

At Rise: A darkened stage. The sonorous SOUNDS of church bells echo from above. A dim candle on an old table gradually illuminates carved stone columns holding up the roof - the soft WHISTLING of a religious song is heard from somewhere behind the stone columns - a man dressed in a bishop's habit comes out from behind one of the columns - the candlelight reveals him standing in the basement of a cathedral - a wall of bars separates him from the audience - the bishop approaches the audience.

BISHOP ODO

They told me you'd be coming.. did you have trouble finding me?

(Sweeping his hand around)

I'm in my new cathedral! Not at all like my cathedral up there..

(Gestures at the ceiling)

That was my old bishopric - such a mighty house of worship! - the Bayeux Cathedral! - walls soaring to the sky, gleaming spires almost pricking the sun! It was built to.. to glorify God!.. but some even say.. to glorify me! Ah, Bayeux, Bayeux.. why, don't you recognize me? - I'm the Bishop.. the Bishop of Bayeux! Odo! - Bishop Odo!

(Sweeping his arms around the cell)

I'm down here in my new cathedral! Look at it! The high vaulted ceiling - up there! - you can barely make out the gargoyles, crouching amongst the beams.. and they're grinning! And the doors.. look at these magnificent doors!

(Rattles the bars between him and the audience)

Heavy wooden doors - of the finest oak! - and carved into them - Biblical scenes! - see there! - the casting out of Job, by Almighty God himself!

(Reaches out through the bars with both arms gesturing towards the audience)

And there you sit, my friends, in your polished hardwood pews..

(Turns and goes to the table behind him)

.. which march up to my altar..

(Slams hand down on table)

.. here! - of the finest Italian marble - yes, we shall worship here! - and floating over all, like the great Holy Spirit..

(Sweeps his hand up to the small and high barred window as he turns)

.. this magnificent stained glass window - composed of thousands of panes! - see them shimmering in the sunlight! - such delicate hues.. depicting a figure.. transfixed upon a cross.. perhaps.. perhaps a bishop? How blasphemous, you say! But here in my new cathedral - here! - a new religion is being born, these five long years - and I, Bishop Odo of Bayeux - I, Odo, am birthing it!

(Slowly turns back to audience)

And you.. you shall be my new flock! - and I shall lead you down the path of, of.. oh, who knows where this path leads? For when one has been abandoned by his brother for so long - five years! - one is forced to create life anew..

(Goes back to cell bars, stares out)

Yes, in this new - and even more magnificent! - cathedral, I am the sole power!

(Shouts out)

BISHOP ODO (Con't.)

I, Odo!

(Pauses, stares at audience)

Come, let us worship together!

(Turns, strides back to table, stands behind it, thumps on it)

Today's sermon is called... but no, I will tell you after I have preached it - my sermon begins as old King Edward of England summons mighty Earl Harold of the House of Godwin to embark on a royal mission..

(Pauses)

But wait!.. how does a Norman bishop know his English history so well?

(Pauses, looks around for guards, leans towards audience, whispers)

The Tapestry.. I have the Tapestry! - no, not here - too dangerous! - I keep it up there..

(Gestures above)

..stretching along the wall of my old cathedral - I commissioned its weaving! - and in the Tapestry, am I too, Odo, now woven into history!

(Walks back to bars, grabs them)

But, my friends, the Tapestry is here, too!

(Leans forward, taps head, looks around for guards)

Listen well then, to my sermon!

(Pauses, whispers)

It begins thus..

(LIGHTS DIM on the cell)

Copyright Ed Ballou, 2016