

## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ - June 3, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Exodus 24:3-8

When Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they all answered with one voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has told us." Moses then wrote down all the words of the LORD and, rising early the next day, he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD, Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do." Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words of his."

### Psalms: Ps 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18

R. (13) I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

How shall I make a return to the LORD  
for all the good he has done for me?

The cup of salvation I will take up,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

Precious in the eyes of the LORD  
is the death of his faithful ones.

I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;  
you have loosed my bonds.

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.

### Scripture Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God. For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

### Gospel: Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



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## **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

## **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

## **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Why are you eating somebody's body and drinking his blood? An indelicate question, but still, why? You walk up the aisle and receive what appears to be bread and wine, but which is really Christ's Body and Blood. The Roman historian, Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD), described Christians as cannibals. And many of Jesus' followers simply walked away when he said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." (Jn 6:56) One answer is found in the word "sacrifice." Oh not in today's meaning of the word: some item we enjoy but give up for Lent. Or as parents might say: "I sacrificed my own interests in order to raise you kids." Many meanings, but the basis is the real one. Once upon a time, the tribes of the world tried to please whatever gods they believed in, by offering "sacrifices" to them. They wanted a better harvest, prevention of the storm, or the drought, receipt of plenty instead of starvation, victory in battle, and so on. Why do this? It involved taking the best lamb from the herd, for example, and making it a gift for the gods by freeing it from earth. This is why sacrifice usually meant killing an offering. Sacrifice of the lamb or dove was meant to represent the best things that belonged to earth, now directed to heaven. Send the finest of earth up to paradise in order that the best of paradise could come down to earth.

Also, people ate the flesh and drank the blood of their offering. Why? So that they, too, could be part of the giving to give to the gods. They became an integral portion of the sacrificial union of heaven and earth. The desire for earth to join the gods is lodged deep in human culture and human nature. In the fullness of time, the one God gave his people, at last, a real connection with the One for whom they had been thirsting. He did it through sacrifice, reversing the order of the offering by *sending himself to be sacrificed*. God sent the best of heaven to earth in order that the best of earth (Christ on the cross) could go up to heaven! Christ was emphatically of the earth, and thus he achieved a perfect unity of heaven and earth in this "sacrifice." Animals could not choose to be offered, but Christ did so choose, freely, out of love, on our behalf.

Alright, what about sacramental signs? At what we call the Last Supper, he symbolized what would happen the next day when he handed over his body and blood. But he did it under the sacramental appearance of bread and wine. This was a re-presentation for all time of the bloody sacrifice on the cross, now in an unbloody form, and remaining today in every Mass. So what is the answer to the question we began with? You and I eat flesh and drink blood *in order to be a part of Christ's sacrifice*, in order to join in the new and eternal covenant. It is our salvation and that of the world. Let us let it in.

## **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you." Why was blood so significant in those ceremonies? Why was it used to seal solemn agreements? Is there a relationship between blood and life? Between blood and death?
2. Jesus entered the sanctuary, the one not of this creation, once for all of us, so that we may receive the promised eternal inheritance. Is there any response to Christ's love for us—which is beyond all comprehension—other than awe-filled reverence and love? What could some other actions be?
3. Surely the disciples hadn't understood what Jesus was doing at the Last Supper, but they trusted him absolutely. Where do you go when you need help with trust? Friends? A Priest? Books? To the Holy Spirit?

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

## **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen