

# SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 3, 2018

*First Reading – Exodus 24:3-8*

*Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 116*

*Second Reading – Hebrews 9:11-15*

*Gospel – Mark 14:12-16, 22-26*

My dear people of God:

While we heard from the First Reading which began in verse 3, chapter 24 of the Book of Exodus, that Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD, and they all answered with one voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has told us", it would be beneficial for us to know that Moses alone received the laws of the Lord. Although he had three companions (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu), plus seventy of the elders of Israel, worshipping at the mountain, he alone came very close to the Lord (Exodus 24:2). It would be safe to assume that the mountain was Sinai.

Moses, being the mediator, after conversing with God, came down and related to the people all the laws and ordinances from God which he received privately. The people gave their assent (verse 3).

On the next day, after presiding over the sacrifice of holocausts and bulls as peace offerings, he read to the people again the laws that he put into writing the day before. In that sacrifice, he splashed half of the blood on the altar, and sprinkled the other half of the blood on the people. The covenant between them and God was ratified (verses 5-8).

My dear people of God, when a covenant is concluded between GOD and man, it is always man who fails to live up to his part of the covenant.

Moses did not lead the Israelites blind-folded into the covenant, nor did he teach them a devotion that was a product of ignorance; on the contrary, he laid before them all the laws. He fairly put these precepts to them. The people submitted themselves to these precepts.

Moses wrote the words of the Lord that there might be no mistake, that they might be perfectly made aware of the thing, and were accorded the chance to make second thoughts, making sure that these were the same as their first thoughts.

People of God: We realize that God's covenants and commands are so incontestably equitable in themselves, and so highly advantageous to us, that the more we think of them, and the more plainly and fully they are set before us, the more reason we must see to comply with them.

It was sealed by the blood of the covenant, that Israel might receive strong consolations from the ratifying of God's promises to them, and might lie under strong obligations from the ratifying of their promises to God.

At this point, my brothers and sisters, I want you to realize that by His Infinite Wisdom, God devised a means for the ISRAELITES back then; and now for US, WHO BELONG TO THIS GENERATION, to be confirmed both in our faith and in our obedience; that we may be both encouraged in our duty and engaged to it. The covenant must be made by sacrifice.

Moses built an altar, in honor of God, which was principally intended in all the altars that were built, and which was the first thing to be looked at in the covenant they were now to seal. He erected twelve pillars, according to the number of the tribes. These were to represent the people, the other party to the covenant; they were set up against the altar, and that Moses, as mediator, passed to and fro between them. Probably each tribe set up and knew its own pillar, and their elders stood by it.

The blood of the sacrifice which God had owned and accepted was sprinkled upon the people themselves and upon the pillars that represented them. This part of the ceremony was thus explained: *"Behold the blood of the covenant; see here how God has sealed you to be a people."* His promises to you, and yours to Him, are both YES and AMEN"

Having seen this sacrificial event done by the mediator, Moses, and going fast forward to the second reading and the Gospel, we know that our Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (of whom Moses was a type), having offered up Himself a sacrifice upon the cross, that His blood might be indeed the blood of the covenant, sprinkled it upon the altar in His intercession (Heb. 9:12), and sprinkled it upon His Church by His word and ordinances and the influences and workings of the Holy Spirit, by whom we were sealed. He

Himself said this solemnly in the institution of the Lord's supper: *"This is my blood, the blood of the covenant"*.

Obviously, Jesus wanted to remind His disciples of the covenant which Yahweh made with Israel at Sinai. This connects our present-day Mass with the First Reading, the Second Reading, and the Gospel. But first, let us appreciate one stanza from the today's Psalm because it echoes the event of the covenant at Mount Sinai: *"I will take up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord... To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. My vows to the LORD I will pay in the presence of all his people."*

Now, let us go to the Second Reading. The author of the letter to the Hebrews continues to show in our second reading that *"Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come to be."* (verse 9). Jesus has perfected the previous tents of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. This tent which is *not made with hands is not of this creation"* (verse 11).

Please note that the connection to the Ark of the Covenant and the sacrifice of atonement is unique in the New Testament and draws us into the rich history of the "first covenant" now brought to perfection in Jesus Christ.

The perfection in Christ is now spelled out: *"He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption"*(9:12). The goat was used for the people's sacrifice, and the calf was used for the sacrifice for the high priest (like Aaron and his household) (Leviticus 16:5-11). Christ's act of atonement on the cross secures an eternal redemption. Christ has entered into the perfect heavenly sanctuary after He provided an eternal redemption, thus securing our eternal redemption by His blood/death on the cross.

What is present in these words stands through all eternity! The imperfection of previous sacrifices is now in the past. They have had their place in the history of God's salvation for the people, but now all things are new. The blood of Christ is the complete sacrifice. *In Christ Jesus, redemption is accomplished.*

Now, let us take a look at our Gospel. Please remember that we are reading the Gospel of the Last Supper as narrated by the Evangelist Mark.

I have explained to you the presence of the MAN with the JAR last Holy Week, I will not tackle it today.

Let me go to the theme of Corpus Christi. For us to appreciate more profoundly this feast, it would be beneficial for us to know its purpose: What is the purpose of the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ? The purpose of this feast is to hold in deep remembrance Jesus who gave His life for the salvation of many. This feast is also a remembrance of Jesus' institution of the Holy Eucharist and His command to celebrate this. The Eucharist is central to our Catholic faith. I pray that today's feast will heighten our awareness of the reality of Jesus present under the form of bread and wine. We heard from the Gospel of Mark: "While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them and said: *"Take, this is my body."* Then he took the cup and after giving thanks, gave it to them and all of them drank from it. He said to them, *"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins,"* (verse 22 & verse 24).

Why do we need a feast of the Eucharist? My dear brothers and sisters, a feast like this affords us the opportunity to give God our collective thanks for Christ's abiding presence with us which is made visible in the Eucharist. It is also an opportunity for us to acquire a better understanding of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ and to fashion and order our attitude to it accordingly. The Eucharist makes present for us the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are able to be part of the act of redemption that occurred on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We remember that sacrifice of Jesus and give thanks for it. At the same time we may derive the sense of spiritual freedom that comes from that event.

But why then, do many of us Catholics, who receive the Eucharist Sunday after Sunday, not experience more of the radical transformation? We may miss the treasure of the Eucharist because we do not take the time to look or reflect on this mystery. Each year the Church pauses to meditate on the Eucharist itself.

Allow me to guide your hearts into this realization: this is the logic of the second reading which we heard from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, verses 11 to 15: *"if the blood of the goats and bulls can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more the blood of Christ"*. That is very clear in verses 13 and 14. Obviously, the author of this letter to the Hebrews upheld the belief of the Israelites of old, that

**the blood of animals offered as holocausts was “REDEMPTIVE”. That was clear from what we heard from the Book of Exodus in today’s First Reading.**

**Now, let us go back to the current “Eucharistic Banquet”. Though we celebrate Eucharist each Sunday, today we are drawn to ponder teachings and events about Christ, on His sublime life: imbibing and partaking of His Body and Blood. WE BECOME WHOM WE EAT. In the ordinary course of things, the food and drink that we consume become assimilated to us. We become assimilated by Christ (or better still, *into Christ*) whom we consume. Let us approach the Eucharist with a more lively faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and we shall experience therein God’s saving power and transforming love. Amen**