

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Evensong & Benediction
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 12, 2015
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One characteristic of revealed religion is it does away with the sense of God being remote. In natural religion man can only infer his creator in the phenomena surrounding him: weather, terrain, sex, and pestilence. Classical Greek mythology and the animist cults of Africa are examples. But then came the revelation of Almighty God to Abraham and the beginning of what we call *revealed religion*.

What was revealed is *God is one*, and the world as a whole is the expression of His single divine will. From the beginning of the relationship with Abraham and Almighty God the will of God was understood to be *good* and that God required His creatures to be good. “Be ye holy for I the Lord your God am holy.” In order for His creatures to achieve holiness Almighty God had to become accessible to souls in a permanent and reliable way.

In the full revelation of God in Christ, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, is the *pinnacle of accessibility* with the Divine. From this vantage point we enjoy, you and I do not expect the Old Testament system to contain more than a limited accessibility to God. But it is there.

All through the Old Testament Scriptures there is the conviction man may freely approach God. The only barrier to this accessibility is man’s obstinate continuation in sin. Almighty God is always proclaimed as ready to receive the repentant and be the refuge of those who are in sorrow and suffering. Your favorite Old Testament stories will attest to that fact.

For us who have the wonderfully-accessible Saviour in the Mass, in the Tabernacle, and in Benediction, we recognize and appreciate, in the Old Testament experience, God’s presence specifically in the Temple. Characteristics of this presence are found repeatedly in the Psalms, the Old Testament’s hymn book. “My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord, and my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.” And again, “When I went into the sanctuary of God, then I understood.”

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Two thousand years before the Incarnation it was the experience of Moses and the people he led that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. A thousand years later King David and his subjects had the same experience. And at the consecration of the Temple of Solomon we read the same.

And so Benediction, which comes out of the rich devotional spirituality of the Middle Ages, has a long and distinguished pedigree in the desire of Almighty God to be with His people. You and I can never over estimate in praise the greatness of the privilege we have been given. We can approach Our Blessed Lord in the Tabernacle, making a Holy Hour during Exposition, and at Benediction. The very concept of the church building as The House of God makes it more than a meeting place of people, which is the Protestant and Muslim emphasis, but the much more important place apart where people may meet God. It is The House of God *because God's promised presence is there*. And our time in the Lord's Presence is the most cherished of all our possessions.