

# The Annunciator

Newsletter of the Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Anglican Patrimony within the Catholic Communion

Canadian Deanery of St John the Baptist Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St Peter

289 Spencer Street Ottawa ON K1Y 2R1 613-722-9139 www.annunciationofthebvm.org

Vol. 26 No. 4 - MARCH 2024



HOLOCAUST

LENT 2: Feb 25th, 2024: Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10 God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only-begotten son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

A "burnt offering", is properly a holocaust—Hebrew: 'ôlah; Greek όλοκαύτωμα holokautoma—where the whole sacrifice is immolated upon the altar, nothing held back, the smoke rising as a fragrant aroma to heaven.



"Take your son, your only-begotten son ... " Abraham was to let go of his son, Isaac, completely to the LORD. Yes, he had also Ishamael, but that was the son "after the flesh", the product of his and Sarah's attempt to make God's promise happen; Isaac was the son of promise, conceived by divine grace, when Sarah was physically beyond the possibility of conception. This was the son he had been promised when he left home at age seventy-five, yet for whom he had to wait another twentyfive years! This was the one by whom he was to have more descendants than he could number—and surely for that you need to start with at least one heir. How many years followed before he was called to enact this sacrifice, offering up all of his hopes, dreams, and the most tangible stuff of God's promise? It is not clear whether Isaac was a boy or man by this time. The text refers to the "lad"-Hebrew na'ar: boy; servant; young man—but even in English that can refer to a youngster or "one of the boys".

Abraham tells his servants that he and the lad will return, confident that they will, somehow. Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence he did receive him back and this was a symbol. [Greek:  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\circ\lambda\gamma$  parabole]. Still, we might well imagine his heart was breaking, as he laid the wood for the sacrifice upon his son, and they trudged up the mountain, a sombre cloud brooding over their ascent.

He needed to go all the way there, to yield that which was most precious, in order that both of their lives might be wholly in the LORD's hands. It recalls to mind the words of Hannah, mother of the great prophet and judge, Samuel, as she prayed fervently to the LORD for a son, promising that, if she were granted her request, "I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life." I Samuel 1:11. I think also of Jesus' words to those who would follow Him: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Mt 10:37-39, and "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Lk 14:26-27. continued on page 2

The way of discipleship is a costly way, prefigured in Father Abraham.

Of course, we might also see here in Abraham a type of our own heavenly Father, who did not withhold His only-begotten Son, offering the most costly Sacrifice of all for our sins, that we may be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus. "...For God so loved the world that He gave..." John 3:16.

Some have questioned why Abraham would even have considered doing such a thing-would imagine that God required such an offering. Was he influenced by the pagan practices of cultures surrounding him, those whose deities demanded child sacrifice? Did he imagine such was the highest he could—must?—offer to the LORD? It has been suggested that perhaps it was some *other voice* he heard calling, not God's, but that it was the LORD who broke through to stop him through His Angel; but the biblical account does not allow for that reading. The LORD calls and directs him; and yet we know that child sacrifice was repugnant to Him: Jeremiah 7:31 And they have built the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. [Hebrew: lêb=heart] and Jeremiah 32:35b They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. So what *did* God require of Abraham?

My understanding is that Abraham needed to enter into the heart of the holocaust, letting go of his very self to the LORD, along with all that he valued most in this world, including that in which all of his hopes and dreams and confidence in God's promises was invested. He was to empty out himself on the altar.

Of course, in his son offered, we are to see Christ Himself. Although this was indeed a real event in time, it prefigured most profoundly Jesus in the Way of the Cross. *Therefore be imitators of God*, *[i.e. in His abundant, forgiving love]* as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Eph 5:1-2

Isaac is the son of promise, awaited for long years, though promised from the beginning; the onlybegotten, beloved of his father; who bore upon his shoulders the wood for the sacrifice—as Christ the Cross—as he ascended the mount at Moriah.

We must not miss the significance of that mountain: 2 Chronicles 3: 1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Here Jerusalem would be built, and the Temple; and

there would be Calvary as well: Golgotha; the hill and place of the Skull, site of the Crucifixion of our Lord.

Traditionally, Isaac has been seen as the willing victim, who was old enough to have resisted his father, but chose perfect submission, even as our Good Shepherd laid down His life, *"I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18.* He yielded to his Father, letting go into his hands, confident that his life was to be found there, whatever the outward appearances. *"...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, ..." Jn 12:24* 

Do you recall the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness? After the Lord declined the invitation to transform stones into bread, punctuating his refusal with Scripture: Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." "(Matthew 4:6, quoting Psalm 91:11-12). The power in this temptation is that He will do exactly this: casting Himself off from heavenly glory and human hope, first in His Incarnation—becoming subject to the effects of sin upon our flesh: suffering, aging and dying—then upon the Cross: *i.e.* He will let go of everything into the Father's hands, emptying Himself. Though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. *Philippians* 2:6-8

He lets go of Himself, not deliberately turning from the Father as the devil would have Him do, plunging into the faithless abyss; but rather casting Himself, as the *Grain of wheat* into the *good Soil*, that He might find Himself in the Father, and grow up in all fullness and fruitfulness in Him. That is that His glory was not simply abandoned, but invested in the LORD: losing His life in order to discover it there.

So, on the Mount of Transfiguration we see what is His in God—that glory which He had with the Father, before the world was, and will manifest once more into eternity; but first comes the Cross. Yet the glory is no less His on that mount—though perhaps as a different spectrum of light or unique wavelength—and the Love which is at the heart of the same radiates from Calvary to overwhelm us there, even as the Apostles were overcome on the mountain top; in worship: *In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. I John 4:10.* 

We are to be overwhelmed by His love for us, confident to entrust our lives to Him. *If God is for us,* 

who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? He who judges us is He who died for us: the only-begotten Son, whom the Father has given to redeem us and make us right with Him. He is on our side.

We are taught through Abraham of the need to let go of that which is most precious—to lose so that we might find—that we might possess all things in the LORD, and not as barriers between us; and through Isaac, we learn the way of Christ, offering ourselves as sweet-smelling holocausts to the Father, *investing* our lives in Him, that we might find who we truly are. That we might know, as St. Paul put it *Colossians 3:1 You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.* 

O GOD, Most High and Holy, Three in One, Father, Son,



, Three in One, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; We offer to thee this day ourselves, our souls and bodies, To be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; To whom be all praise and glory.

In the Name of the Father, & of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

## 

Our oldest parishioner, **Mary** Thorpe (Lindsay) **Kerr** died on Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> in her 104<sup>th</sup> year. Her Vigil Evensong will be prayed on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 7:00PM, and her Requiem Funeral Mass celebrated on Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00AM. Let us pray with thanksgiving for her life and witness, and for the repose of her soul. May she rest in peace and rise in glory in Christ Jesus.

୶ଡ଼୶୶୶ଡ଼୶୶ଡ଼୶୶୶ଡ଼୶୶୶ଡ଼୶୶୶ଡ଼୶୶୶ଡ଼୶

# <u>The Akedah- Genesis 22</u>

# (Hakedat Yitzchak: The "Binding" of Isaac - DJH)

The skies were ominously overcast, a weight, as it were, upon the very heavens, a burden, brooding over the old man and his son, as they made ready to depart upon their journey. While they loaded provisions on the pack animals and gathered the servants who were to travel with them, the boy was struck by how much his father's mood seemed to reflect the weather: sombre, head bowed down, as though some secret sadness were gnawing upon his heart.

When all was ready, they set out, tracking slowly along the dusty road, a melancholy band with few words between them. Once or twice, the boy tried to engage his father in conversation, but the old man replied only in the most distracted way, trailing off as though his mind were somewhere else; so he ceased trying.

At last they came in sight of their goal. In the land called "Moriah", the summit of a mountain rose up before them. There they were to ascend to offer a holocaust: a burnt offering to the LORD.

When they drew near the base of the mount, the old man instructed the servants to make camp. "You remain here. I will take the boy with me. When we have made the sacrifice, we will return to you."

So father Abraham took up wood for the fire and laid that burden upon his son, Isaac. Then he looped a coil of stout rope over his own shoulder, fastened on his carefully honed knife, and took up the smoking fire-pot: a small clay vessel containing the burning embers with which they would kindle the blaze. Then they began the ascent; but deep puzzlement creased Isaac's brow.

"Father?" he asked. "My son." came the reply, though Abraham seemed distracted yet. "We have wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham breathed deeply before responding. Then, in a voice so low that Isaac had to strain to hear, he spoke, "God,...God will provide Himself a lamb...my son...God will provide."

The sorrow in his voice was palpable, and Isaac felt a tremor in his own heart as they trudged on in silence.

When they reached the appointed place, Abraham gathered stones together and built an altar, then laid the wood on and about it in readiness.

Suddenly, to his horror, Isaac found himself grasped in the iron grip of his father's powerful arms, then bound tightly with cords and thrust upon the wood, upon the altar slab.

*"Father! Father!"* he tried to choke out, but the words caught in his throat. *"Why, why have you forsaken me...? Father, my father..."* But the pounding of his own heart and the rush of his blood filled Abraham's ears, even as tears blinded his eyes. Drawing the razor-sharp knife, he moved forward, and raised his hand over his son. When..."ABRAHAM!" came a voice – the Angel of the LORD — the very voice of GOD — crying out from heaven. "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Abraham's hand dropped to his side, the knife clattered to the stony ground, and the old man collapsed over the prostrate form of his son, weeping, exhausted weeping, sobbing from the depths of his soul. How long? Who knows; but gradually he became aware of a new sound; a pleading voice; a bleating voice. At first it came dully, background to his weeping, then sharply, persistently: bleating, the baaing of sheep, and rustling—shaking in fact—of bushes nearby. He raised his head and rubbed his eyes clear of tears. In amazement he beheld a ram, caught by its horns in a thicket. ("God Himself will provide.") He scrambled to his feet and snatched up the knife from the ground. Hastily cutting the cords which bound his son, Abraham turned and hurried to lay hold of the ram. "God will provide Himself a lamb!" he cried. "God will provide, my son, God does provide!"

...And when the smoke of the burnt offering had died away, Abraham returned to the servants with his son, even as he had promised.

# శాతానానారావారావారావి. <u>Michael's Musings</u>

There is a very small list of books to which I return over and over again, often ones that seem to fit with a season of the Church year, which of course does not always mean specifically "religious" books, as Christianity covers the whole of life. For example, I almost always read through Dickens' A Christmas Carol sometime in the lead-up to the Nativity, and wrote about this recently. The various volumes of Pope Benedict XVI's Jesus of Nazareth provide a good example of more specifically theological literature that can accompany us through the Church year; he focuses on Holy Week in Volume II, whereas Volume III, the short volume on the Infancy Narratives, is both informative and simply delightful in its beauty and good reading for anytime, but especially in the glow of a Christmas tree. But I would like to return to the world of more imaginative literature for a moment, with a book that I re-read practically every year, especially during Lent.

Few of you will be surprised to learn that my selection is C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, the enormously popular bestseller that launched Lewis' career as a popular writer on religious topics, possibly the most well-known Christian work of fiction of the 20th century. Of course, I know that not everyone has read it, and so I want to make the case for taking a look at it this Lent.

It's relatively easy to find copies secondhand, in various editions or in anthologies, and it is quite inexpensive as an e-book. It's also not very long. Conveniently divided into 31 short chapters, it has the excitement of a page-turner, but I do encourage going through slowly, taking one letter at a time, as part (only one part, but a helpful one, I've found) of a Lenten examination of conscience.

What's fascinating is that the book's "author", the senior demon Screwtape, focuses much less on many of the "obvious" sorts of sins that draw me to the Confessional, but on those which we might really not think about much at all – those things that, left unchecked, do grow into serious states of spiritual brokenness and separation from God, often without us realizing it. Indeed, an obviously serious sin may not please our tempters so much, as it sometimes has the nasty effect of making us aware of our condition, leading us to real and true repentance. The book is, of course, not absolute truth, and Lewis warned the reader not to take it too seriously, in one sense; but he is able to give a remarkable amount of good advice in the process of telling the story of one individual soul, from the point of view of the demon trying to win him. The short version of this is, please do read it when you can – it is not that long, as I said. You may like it very much and see it as essential to re-read from time to time, or you may simply read it once, but I think it is very important to read it at least once.

What I find most remarkable about the book is how well it has held up over the decades since it was written during the early days of the Second World War. Part of the reason for that is how Screwtape insists that the war is not particularly important, in the grand scheme of things. He takes Wormwood to task for being too excited over bombings and carnage, stressing that although watching any sort of human suffering is great fun (from the demonic perspective), all that ultimately matters is the final fate of a human soul. In Lewis' reminder to the British public of his day that there was something more important than the War, he created something very transferable to our age. In fact, some of his points have become even more relevant.

For example, Screwtape talks about how the Enemy (the Lord, in actual fact) wants to keep people focused on two things, on God himself, and on the particular moment in time called "the Present", the part of time in which we are able to make decisions, to actually do things. "Our Father Below" as Screwtape calls Satan, wants to keep people's focus primarily on the past or future, on things that we cannot control. We do have a responsibility to learn from the past, to repent of certain things, and to consider carefully what responsibility we have now in the present in the light of past experience; but we are not meant to live there. Likewise, our primary concern for the future is to determine our present responsibility, and then to move on to dealing with the business at hand. In contrast, the tempters in Lewis' book would prefer our attention be directed to what might happen to us in a million future scenarios, which certainly cannot all come true. Our responsibility is not somehow to be prepared for what might never happen, but to give over what is happening in the moment, our present anxiety and concern, to God, to see everything primarily in terms of an opportunity to come closer to God.

One of my favourite parts of *The Screwtape Letters* is Lewis' account, which I assume is at least semiautobiographical, of the patient's recommitment to Christ, occurring after something so simple as a quiet walk down to an old mill for afternoon tea by himself. The key is that he

did something not to impress someone (as had been a besetting sin) but because he really loved it, and was grateful for it. Screwtape stresses that Satan has no interest in seeing us enjoy something good God has created, and that in anything, done purely for the love of something that God has created, there is a pull towards God. Conversely, anything done with a selfish motive, anything done to feed our ego, anything that is really all about ourselves, even if it is something really good in and of itself, draws us away from God. This is a lesson we have heard over again and again from the pulpit, but it can't be repeated enough: the sin of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Lewis' imaginary tempter is horrified of the opposite, of seeing people do the wrong thing for a good reason, and somehow experiencing God's grace in the process—but this is not something I would advise doing on purpose. We simply have to, in everything we do, give ourselves over completely to God. In the anxieties of the moment, our task is specifically to offer that anxiety to God, not to prepare for a million hypothetical possibilities. The book is deceptively simple and allows this to be explored in a lighthearted but still serious way, but I won't spoil any more of it here. Again, I do highly recommend it, especially if you haven't read it yet. A blessed Lent to you all and, at the end of the month, a glorious Easter!

## 

# C. S. LEWIS - MAGDALEN COLLEGE - July 5, 1941

*I* have no intention of explaining how the correspondence which *I* now offer to the public fell into my hands.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. The sort of script which is used in this book can be very easily obtained by anyone who has once learned the knack; but ill-disposed or excitable people who might make a bad use of it shall not learn it from me.

Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle. I have made no attempt to identify any of the human beings mentioned in the letters; but I think it very unlikely that the portraits, say, of Fr. Spike or the patient's mother, are wholly just. There is wishful thinking in Hell as well as on Earth.

In conclusion, I ought to add that no effort has been made to clear up the chronology of the letters. Number XVII appears to have been composed before rationing became serious; but in general the diabolical method of dating seems to bear no relation to terrestrial time and I have not attempted to reproduce it. The history of the European War, except in so far as it happens now and then to impinge upon the spiritual condition of one human being, was obviously of no interest to Screwtape. କାର୍ତ୍ତରେକାର୍ଭରୁ (Letter #2 - abridged) କାର୍ତ୍ତରେକାର୍ଭରେକାର୍ତ୍ତରେକାର

### My dear Wormwood,

I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties; indeed, in your better moments, I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy's camp and are now with us. All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favour.

One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans. All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate. When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands, and one shabby little book containing corrupt texts of a number of religious lyrics, mostly bad, and in very small print. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbours. Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like "the body of Christ" and the actual faces in the next pew. It matters very little, of course, what kind of people that next pew really contains. You may know one of them to be a great warrior on the Enemy's side. No matter. Your patient, thanks to Our Father below, is a fool. Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous.

#### \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

I have been writing hitherto on the assumption that the people in the next pew afford no rational ground for disappointment. Of course if they do—if the patient knows that the woman with the absurd hat is a fanatical bridge-player or the man with squeaky boots a miser and an extortioner—then your task is so much the easier. All you then have to do is to keep out of his mind the question "If I, being what I am, can consider that I am in some sense a Christian, why should the different vices of those people in the next pew prove that their religion is mere hypocrisy and convention?" You may ask whether it is possible to keep such an obvious thought from occurring even to a human mind. It is, Wormwood, it is! Handle him properly and it simply won't come into his head. He has not been anything like long enough with the Enemy to have any real humility yet. What he says, even on his knees, about his own sinfulness is all parrot talk. At bottom, he still believes he has run up a very favourable credit-balance in the Enemy's ledger by allowing himself to be converted, and thinks that he is showing great humility and condescension in going to church with these "smug", commonplace neighbours at all. Keep him in that state of mind as long as you can.

your affectionate uncle, Screwtape

