

Corpus Christi B

First Reading Exodus 24:3-8

Moses went and told the people all the commands of the Lord and all the ordinances. In answer, all the people said with one voice, "We will observe all the commands that the Lord has decreed." Moses put all the commands of the Lord into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he directed certain young Israelites to offer holocausts and to immolate bullocks to the Lord as communion sacrifices. Half of the blood Moses took up and put into basins, the other half he cast on the altar. And taking the Book of the Covenant he read it to the listening people, and they said, "We will observe all that the Lord has decreed; we will obey." Then Moses took the blood and cast it towards the people. "This" he said "is the blood of the Covenant that the Lord has made with you, containing all these rules."

Second Reading Hebrews 9:11-15

Now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, which is better than one made by men's hands because it is not of this created order; and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal redemption for us.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer are sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement and they restore the holiness of their outward lives; how much more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service to the living God.

He brings a new covenant, as the mediator, only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: his death took place to cancel the sins that infringed the earlier covenant.

Gospel Mark 14:12-16.22-26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city and you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, and say to the owner of the house which he enters, 'The Master says: Where is my dining room in which I can eat the passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the preparations for us there."

The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover. And as they were eating he took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them. "Take it," he said "this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it, and he said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God."

After psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives.

Meditation

This celebration originated in the diocese of Liège (1246) on the basis of revelations of Juliana of Cornillon. It was accepted with such enthusiasm throughout Europe that in 1264 it was promulgated for the entire Latin Church. From the beginning the feast commemorated both the body and the blood of the Lord. This original unity has been restored in the post-Vatican II celebration.

Human beings are so essentially physical that even our language of the spirit derives from our bodies. To be a member of an organization requires that we be incorporated into that organization. Publications of societies are said to be organs of these groups. Jesus and his Church have a keen grasp of this reality in the celebrations we call sacraments. Sacraments address themselves to the Church which is Christ's Body and to individual members of that Body. The source and summit of all the Church's life is professed to be the celebration of the eucharist where the Body of Christ partakes of what it is. On this Sunday we celebrate our identity as Christ's Body. On this Sunday we profess our belief that the life-giving and life supporting blood which flows among us is Christ's very life. On this Sunday we direct our attention to the symbol which makes all other symbols possible. The earthly language of bodies and blood fills the scriptures. But those same scriptures proclaim that the pouring forth of blood is unto the nourishment of God's people.

Flesh, blood, bread and wine are the products of destructive processes which bring them to human tables as food to sustain a family. Christ immersed himself in those processes which brought him to the table of the human family as the one food and drink which changes the eater into the eaten. In him we truly become what we eat and drink.