



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR  
ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2018  
WISDOM OF SOLOMON 3:1-9; PSALM 24: 1-6; REVELATION 21:1-6; JOHN 11:32-44

## THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE



One of the best parts of serving as a Deputy to General Convention, as I did in July, is the opportunity to see friends across the Episcopal Church that we would otherwise not see. It had been more than a decade since I last saw a good friend who serves in Alabama. The reconnection

was an instant transport back to our days in seminary, and our mutual memory that held the laughter and sorrow of our life shared as students trying to figure out how to live into this vocation as priests with some measure of grace. Jim has always had a penchant for raucous humor, and so

it was not more than a minute into our first conversation at the rear of the House of Deputies hall that he leaned to me and whispered, “remember the molé?”

He said “molé” as if it was a four-letter dirty word, which catapulted me to January 2002, and he and I and a few others from seminary were sitting in a backyard of a small home on this side of the US-American border in south Texas. The home served as a resource center for women who had crossed the border with their children, and who were learning English, learning to drive so they could obtain licenses and the documentation required to land jobs.

We had come to see what life was like for them, on both sides of the border; we investigated economic, social and political realities of our southern border (it’s complicated), and on this day, having toured their resource center, these women invited us to have lunch. We were their guests. It was chicken with molé sauce.

They had spent three days preparing the special sauce of spices and oils and chocolate using family recipes passed down from their Oaxacan grandmothers. Let’s just say it was a life-changing experience—a sacramental meal as holy as any we share here at this table.

And Jim, not one to hold back, was near to having a spiritual swoon, stood up and declared he wanted to take the pot of molé and pour it over his head.

The image has stuck with me, and this summer we had a good laugh once more at the shared memory, humorous but holy also.

We are sacramental people—you and I—we were created to discover sacramental meaning, not just in church, but across the course of life. I know sacramental is a churchy word, but words matter... and this word has a catalyzing power to transform the simple, mundane elements of life and makes them holy, special, set apart so that we might know something more profoundly about God and the way God has designed the world in all its resplendent goodness.

So, in church, we speak of the sacramental nature of bread and wine, which are set apart for us to receive the spiritual gift of Christ’s life taken into ours. The gifts of God for the People of God.

But we could also speak of the sacramental nature of a grandmother’s sage dressing prepared for a family’s Thanksgiving meal. Just saying those words triggered the anamnestic memory of that smell

wafting from the kitchen on the homestead back in the Ozark foothills, knowing it was made by holy hands for holy purpose, setting apart a day for reveling in deep gratitude. I suspect you have memories that are best traced through the senses, and if you remember them as holy, as life-giving, then consider how they are sacramental.

The quilts that are lovingly made by St. Mark's Quilt Ministry here are given to those who may be in the hospital, or recovering from surgery, or they may be given to those who are leaving this community—these quilts are more than just scraps of cloth patched together. They become sacramental gifts because when we finger the ties or feel the warmth, we come to know that the love with which the quilt was made, and given, is ultimately a gift from God, passing through the hands of a community that claims us as beloved.

This morning we will be baptizing several children and one young adult as we welcome them into this household. It is a sacramental act—taking water and oil and ritually marking them as members of the Body of Christ. We pray for them, we bless them, we mark them, for a purpose.

There are three ways that our tradition has directed for the sacrament of baptism.

The oldest form is full immersion, all the way under, dying and rising again. The second is affusion, pouring water over one's head and down the body, and the third is aspersion, or sprinkling, with water upon the head. This has become the most common in modern times, but our new font provides for all three options.

One is not more efficacious than another, and those being baptized (or their parents) will select the approach they desire. The key is how we lay down the memory, so that we might know it as a sacramental act.

Which is why I will ask you all a question in a few moments—will you support these persons being baptized in their life in Christ? When you answer “we will” you are saying you will help them remember this day on which you and they become sacramentally connected in a special way for all eternity. We say the bond is indissoluble.

We ask you all to sign the certificates of baptism that are on the welcome table in the back as a testimonial that you were here, you witnessed the act and know it to be a sacramental one.

When the clergy come along and sprinkle you with water from the font, and say to

you “remember your baptism,” the invitation is to feel the sacramental water light on your skin and let it awaken your soul to that deep memory of grace given you—even if you cannot remember the day cerebrally, the invitation is to remember your sacramental identity today, in light of that experience.

And on this day, when we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, we forge across the deep mystery of the Communion of Saints who help us embody sacramental truth across time and space, we are invited to see and hear and taste and smell and touch

the goodness of God in this world, knowing that God is gathering it up in redemptive love, such that nothing is lost.

To the eyes of the foolish, it may seem to perish, as the passage from Wisdom says. But we know that God is up to something here and now, that love will win the day, that nothing will perish from the eternal embrace of a loving God, and that the peace of God which surpasses understanding will prevail.

And for that may God’s holy name be praised. Amen.



SAINT MARK'S  
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

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