



Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ | June 3, 2018

Jesus' Gift of Life

By Janel Esker

I'm a proud, regular blood donor. I don't particularly enjoy needles or the sight of blood, but my mother educated me at a young age that donating blood is one of the most important things you can do to help people. For less than an hour of your time, a momentary stick, and sugar-laden goodies afterward, you can provide a gift that is unequalled in significance—the life-giving force of blood. Truly, donating blood is one of the most prolife actions you can take.

Today we take time to particularly recognize the gift of life we receive each week at the eucharistic table. Jesus is, in

a way, the ultimate blood donor. He gives us all of himself—Body and Blood, the fullness of his life—in our eucharistic meal. Just as blood donations can sustain life for the human family, Jesus' gift of his Body and Blood is our sustaining spiritual life force, a symbol of the covenant between God and humanity that is given to us freely and has no equal.

Though I give blood regularly, I am given a reminder nudge by my blood center after the eight-week waiting period. We come to the eucharistic table each week, but each time we step forward do we remember how significant this gift is? As we receive, are we aware of Jesus' power within us?

This solemnity gives us that reminder to stay attentive to and grateful for God's gift of the Eucharist. +

Sunday Readings

Exodus 24:3-8

[Moses said,] "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you."

Hebrews 9:11-15

...He is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

[Jesus said,] "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many."

A Word From Pope Francis

The Lord breaks his Body and pours out his Blood for all. Truly no division can withstand this sacrifice of communion; only the attitude of falsehood, of complicity with the evil one, can exclude one from it. No other indefensible gap can withstand the power of this broken Bread and this shed Blood.

—General audience,
November 11, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How well do I prepare my heart and mind to receive Jesus in the Eucharist?
- Do I take time to visit him in the tabernacle or adoration to show him my love and gratitude?



The Sacraments— and More

By Thomas H. Groome

My mother-in-law had a lovely habit, upon seeing something beautiful, of saying: “I give you that.” The first time it happened to me we were overlooking a harbor at sunset. When she said, “I give you that, Tom,” I felt it was all mine, and I experienced it as total gift. Maryanne, God rest her soul, had a sacramental consciousness. She recognized “the more” in the everyday.

We Catholics tend to associate *sacrament* with the seven we celebrate as communities of faith. But we should be conscious of the continuity between the liturgical sacraments and the sacramental-ity of life.

The Catholic principle of sacramental-ity is that God is ever present and that we respond through the ordinary and everyday. As we come “to find God in all things” (St. Ignatius of Loyola) and experience God’s grace daily, we can readily believe that the seven sacraments “make present...the grace that they signify” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1127).

In the early centuries, Christians celebrated many sacred rituals as having sacramental power. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church gradually established seven—baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony—as our vital sacraments. Because each reflects a central value in Jesus’ ministry, we say that Jesus instituted all seven.

Starting With Baptism

Because baptism begins our initiation into the Church, it’s considered the “first” of the sacraments. Confirmation and Eucharist, then, complete our initiation. Anointing and reconciliation are sacraments of healing, while matrimony and holy orders are sacraments of vocation to serve the community.

While all seven are necessary to the life of the Church, Catholics cherish the Eucharist as the “sacrament of sacraments” (St. Thomas Aquinas). The *Catechism*, echoing Vatican II, describes it as “the source and summit of Christian life” (CCC 1324). Eucharist is our greatest act of thanksgiving and praise to the Father, reoffering the holy sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In Eucharist, too, we reenact Jesus’ Last Supper with the disciples, so replete with love and peace.

We believe that in doing again what Jesus did at the Last Supper, that “bread and wine...by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ” (CCC 1357). So, in receiving holy Communion we encounter the Real Presence.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-65 revived for Catholics our awareness that the risen Christ is present to the Christian community assembled for worship as the word of God is proclaimed through Scripture. However, “the mode of Christ’s presence under the

Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as ‘the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend’” (CCC 1374).

How and Why

The favored Catholic way to explain *how* Christ is present in the Eucharist is *transubstantiation*. So while the appearance of bread and wine remain, their substance is changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

But as important as *how*, we must remember *why* Jesus is present, and what receiving holy Communion should produce in our lives. He is present as our bread of life to sustain us in daily living as disciples. Eucharist empowers, but also requires our response. Its celebration sends us forth to love and serve the Lord, to live “for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

In their own ways, each sacrament calls and empowers us for such daily discipleship. As we so live, the sacramentality of life and effectiveness of the sacraments become even more important. +



Lord, out of brokenness and weakness you saved my life. Help me to embrace my weakness so I can walk in solidarity with the poor and suffering.

From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 4-9, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
2 Pt 1:2-7 / Mk 12:1-12

Tuesday, Weekday: St. Boniface:
2 Pt 3:12-15a, 17-18 / Mk 12:13-17

Wednesday, Weekday:
2 Tm 1:1-3, 6-12 / Mk 12:18-27

Thursday, Weekday:
2 Tm 2:8-15 / Mk 12:28-34

Friday, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus: Hos 11:1, 3-4, 8c-9 / Eph 3:8-12, 14-19 / Jn 19:31-37

Saturday, Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 2 Tm 4:1-8 / Lk 2:41-51

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