



TIMES OF THE LITURGY

Sunday - 7.45am - Lauds | 8.15am - Low Mass | 9.15am - Dominican Rite Mass (Extraordinary Form) | 11am - Sung Conventual Mass | 6pm - Low Mass | 7pm - Vespers.

Monday - Friday - 7am - Lauds | 7.30am - Conventual Mass | 6.15pm - Devotions and Meditation | 6.30pm - Vespers. [N.B. First Fridays of the month, Vespers in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with a period of Adoration from 6.15pm.]

Saturday - 9am - Lauds | 9.30am - Conventual Mass | 4.30-6pm - Confessions | 6.15pm - Sung Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 6.30pm - Vespers.

THIS WEEK

Sun 8 **Sunday XXIII**

Mon 9 ST PETER CLAVER

Tue 10 *feria*

Wed 11 *feria*

Thu 12 Most Holy Name of Mary

Fri 13 St John Chrysostom

Sat 14 THE EXALTATION OF THE
HOLY CROSS

Sun 15 **SUNDAY XXIV**

The September issue of Catholic East Anglia is now available online. Please visit <<https://www.rcdea.org.uk/the-september-catholic-east-anglia-is-now-live-online/>>

Our Diocese is delighted to announce the Diocesan Retreat Day for Women, taking place on Saturday October 12 from 11am- 4pm at Our Lady Immaculate & St Etheldreda, Newmarket, CB8 8LT. The theme for this year's retreat is "Called to More: Finding God in the Hidden Things of Daily Life." For more information and registration, use the QR Code:



Lauds, Mass, and Vespers are broadcast daily on Radio Maria.

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<https://radiomariaengland.uk/>

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cambridge.bursar@english.op.org



The 39th Annual ~~NATIONAL ROSARY CRUSADE~~ will take place on Saturday 12th October 2024. People will assemble outside Westminster Cathedral on Ambrosden Avenue at 1.45pm and will then process to the Brompton Oratory. The Rosary Crusade will end around 5.15pm. For Information Contact: Francis Carey (01494) 729223 – Mathias Menezes 07950 384515, Web: www.rosarycrusadeofreparation.blogspot.com, E-mail: rosarycrusade@duc-in-altum.co.uk.

A Music Workshop Day & Eucharistic Rosary Procession will take place on Saturday 26 October at the Rosary Shrine in London. The day will begin at 10am and finish at 7.30pm with a Eucharistic Rosary Procession. To register, please email london.secretary@english.op.org.

AKEDA - THE BINDING OF ISAAC

Stephen J Vicchio has written a book about the many ways in which the story of Isaac the son of Abraham was taken by his father to a mountain in the land of Moriah, to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of that land. The story is called in Jewish sources, 'the Akedah', which seems to mean the binding or tying up of Isaac as is said in the story as told in Chapter 22 of the Book of Genesis.

When they came to the place that God had said to him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood (Genesis 22:9).

The word for binding, 'aked' does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew bible, but there is little doubt about its meaning. Its uniqueness in the Old Testament does allow the term 'the binding' to work as a description of the event, even though Isaac being bound up is not the main point of the story. There is only one binding, though binding described by other Hebrew words do occur.

What is the point of the story then? Well, that is as big a question as you could expect in the whole of the bible. Abraham has been promised a son, which seems impossible because of the great age of his wife, Sarah. He has another son, Ishmael, but it is only through Sarah that Abraham can perpetuate his race. He receives Isaac, but then in Chapter 22, he is told to take Isaac his beloved, (often translated, only begotten son, as in the Vulgate) and sacrifice him. Vicchio gives many examples of how this story has been treated, in theology, both Jewish and Christian, and in art. The book is very well worth reading but it is an impossible task to make an exhaustive list of all the ways that this terrible story has been examined, used or even avoided by so many thinkers and artists throughout the years. It is an inexhaustible mystery, and the possible meanings of the story are limitless, so that there is never going to be a secure and universally accepted interpretation of the story.

I might say a few things about the story myself. It is called a story where God tests Abraham. There is the first problem. Does God need to test his own creation? The obvious answer is no, but then we sit tests not just so the examiner can know what we know but also so that we can find out what we know. Knowing that there is test coming is a good way of making us put more effort in knowing stuff. Whether God knows what Abraham will do or not, Abraham certainly does not know. Abraham replies to God with the words, 'here I am', which is a single compound word in Hebrew. It is the same word used by Moses, when God calls to him from the burning bush, Exodus 3:4, by Samuel when he hears Gods voice in the house of Eli, 1 Samuel 3:4, and by Isaiah when God appears in the temple.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

Here 'I am' literally means 'behold me' or 'see me', and it is noticeable that the Prophet Jeremiah who is a distinctly reluctant prophet does not say this word when God calls him, nor do subsequent prophets. God often says the same word of himself, but this is usually translated as simply 'Behold', rather than see me, possible because behold me would seem blasphemous of God. You might remember that Pilate says, 'Behold the man' when he shows Jesus to the crowd, thereby unconsciously speaking both of God and Man, (John 19:5).

The story is therefore about Abraham, and it being demonstrated that he is willing to sacrifice his son, even though this would seem to make impossible the promise of God. Many critics of the story turn the story into a story about Isaac, which is reasonable to some extent. Yet Isaac is not the one who is making the decision. He does not know that he is going to his sacrifice, and when he gets there, he is bound up. This binding takes away his choice. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, binding yourself, a different Hebrew word being used, is a sign of choice, you gird up your loins to go on a journey, or gird on your sword. St Peter in Chapter 21 of the Gospel of St John is told that

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go" (John 21:18).

It is still fair to consider Isaac since he is the victim of both God and Abraham, except God saves Isaac and provides an alternative to human sacrifice. He is not really a victim then. The prevalence of animal sacrifice in the ancient world, at least in and around the Mediterranean Sea, might suggest that animal sacrifice was indeed a substitute for human sacrifice and its real meaning. There is an unholy but powerful need to sacrifice human beings, a need unmasked and therefore fully abolished by the death of Jesus, according to Rene Girard, so that the need can be brought to an end.

That is one possible meaning for the story of Isaac. Christians often see in Isaac an image of the death of Christ. They also often suggest that the real test of Abraham is to see if he believes in the possibility of the Resurrection. This is not fanciful, as we have

Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56).

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, reckoning that God is able to raise up even from the dead, wherefor he received him in a parable (Hebrews 11:17,18).

Why would St Paul talk of extinguishing the Holy Spirit, since the Spirit is God and so cannot be affected by us in any way? Obviously, he is saying that we should not extinguish the Holy Spirit in our hearts. There is a similar way of talking in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

In this view, it is not just that Isaac could be raised from the dead, but that Abraham believed in this because he believed in the Resurrection of Christ who was to come.

There is much to say about this story, to quote Erich Auerback, Mimesis, ‘Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon.’

We might look at art too, which usually includes the intervention of the angel. You should look at the most powerful version, to my mind, Rembrandt, ‘Abraham and Isaac’. Here Abraham is dropping his knife but his hand, which is huge, covers Isaac’s face, as if he wishes to stop Isaac seeing what is happening. The story of the binding means one thing for Jews, the struggle of their people, and another thing for Christians, but it means everything for humanity, because it is the story of humanity and God.

ST PETER CLAVER

Peter was born in Catalonia and studied at the University of Barcelona. He became a Jesuit; and while he was studying philosophy in Mallorca, the door-keeper of the college, Alfonso Rodríguez, saw that his true vocation was to evangelize the New World, and encouraged him to fulfil that vocation..

He arrived in Cartagena, in what is now Colombia, in 1610, and six years after his ordination six years later he began working with slaves, labouring on their behalf for 43 years, attending to both their spiritual and material needs. The slave trade was repeatedly condemned by the Popes; but it was too profitable to be stopped and on the whole the local church hierarchy kept quiet about it, much as they did in North America in the 19th century.

He brought fresh food to the slave-ships as they arrived, instructed the slaves and baptized them in the faith, followed their progress and kept track of them even when they were sent to the mines and plantations, defending them as well as he could from oppressive slave-owners. He organized teams of catechists who spoke the many languages spoken by the slaves. He worked in hospitals also, looking after lepers among others, and in prisons.

Naturally he made himself unpopular by his work: as his superior said, ‘unfortunately for himself he is a Catalan, pig-headed and difficult’. Opposition came from both within the Church and outside it, but there were always exceptions. For instance, while many fashionable ladies refused to enter his city churches because they had been profaned by the presence of the blacks, a few, such as Doña Isabel de Urbina, became his strong and lifelong supporters.

At the end of his life he fell ill with a degenerative disease and for four years he was treated neglectfully and brutally by the servant whose task it was to look after him. He did not complain but accepted his sufferings as a penance for his sins.

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