

Moses and the Rock that Was Christ (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year C)

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12—The Cloud, the Sea, and the Rock of Moses

¹ I want you to know, brethren, that *our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,* ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same supernatural food ⁴ and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

⁵ Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not [be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance.” ⁸ We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents;] ¹⁰ *nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.* ¹¹ *Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.* ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:1-12)

1. The Cloud = the “glory cloud” of the Exodus (Exod 14, 40)
2. The Sea = the Red Sea, which the Israelites cross (Exod 14)
3. Spiritual Food (Greek *pneumatikon brōma*) = manna from heaven (Exod 16)
4. Spiritual Drink (Greek *pneumatikon poma*) = water from the Rock (Exod 17)
5. Wilderness Generation: did not make it into the Promised Land
 - a. Idolatry—Golden Calf (Exod 32)
 - b. Immorality—Daughters of Moab (Num 25)
 - c. Grumbling (Greek *gongusmos*)—complaining (Num 14:1-27; 21:1-9)
6. Presumption: “let anyone who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall” (10:12)

The Living Tradition

St. Ambrose: What do we learn from the type which was prefigured in the time of Moses? That when the people of the Jews thirsted and murmured because they had no water God bade Moses strike the rock with his rod. He struck the rock and the rock poured forth a flood of water, as the Apostle says: “They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them; and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). Do you also drink, that Christ may follow you. You see the mystery. Moses is the prophet; the rod is the word of God. *The priest strikes the rock with the word of God: the water flows and the people of God drink. And the priest touches the cup, waters streams into the cup, springing up to eternal life.* (Saint Ambrose, *On the Sacraments* 5:1. Trans. J. Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality*, 194]

Didache: My child, *do not be a grumbler* (Greek *gongusos*), since it leads to blasphemy.

(*Didache* 3:6. Trans. M. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 349)

St. Benedict: one of the key “instruments of good works” is “not” to be “a grumbler” (Latin *non murmuriosum*). (*Rule of Benedict* 4.1, 39)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year C)

1. How can Paul say that “the rock” was “Christ”? What does he mean by this? What does it mean for how we understand the sacrament of the Eucharist today?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Gerald Bray, ed. *1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. George T. Montague, SM, *First Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).