.