

Liturgy We Live *by Dr. Gil Haas*

A hammerbeam is a timber truss allowing a roof to span a greater distance than the length of any individual timber. This type of construction supports our Cathedral's roof. Hammerbeams are supported by curved braces from the wall, and hammer posts are built on top to support the rafters. The ends of hammerbeams are often decorated, and the ram's heads in our Cathedral serve this function. The most famous ram in the OT is the one Abraham substituted for the sacrifice of Isaac. This ram, sacrificed in Isaac's stead, is an image of Christ crucified in our place. The thicket in which the ram was entrapped is likened to Jesus' crown of thorns. Rams also represented male fertility, and statues of rams were believed to make women fertile and ensure a family hearth's happiness. Similarly, rams were used by the early Church to symbolize Christ's spiritual fertility. Rams lead sheep, and St. Ambrose considered rams emblematic of the divine Word. Rams fighting with wolves and defending the sheep represented the war between Jesus and Satan for souls. Rams tend to butt their enemies, and ram's heads were placed on the ends of "battering rams" during a siege.

If you have a liturgical question or an inquiry about anything that transpires during or around our worship service, please forward the question you would like researched to: gghaas@aol.com, or drop the question in the offering basin. Please note whether we can credit you as the source of the question.