

# SUNDAY THEOSIS #1-58

## The Holy Mysteries

By Father Robert Slesinski

### Seven: A Holy Number (Continued)

When Jesus rebukes his mother that “my hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4), he is alluding to his eventual hour of Passion, thus linking the mystery of marriage to the Cross and surely the Kingdom to come. In turn, given this linkage, one can readily opine that Jesus’ saying “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower” (Jn 15:1) can also be associated with marriage, the fruit of marriage being off-spring. Also in the addressing of his mother as “Woman” in this passage, we readily are reminded of the other instance he uses the appellation, namely, when he is dying on the Cross and entrusts her to the Apostle John: “Woman, behold

your son” (Jn 19:26). Lastly, given the fact that a Sabbath of sorts is at stake in the wedding in Cana, we naturally adopt an eschatological frame of mind and plead our heavenly Father “Thy Kingdom come” (Mt 6:10).



Working our way backwards as per the days of the week, we move forward as to Jesus’ miracles as related to us by St. John. This second great sign of the Lord’s transformative powers is the healing of the official’s son (Jn 4:46–54). Again being in Cana, a royal official comes to the town to implore him to cure his son. This, accordingly to John’s Gospel, is only the Lord’s second miracle, but he can only lament “unless



you people see signs and wonders, you do not believe" (Jn 4:48). Told by the Lord to return home as his son would live, the official soon realized that his son was cured upon hearing the Lord's words. In thanksgiving, the official's entire household became believers. But the official had been bold, "Sir," he addressed the Lord, "come down before my child dies" (Jn 4:49). It is in the act of invoking the Lord's Name (or Person) that Jesus' power manifests itself; his ultimate dominion over the land comes to the fore. Or, in one of his great sayings, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, except through me" (Jn 14:6). Through the Lord Jesus we are initiated into the truth—the sacramental reality of holy baptism thus presenting itself to us for reflection. This sacrament can also recall to us the sixth day of creation, Friday, the day of naming when the Lord God gave dominion to Adam over all living creatures (Gn 1:28–31; 2:19–20). And in the prescient observation of Caldecott, this dominion

would also seem to be ultimately established with the Passion and Our Lord's declarative word: "It is accomplished" (Jn 19:30), being equally an act of recreation as heralded by holy baptism, evocative of a needed tribute to our heavenly Father, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name" (Mt 6:9).

Proceeding backwards again, now to Thursday, the fifth day of creation, we stop to meditate on the third miraculous sign related in the Johannine Gospel, the healing of the paralyzed man (Jn 5:1–14), which takes place at the Sheep Pool in the Bethesda neighborhood of Jerusalem. The scenario can only cause the





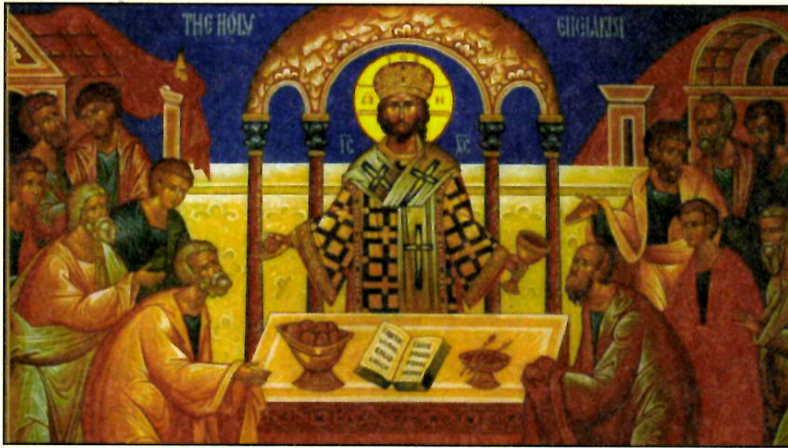
reader pain. A paralyzed man sick for thirty-eight years could not find anyone to lower him into the pool, which was known for its healing properties. Realizing his plight, Jesus simply says to him: "Stand up. Pick up your mat and walk" (Jn 5:8), the man being immediately cured. Curiously there are five porticoes at this pool only leaving one amazed that on the fifth day of creation, the Lord God had the waters of the earth teem with fish and the skies with birds (Gn 1:20–23). The Lord's own authoritative saying is also brought to mind: "I am the door" (Jn 10:9), the gateway, as it were, through which one must pass in order to reach salvation. In this light, a sacramental door also presents itself, the holy mystery of reconciliation through which we once again can enjoy communion with God and humankind. We can only now appreciate the word the Lord on the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34), a holy word that, in penitence, is expressed in a petition of the Our Father that now can readily come to our lips: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mt 6:12).

We now arrive at the middle of the week, Wednesday, symbolic of the fourth day of creation, with its sign actually becoming a keystone for sustaining the others, the three before and the three after. The fourth Johannine sign is, not surprisingly, the multiplication of loaves and the feeding of five thousand (Jn 6:1–15), underscoring the centrality of the Holy Eucharist for the Christian life. The particulars of the scenario stand out for their symbolic character. The apostles only have five loaves and two fish for food ( $5 + 2 = 7$ ), but the Lord works his miracle feeding the multitude with precisely twelve baskets left over, the Twelve themselves being at the foundation of the Church in time (Judas being replaced by Matthias). Not surprisingly, Jesus' fourth great saying is "I am the Bread of Life" (Jn 6:35); nor should it surprise us that his fourth word in pain on the Cross is "I thirst" (Jn 19:28), the Lord's physical dehydration being only, as Caldecott remarks, "an outpouring of his substance into the sacraments themselves." The fourth day of creation, for its part, relays the creation of the luminaries of the sky, the sun,



moon, and stars (Gn 1:4–19). In this “light,” as it were, one can only conceive of the Holy Eucharist being a source of illumination as well as being sustenance, the Sun itself being the Liturgy of Sacrifice, the moon as reflective light being

as it were, the sacrament of holy orders, paralleling that of holy reconciliation, “I am the door” (Jn 10:9), penance only coming from the hands of a priest. But what happened on the third day of creation? It is the creation of



the Liturgy of the Word. The petition of the Our Father thus presents itself: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11).

Going backwards again, we come to Tuesday, the third day of creation, as it were, and, looking forward, the fifth of Jesus’ miraculous signs as related by the Evangelist John—John’s walking on water (Jn 6:19), bringing peace in turbulent waters. His spiritual saying, as recounted in St. John’s Gospel, could not be more appropriate: “I am the Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11), heralding,

dry land, separate from the sea, so that vegetation may thrive on earth (Gn 1:9–13). But as anyone in holy orders knows, the dry land may seem not to bring forth fruit, becoming a veritable desert in the soul of a priest. Thus, any priest can relate to

Christ’s own cry of desperation on the Cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34). Then there is resignation; then there is peace, the petition of the Our Father bringing its unique consolation: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10).

*To be continued ...*

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