

The Covenant of Eucharist

By Fr. Joseph Pellegrino

Today's first reading presents a significant scene from the Book of Exodus. This is the people's acceptance of the Covenant of the Law of God, the Covenant of the Ten Commandments. A sacrifice was used to seal the covenant. Young bulls were slain. As a sign of the people's acceptance, all the people were sprinkled with the blood of the bulls, the blood of the sacrifice. Strange, but significant. The people were not to be mere observers. They were to be intimately involved in the covenant.

This reading is presented as prophetic foreshadowing of the Blood of the New Covenant. We share intimately in the sacrifice offered to the Father by Jesus on the Cross. Instead of witnessing a sacrifice, we receive the sacrifice within ourselves. We eat His Body. Instead of being sprinkled with the Blood of the Sacrifice, we drink the Blood of the Lord.

When we receive communion we reaffirm our acceptance of the New Covenant with God. This is more than just saying, "I agree." Communion is an intimate sharing of the presence of Christ conquering evil on the Cross. We are not just stained with the blood. We take the blood of the Lamb within us. We don't just offer young bulls for sacrifice. We take the sacrifice within us. The sacrifice is the Body of Christ.

As little children we learned that communion was Jesus. But after the excitement of First Holy Communion, it was easy for us to forget what we were doing or whom we were receiving when we approached the Eucharist. Our parents had to remind us continually to talk to Jesus, to pray.

The Church gives us the Solemnity of Corpus Christi to remind us as adults of what we are doing and whom we are receiving which we approach the Eucharist. The original celebration of the Body of Christ was begun in the thirteenth century and promoted by one of our spiritual ancestors named St. Juliana of Liege, a visionary and an Augustinian nun. Soon after this the pope, Pope Urban IV, asked the great theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, to prepare a Mass to celebrate this new feast. We still sing some of the hymns that St. Thomas Aquinas wrote for this Mass, particularly the Tantum Ergo, or Down in Adoration Falling, and the O Salutaris Hostia, or O Saving Victim.

Most often we refer to the Eucharist as "communion". The communal aspect of the Eucharist is far more than a group of people sharing a

meal. It is the union of those who share the Body of Christ into the Kingdom of God. When we receive communion we are by that very action recommitting ourselves to fighting paganism in our lives and our world. We are recommitting ourselves to be active members of that community that spreads the Kingdom of God through sacrificial love. Because we receive the Eucharist so often, it is easy to overlook the huge commitment we are making to live and spread the Kingdom of God.

The Eucharist, a word that means thanksgiving, is the way that we thank God for life we have received. We thank God for uniting us to the community of salvation. We thank God for the many ways that we experience his love in every aspect of our lives.

The Eucharist is the mystery of commitment and strength. The commitment is to do the work of the Kingdom. We are a part of the Grand Adventure, the Great Quest. When we receive communion we reaffirm our role in the battle to transform the world into the Kingdom of God.

The Eucharist is also the mystery of strength. The strength that we need for the Great Quest is the very presence of Jesus within us as Church and as individuals. We are not in this battle alone. We carry the Lord, our strength. Do we have a difficult decision to make? We ask Jesus within us for guidance after we receive. Do we feel that our lives are falling apart? We ask Jesus to keep us together. Are we searching for a way to serve the Lord? We give ourselves over to the Lord within us. Are we sick, gravely sick, even terminal? We ask Jesus within us how we can use our sickness to fulfill our part of the Grand Adventure. Do we feel alone? We stop and pray after communion and realize that we are never alone when we are with the Lord.

There are so many reasons why we pray when we have Jesus within us after we receive communion. All of them are valid. Every petition is heard by the Lord, particularly when he is within us.

Today we pray for sincerity. We pray that we might be sincere in the commitment we make every time we receive communion. We ask God for the Great Gift, the ability to live out our commitment. This Great Gift is the New Covenant, the very Body and Blood of Christ.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Exodus 24: 3-8

Hebrews 9: 11-15

Mark 14: 12-26

June 10, 2012

靈 修 生 活

彼 也 聖 地， 此 也 聖 地

寒 爐

讀經一：盟約之血

梵二後，「聖體瞻禮」易名為「基督聖體聖血節」，似乎在暗示回復彌撒中兼領聖體聖血的理想傳統。基督最後晚餐中拿起葡萄酒說：「這是我的血，新而永久的盟約之血……」。猶太人一向認為血液是生命的象徵。盟約之血灑在祭台上，也灑在人民身上，帶出「上主與人民活著同一生命」的信念。

讀經二：煉深人心的祭獻

致希伯來人書的這一段，把「基督的司祭職」與舊約的司祭職，作一並列的比較。保祿採用了贖罪節那天，大司祭帶著犧牲的血，進入聖殿的至聖所履職的這一環節，作為他的論點。基督進入非人手所造的聖殿，奉獻自己。牛羊等犧牲之血，尚且有淨化的功能，何況基督的聖血呢！從各方面比較，保祿肯定了基督的祭獻，遠勝其他祭獻，更能潔淨人的良心。

福音：世界是聖地

一位美國神父，到巴勒斯坦去遊覽，主要是為考究一下耶穌生活過、受難、被釘、死亡和復活的聖地。這趟旅遊中，神父結識了一位亞拉伯小朋友，這小孩天天給神父輔祭，更教曉他幾句難學的亞拉伯俚語，又帶神父東去西去，倍增神父的懷古樂趣。神父的幾個星期大假就這樣有意義地在聖地中度過。到了要分手的那天，神父依依不捨對小朋友說：「能夠生活在耶穌生活過的聖地，這福分，恐怕不會很多人有吧！天主聖子，由幼童至成人，走遍這些街巷，呼吸過這些氣息，想起來，豈不有助你更愛慕祂嗎？」小孩思索了一會，回答說：「不一定要生活在聖地才可愛慕救世的天主，因為祂已經活在全世界的每一角落，因此，無論你到天涯地角甚麼地方，你都置身在耶穌的聖地中。」

我們曾否想過，香港、九龍、新界……都是聖地？耶穌聖體聖血節的意義，就是回味主耶穌建立聖體的話：「這是我的身體……這是我的血……」，同時重演著這神妙的奧蹟，讓基督臨現於世界每一角落中。

蒞臨主的晚餐廳

這裡是白冷，每次彌撒慶典中，耶穌就在這裡誕生；這裡是納匝肋，耶穌就在這裡成長；耶穌更在這裡顯奇跡：使懈怠的癩子在皈依的路上奔馳，給醉生夢死的瞎子復明，叫他們看清生命的指向；祂依然在這裡接待罪人，祝福平安。然而，最大的聖地，莫過於我們的聖堂。它成了福音中耶穌首次祝聖聖體聖血的「晚餐廳」。聖堂是加納，也是拉匝祿出死入生的聖所。每次我們痛失親友，耶穌都在替我們擦乾眼淚，提醒我們：「信我的人，即使死了，仍然活著……」總之，耶穌依然和我們一起生活，我們的前後左右，都是聖地。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

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出 24:3-8; 希 9:11-15; 谷 14:12-26