



## A Month of Readings on the Precious Blood

*The month of the precious Blood should be preached daily in our churches and we should not be looking for needless excuses.... (Ven. Giovanni Merlini)*

### Introduction

I suspect that Merlini's admonition to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood might have something to do with wondering where they would get enough material for a month's worth of sermons. With this contribution, appearing many years after its long-unavailable predecessor, I hope to assist those committed to the spirituality of the Precious Blood to deepen their acquaintance with the richness of reflection on a topic dear to them from a variety of authors. I hope too that observance of the month traditionally dedicated to the mystery of Christ's Blood might likewise be enhanced by this volume's encouragement to do so prayerfully after the model of the Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours. To that end it follows the familiar pattern of invitational-hymn-psalmody-readings-responsory-collect. The readings from Scripture follow a one-year cursus while those taken from other sources follow a two-year cycle. Among the latter, I have tried to include voices that are familiar as well as some that, hopefully, will be new to readers. The psalmody and, in particular, its antiphons are taken from a little-known 2014 recording of an office composed in honor of a reputed relic of the Precious Blood in Norway. The entire composition, sung by the *Schola Sanctae Sunnivaе*, entitled *In festo susceptionis sanguinis Domini* is readily available from vendors such as Amazon and the entire text of the liturgy with English translation can be found at <http://www.2l.no/e-book/2L114.pdf>. Please note that, out of consideration for copyright holders, this document is for private use only.

**Invitatory** (*The following “Canticle of the Blood” may be used as an Invitatory*)

*Come,  
let us adore Christ, the Son of God,  
who has redeemed us with his blood.*

Clap your hands, all you peoples,  
sing unto God with a voice of jubilation.

For you, God, glorious and mighty,  
have shown us mercy.

You have not spared your only Son,  
but delivered him up in our behalf.

That you might redeem us  
from our sins in Christ’s own blood;

That justified in the blood of Jesus  
you might turn your anger from us;

That we who were separated  
might be reconciled through the blood of Christ.

O God, my God, what can I render to you  
for all the good you have bestowed upon me?

I will take the chalice of salvation,  
and I will call upon the power of Christ’s blood.

Sing to Jesus, all you saints,  
and make known the memory of his holiness.

For Christ indeed has loved us and washed us in his blood  
and has become our helper and redeemer.

May Christ be blessed forever  
who has wrought such wonders in us.

Blessed be Jesus for all ages,  
and may the heavens and the earth be filled with the praises of his love.

*Come, let us adore Christ, the Son of God,  
who has redeemed us with his blood.*

*Amen. (St. Maria de Mattias, +1866)*

**Hymn** (*at choice*)

No weight of gold or silver  
can measure human worth;  
No soul secures its ransom  
with all the wealth of earth;  
no sinners find their freedom  
but by the gift unpriced,  
the precious blood of Christ.

Our sins, our griefs, our troubles,  
He bore and made his own;  
We hid our faces from him,  
rejected and alone.  
His wounds are for our healing,

What shall I offer to the Lord  
His praises to proclaim?  
The saving cup I will take up  
And call upon God's name.

The blood of calves or rams or goats  
Could never cleanse our sin.  
For only Christ's blood without price  
Can wash the heart within.

How precious in the eyes of God  
The sacrifice of faith!

Glory be to Jesus  
Who in bitter pains  
Poured for me his life blood  
From his sacred veins!  
Grace and life eternal  
In that blood I find,  
Blest be his compassion  
Infinitely kind!

Blest through endless ages  
Be the precious stream  
Which from endless torment  
Doth the world redeem!

No weight of gold or silver  
Can measure human worth;  
no soul secures its ransom  
with all the wealth of earth;  
no sinners find their freedom  
but by the gift unpriced,  
the Lamb of God unblemished,

Our peace is by his pain;  
Behold, the Man of sorrows,  
The Lamb for sinners slain!

In Christ the past is over,  
a new world now begins,  
with him we rise to freedom  
Who saves us from our sins.  
We live by faith in Jesus  
to make his glory known:  
Behold, the Man of Sorrows,  
The Lamb upon his throne! (76 76 D)

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Your servant Lord, was Christ your Son,  
Your servant to his death.

I eat his flesh and drink his blood:  
Our mystic unity.  
So may I be your servant, too.  
So may you set me free.

Then I shall call upon your name  
In thankfulness and praise,  
And drink of everlasting life  
For everlasting days. (CM)

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There the fainting spirit  
Drinks of like her fill;  
There, as in a fountain,  
Laves herself at will.

Abel's blood for vengeance  
Pleaded to the skies;  
But the blood of Jesus  
For our pardon cries.

Lift ye then your voices;  
Swell the mighty flood;  
Louder still and louder  
Praise the precious Blood.

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the precious blood of Christ.

Our sins, our griefs and troubles,  
He bore and made his own;  
We hid our faces from him,  
Rejected and alone.  
His wounds are for our healing,

Our peace is by his pain:  
Behold, the Man of sorrows,  
The Lamb for sinners slain!

In Christ the past is over,  
A new world now begins,

With him we rise to freedom  
Who saves us from our sins.  
We live by faith in Jesus  
To make his glory known:  
Behold, the Man of sorrows,  
The Lamb upon his throne! (76 76 D)

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See how the army of our sins,  
A cruel army, proud and fierce,  
The heart of God most innocent  
Ungratefully and basely pierce!

Our sins direct the cruel stroke  
Made by the thrust of soldier's lance;  
The dreaded sharpness of its point  
Our crimes with mortal guilt enhance.

From out that opened Heart is born  
The Holy Church, of Christ the Bride;  
Behold the ark to save our race;  
The door, this wound made in his side.

Hence comes and everlasting stream  
Of grace in wondrous sevenfold flood,  
That we may there our robes defiled  
Cleanse in the Lamb's most precious Blood. (LM)

\*\*

The Lamb's high banquet called to share,  
Arrayed in garments white and fair,  
The Red Sea past, we now would sing  
To Jesus our triumphant King.

Upon the altar of the cross  
His body has redeemed our loss;  
And, tasting of his precious Blood,  
In him we live anew to God.

Now Christ our Passover is slain,  
The Lamb of God without a stain;  
His flesh, the true unleavened Bread,  
For us is freely offer'ed.

Christ rises conqu'ror from the grave,  
From death returning, strong to save;  
With his right hand the tyrant chains,  
And paradise for all regains. (LM)

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Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee;  
Let the water and the blood  
From thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double sure,  
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Could my tears for ever flow,  
Could me zeal no languish know,  
These for sin could not atone—  
Thou must save, and thou alone;  
In my hand no price I bring,  
Simply to the cross I cling. (77 77 77)

\*\*

Created for the glory of your name,  
redeemed by your blood on the cross,  
signed by the seal of your Spirit,  
we beseech you: save us, O Lord!

You break the bonds of guilt,  
protect the meek and free the oppressed.

You lead the people who believe in your love  
to the restful meadows in heaven.

Praise and honor to you,  
good shepherd, radiant beam of the eternal light,  
who live with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
in glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb,  
our garments cleansed in him,  
saved and made new by Love,  
we sing praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

With you we are raised on the Cross,  
with you, baptized into your death,  
in you, O Christ, we are now risen,  
and restored to life in the heart of the Father.

O Christ, your life is an immense font of joy,  
springing up eternally; unending splendor,  
in you is immersed the human smallness of the  
redeemed.  
Our day passes, declining;  
Lord, remain with us this evening,  
and may the certainty of our faith  
light up the advancing night.

Grant that our death be absorbed  
by the glorious light of the Resurrection and,  
having died your own death,  
may we live in you, who are our life.  
O Father of kindness, we ask you this  
through your Son who is risen,  
and through the eternal Love who leads us  
toward the sweet light of your face. Amen.

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**PSALMODY** (*at choice*)

**Series I**

*Antiphon 1* Author of everyone's salvation, Jesus, who are our refuge, We, your servants, bowing and unworthy, call upon you, those whom you thought worthy to redeem with your own blood, see fit to unite us with the companies of the patriarchs.

*Psalm 8*

How great is your name, O Lord our God, \*  
through all the earth!

gave him power over the works of your hands, \*  
put all things under his feet.

Your majesty is praised above the heavens; \*  
on the lips of children and of babes  
you have found praise to foil your enemy, \*  
to silence the foe and the rebel.

All of them, sheep and cattle, \*  
yes, even the savage beasts,  
birds of the air, and fish \*  
that make their way through the waters.

When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, \*  
the moon and the stars which you arranged,  
what is man that you should keep him in mind, \*  
mortal man that you care for him?

How great is your name, O Lord our God \*  
through all the earth!

Yet you have made him little less than a god; \*  
with glory and honor you crowned him,

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 2* The city is truly blessed which your Godhead illuminates, Jerusalem adorned with celestial stones, into whose dwellings deem it fit to lead us, whom you set free, Lord Jesus, with your blood.

*Psalm 19A*

The heavens proclaim the glory of God \*  
and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands.  
Day unto day takes up the story \*  
and night unto night makes known the message.

tent, \*  
rejoices like a champion to run its course.

No speech, no word, no voice is heard †  
yet their span extends through all the earth, \*  
their words to the utmost bounds of the world.

At the end of the sky is the rising of the sun; †  
to the furthest end of the sky is its course. \*  
There is nothing concealed from its burning heat.

There he has placed a tent for the sun; †  
it comes forth like a bridegroom coming from his

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 3* Most merciful Lord, who for the sake of our wretchedness endured the punishment of death at the hands of the wicked, set free from the infernal abyss those you have redeemed and blot out all their sins in lasting oblivion, those for whom you gave up your revered body and poured forth your precious blood.

*Psalm 24*

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, \*  
the world and all its peoples.  
It is he who set it on the seas; \*  
on the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? \*  
Who shall stand in his holy place?  
The man with clean hands and pure heart, †  
who desires not worthless things, \*  
who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbor.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord \*  
and reward from the God who saves him.  
Such are the men who seek him, \*  
seek the face of the God of Jacob.

O gates, lift high your heads; †  
grow higher, ancient doors. \*

Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is the king of glory? †  
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant, \*  
the Lord, the valiant in war.

O gates, lift high your heads; †  
grow higher, ancient doors. \*  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is he, the king of glory? †  
He, the Lord of armies, \*  
he is the king of glory.

Glory to the Father and to the Son \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

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**Series II**

*Antiphon 1* Lord, Almighty King, from the princes of darkness and from the regions of punishment free your humble servants, for whom you paid the price of your blood. Lord Christ, lead us to the fellowship of your elect, with whom we may rejoice for ever.

*Psalm 46*

God is for us a refuge and strength, \*  
a helper close at hand, in time of distress:  
so we shall not fear though the earth should rock, \*  
though the mountains fall into the depths of the sea,  
even though its waters rage and foam, \*  
even though the mountains be shaken by its waves.

The Lord of hosts is with us: \*  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

The waters of a river give joy to God's city, \*  
the holy place where the Most High dwells.  
God is within, it cannot be shaken; \*  
God will help it at the dawning of the day.  
Nations are in tumult, kingdoms are shaken: \*  
he lifts his voice, the earth shrinks away.

The Lord of hosts is with us: \*

the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Come, consider the works of the Lord, \*  
the redoubtable deeds he has done on the earth.  
He puts an end to wars over all the earth; †  
the bow he breaks, the spear he snaps. \*

He burns the shields with fire.  
"Be still and know that I am God, \*  
supreme among the nations, supreme on the earth!"

The Lord of hosts is with us: \*  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 2* Guard your flock, Lord, you who deigned to assume the cross for the sake of mankind, shedding your blood as the price of our salvation. Alleluia.

*Psalm 100*

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. †  
Serve the Lord with gladness. \*  
Come before him, singing for joy.

Know that he, the Lord, is God. †  
He made us, we belong to him, \*  
we are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Go within his gates, giving thanks. †  
Enter his courts with songs of praise. \*

Give thanks to him and bless his name.

Indeed, how good is the Lord, †  
eternal his merciful love. \*  
He is faithful from age to age.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 3* Have compassion on your servants, most bounteous God, that they may be among the number of your elect, whom you deigned to redeem with your own blood.

*Psalm 72*

O God, give your judgment to the king, \*  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice \*  
and your poor in right judgment.

May the mountains bring forth peace for the people \*  
and the hills, justice.

May he defend the poor of the people †  
and save the children of the needy \*  
and crush the oppressor.

He shall endure like the sun and the moon \*  
from age to age.

He shall descend like rain on the meadow, \*  
like raindrops on the earth.

In his days justice shall flourish \*  
and peace till the moon fails.

He shall rule from sea to sea, \*  
from the Great River to earth's bounds.  
Before him his enemies shall fall, \*  
his foes lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts \*  
shall pay him tribute.

The kings of Sheba and Seba \*  
shall bring him gifts.  
Before him all kings shall fall prostrate, \*  
all nations shall serve him.

For he shall save the poor when they cry \*  
and the needy who are helpless.

He will have pity on the weak \*  
and save the lives of the poor.

From oppression he will rescue their lives, \*  
to him their blood is dear.

Long may he live, \*  
may the gold of Sheba be given him.  
They shall pray for him without ceasing \*  
and bless him all the day.

May corn be abundant in the land \*  
to the peaks of the mountains.  
May its fruit rustle like Lebanon; †  
may men flourish in the cities \*  
like grass on the earth.

May his name be blessed for ever \*  
and endure like the sun.  
Every tribe shall be blessed in him, \*  
all nations bless his name.

Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, \*  
who alone works wonders,  
ever blessed his glorious name. \*  
Let his glory fill the earth.

Amen! Amen!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

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### Series III

*Antiphon 1* May the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, who freed us with the price of His blood, free us from the princes of darkness and set us in the celestial home, rejoicing with Him in everlasting glory.

#### *Psalm 96*

O sing a new song to the Lord, †  
sing to the Lord, all the earth. \*  
O sing to the Lord, bless his name.

Proclaim his help day by day, †  
tell among the nations his glory \*  
and his wonders among all the peoples.

The Lord is great and worthy of praise, †  
to be feared above all gods; \*  
the gods of the heathens are naught.

It was the Lord who made the heavens, †  
his are majesty and state and power \*  
and splendor in his holy place.

Give the Lord, you families of peoples, †  
give the Lord glory and power, \*  
give the Lord the glory of his name.

Bring an offering and enter his courts, †

worship the Lord in his temple. \*  
O earth, tremble before him.

Proclaim to the nations: “God is king.” †  
The world he made firm in its place; \*  
he will judge the peoples in fairness.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad, \*  
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,  
let the land and all it bears rejoice, \*  
all the trees of the wood shout for joy

at the presence of the Lord for he comes, \*  
he comes to rule the earth.

With justice he will rule the world, \*  
he will judge the peoples with his truth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 2* Lord, fount of mercy, in which is washed away the contamination of our sins, graciously succour your redeemed family; and having redeemed them with the shedding of your precious blood, after their human life, with their sins remitted, benignly grant them, good shepherd, a place in Paradise.

#### *Psalm 93*

The Lord is king, with majesty enrobed; †  
the Lord has robed himself with might, \*  
he has girded himself with power.

The world you made firm, not to be moved; †  
your throne has stood firm from of old. \*  
From all eternity, O Lord, you are.

The waters have lifted up, O Lord, †  
the waters have lifted up their voice, \*  
the waters have lifted up their thunder.

Greater than the roar of mighty waters †  
more glorious than the surgings of the sea, \*  
the Lord is glorious on high.

Truly your decrees are to be trusted. †  
Holiness is fitting to your house, \*  
O Lord, until the end of time.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon 3* Hail, King of kings and Lord, who loved your flock solely through your tenderness and did not shrink from being the reviled object on the cross. Hail, our sweet Lord, our cure and our curer. O most holy Lord, we beg to be preserved by your blood, we for whose sake you became the death of hell.



Psalm 99

The Lord is king; the peoples tremble. †  
He is throned on the cherubim; the earth quakes. \*  
The Lord is great in Zion.

He is supreme over all the peoples. †  
Let them praise his name, so terrible and great. \*  
He is holy, full of power.

You are a king who loves what is right; †  
you have established equity, justice and right; \*  
you have established them in Jacob.

Exalt the Lord our God; †  
bow down before Zion, his footstool. \*  
He the Lord is holy.

Among his priests were Aaron and Moses, †  
among those who invoked his name was Samuel. \*

They invoked the Lord and he answered.

To them he spoke in the pillar of cloud. †  
They did his will; they kept the law, \*  
which he, the Lord, had given.

O Lord our God, you answered them. †  
For them you were a God who forgives; \*  
yet you punished all their offenses.

Exalt the Lord our God; †  
bow down before his holy mountain \*  
for the Lord our God is holy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

**COLLECTS** (*at choice*)

Almighty and eternal God, you have appointed your only-begotten Son the Redeemer of the world, and willed to be appeased by his Blood. Grant we beg of you, that we may worthily adore this price of our salvation, and through its power be safeguarded from the evils of the present life, so that we may rejoice in its fruits forever in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Feast of the Precious Blood; Traditional*)

Father, who through the blood of Jesus your Son, the Lamb sacrificed on the cross, redeemed us, sanctified us, and made us your people; grant that all may accept this gift of your love, celebrate it joyfully in the Spirit, and drink of it in the Eucharistic chalice, the sign of your covenant and blessing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. (*Feast of the Precious Blood; Contemporary*)

O God, who by the Precious Blood of your Only Begotten Son have redeemed the whole world, preserve in us the work of your mercy, so that, ever honoring the mystery of our salvation, we may merit to obtain its fruits. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. (*Votive Mass The Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ*)

Remember your mercies, O Lord, and with your eternal protection sanctify your servants, for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his Blood, established the Paschal Mystery. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. R. Amen. (*Good Friday*)

O God, who for your glory and the salvation of the human race willed to establish Christ as the eternal High Priest, grant that the people he has gained for you by his Blood may, through their participation in his memorial, experience the power of his Cross and Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. (*Votive Mass of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest*)

O God, whose mercies are without number and whose treasure of goodness is infinite, graciously increase the faith of the people consecrated to you, that all may grasp and rightly understand by whose love they have been created, through whose Blood they have been redeemed, and by whose Spirit they have been reborn. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. (*Votive Mass The Mercy of God*)

## READINGS

### Day 1

*A reading from the Book of Leviticus.*

If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel: No person among you shall eat blood, nor shall any alien who resides among you eat blood. And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of every creature—its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off. (*Leviticus 17:10-14*)

*From the "Spiritual Writings" of St. Gaspar del Bufalo (+1837)*

*"You have been bought at a great price" [1 Cor 6: 20]. My faithful people, the adoration of the inestimable price of our redemption is the most tender subject that we can propose for our consideration. Through it we receive the treasures of Wisdom and Sanctification. Through it we are freed from the pains of hell in proportion to our love of Jesus. Through it we take possession of the holy glory of heaven, in virtue of the Divine Blood! "You have been bought at a great price; glorify God in your body" [1 Cor 6: 20]*

Now who would believe it? Instead of observing sentiments of tender response in Souls, one sees ingratitude, an inexpressible lack of awareness in the sons and daughters who have been redeemed! *"What profit is there in my Blood?" [Ps 30: 10].* The Lord has already lamented this with His Prophet. It is just, therefore, O faithful ones, that to compensate for the ingratitude of humankind, we consecrate the present month to Adoration of the Divine Blood and by it soften our Hearts. By means of the application of this inestimable price by which we are redeemed, may the sinful soul find the sacred and religious motivation to hope for mercy and pardon; may the penitent find in this [price] inspiration to grow in the Virtues and in Holiness; and finally, may the just person find a most ardent zeal to save Souls for the Lord. If sin was always the cause of the inner sorrows of the Savior, then today, in the universal crisis of the people, it has caused indescribable harm to the interests of faith. And what does the demon not do (in order that souls not profit from the divine Blood)? Ah, when people recall such an important devotion it prods them to rise from the fatal sleep of spiritual death, which oppresses them. *"I will take up the chalice of salvation, and I will call on the name of the Lord" [Ps 116: 13] . . . "my chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it!" [Ps 23: 5].* Now, I mean that in the Old Testament the Lord was pleased with the Blood of the Victims, inasmuch as this prefigured the Blood of the Lamb shed in the fullness of time on the altar of the Cross. *"For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works?" [Heb 9: 13-14].*

From this devotion, besides, comes the revival of that goodness which the Divine Blood has created in us through the regeneration of Holy Baptism. From this devotion comes a special respect for the other Sacraments and especially for the Sacrament of Penance, where one finds fulfilled the passage: *"justified in Blood, we will be saved by him from the wrath" [Rom 5: 9].* Oh, that we might turn the gaze of our faith to the Table of love, to the Sacrifice of the Altar; oh, how religion calls us to the most tender mysteries of redemption! Jesus, dearest people, is therefore our beloved, white and ruddy. He is white, because he is pure at the core of his being. He is ruddy, because of his Divine Blood. *"My beloved is white and ruddy" [Song 5: 10].* Everywhere I fixed my attention, I did not remember nor did I see that Blood . . . the wounds of the feet, of the hands . . . the Head crowned with thorns . . . the open Divine Heart stirs us to love all things in return . . . let us even use the words of the Church in the Hymn of the Passion of Jesus Christ, *"stand at the cross mourning; anoint the sacred feet . . . wash them with your tears, dry them with your hair, and kiss them with your mouth."*

Oh my Jesus, I pray that you accept the supplications of this holy month, in compensation for so many iniquities of humankind; and while the enemy of good seeks to keep the sons of Adam from remembering your love, may the

devotion to the Divine Blood bring our souls closer to your Divine Heart: “*you have been brought near in the Blood*” [Eph 2: 13]. May our minds, therefore, always be occupied with pondering the mysteries of your love and may our hearts be occupied with love for its application. May our bodily sentiments be occupied with showing the triumphs of that love for our sanctification and that of others. Thus may this inestimable price by which we have been redeemed be indelible in our memory: “For you have been bought at a great price. *Glorify God in your body*” [1 Cor 6: 20].

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From “*The Church’s Year of Grace*” by Pius Parsch (+1954)

The feast of the Most Precious Blood continues the mystery of redemption proper to Good Friday and to feast such as Holy Cross, Corpus Christi and Sacred Heart. The observance was placed on the first Sunday of July by Pius IX in 1849, as the whole month was formerly dedicated to the Precious Blood. The Breviary reform of Pius X assigned the feast to the present date.

Let us classify the matter which the liturgy presents on the subject of the Precious Blood under the following headings: a) types from the Old Testament; b) scenes from the life of Jesus; c) symbols.

a) The Church takes us back to the beginning. Cain and Abel are making an offering. Abel’s sacrifice is pleasing to God, Cain’s is not. This gives rise to the sin of hatred, and fratricide is its resolution. The thirsting earth soaks up Abel’s blood as it shouts to heaven for vengeance. This shouting prefigured the scene on Calvary, where Christ’s Blood cried to heaven for the redemption of mankind.

Millenia pass, and now we see Israel oppressed by Egypt. God commands the people to kill a lamb and to sprinkle the doorposts with its blood; houses thus besprinkled are spared by the messenger of death. But where the doors are not reddened with the blood of the lamb, all male firstborn from king to slave die. This blood on the doorposts was a type of the Blood of Christ. Can the blood of a lamb save a man? No, but as a figure of the Redeemer’s Blood it certainly does. For when the Destroyer sees the thresholds of a human heart marked with Christ’s sacred Blood, he must pass by. And another soul is saved

In a vision the prophet Isaias saw a man treading out grapes (in the Orient, trampling upon grapes in the wine-press was the usual means of extracting the juice). The prophet asked the man: “Why are your garments so red?” “The wine-press I have trodden alone,” he answers, “because from the nations there is no one with me.” The trodder of the wine-press is Christ, His garments crimsoned by the Blood of redemption.

b) The Church reminds us of the first drops of blood that flowed for our redemption on the day when Jesus was circumcised. It is night on Mount Olivet, and the moon is shining. We see the holy face crimsoned with blood during the agony in the garden. Unhappy, despairing Judas casts the blood-money down in the temple. “I have betrayed innocent blood!” In the scourging chamber we see the Lord in deepest humiliation; under raw strokes the divine Blood spurts out over the floor. Christ is led before Pilate. Pilate shows the blood-covered Body to the crowds: *Ecce homo!* We go through Jerusalem’s streets following the bloody footsteps to Golgotha. Down the beams of the Cross blood trickles. A soldier opens the sacred side. Water and Blood.

c) Adam is sleeping an ecstatic sleep. God opens his side, removes a rib and forms Eve, the mother of all the living. But our view transcends this action and in spirit we behold the second, the divine Adam, Christ. He is sleeping the sleep of death. From His opened side blood and water flow, symbols of baptism and the Eucharist, symbols of the second Eve, the Church, the Mother of all the living. Through blood and water Christ willed to redeem God’s many children and to lead them to an eternal home.

At Jerusalem a service in Yahweh’s honor is taking place on the Day of Atonement. The high priest is making his annual entrance into the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood of bucks and bulls upon the covenant in expiation for the sins of the people. The Church shows is the higher meaning of this rite. Our divine High Priest Christ on the first

Good Friday entered that Holy of Holies which is not made with hands nor sprinkled with the blood of bucks and bulls; there He effects, once and for all, with His own Blood man's eternal redemption.

A finale. Holy Church transports us to the end. The heavenly liturgy is in progress. Upon the altar is the Lamb, slain yet alive, crimsoned by His own Blood. Round about stand the countless army of the redeemed in garments washed white in the Blood of the Lamb. Hosts of the blessed are singing the new canticle of redemption: "You have redeemed us out of every tribe and tongue and nation by your Blood."

Now from vision to present reality. How fortunate we are to have divine Blood so near to us, to offer it to the heavenly Father for the sins of the whole world! Why, we are even permitted to drink it!

## RESPONSORY

Of old it was decreed by the Lord: Make sure that you do not partake of the blood -- for blood is life. But Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed -- for blood is life.

## Day 2

*A reading from the Book of Exodus.*

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (*Exodus 12:1-13*)

*From a sermon by St. Aphraates of Persia (+345)*

The Passover of the Jews is celebrated on the fourteenth day during the night and on the following day. Our Passover is celebrated on the day of the passion, the Great Friday, on the fifth day, with its night and daytime. At Passover, the Jews escaped from slavery to the Pharaoh; on the day of the crucifixion we were delivered from captivity to Satan. They slaughtered a lamb from the flock and by means of its blood were kept safe from the destroyer; by the blood of the well-beloved Son we have been rescued from the corrupt works we used to do. They had Moses as their leader; we have Jesus as leader and Saviour. For their sake, Moses parted the sea and brought them across; our Saviour opened up the lower world and broke down its gates when he made his way into the depths of the abyss, opened its approaches and cleared a way for those who believed in him. To the Jews manna was given; to us the Saviour has given his body to eat. For them water gushed from a rock; for us the Saviour causes *floods of living water to gush from his bosom*. To them the land of Canaan was promised as an inheritance; to us the Lord has promised to give the land of Life.

For the sake of the Jews Moses set up the bronze serpent in order to heal from serpents' bites those who gazed on it; for our sake, Jesus nailed himself to the Cross in order that looking at it we might be saved from the wound of the serpent, that is, Satan. For them Moses set up the tent of covenant, in order that by offering sacrifices and oblations

there they might be cleansed of their sins; Jesus, for his part, by rising from the dead *raised up the fallen tent of David*. He had told the Jews: *When you have destroyed this temple which you see, I will raise it up in three days*. The disciples understood him to be speaking of his body: when the Jews would destroy it, he would raise it up in three days. In this Tent he promised us Life, for in it our sins have been expiated. He called the tent of the Jews a 'temporary tent', since it was useful only for a short time; ours he called a *temple of the Holy Spirit*, and an everlasting one.

As for the Passover lamb, listen to the Most Holy One ordering that it be eaten in a single house and not in several. This single house is the Church of God. In it, we eat the Passover lamb *in haste*, with fear and trembling, while remaining standing, for we are hastening to eat the Life given by the Spirit we have received.

According to the prophecy of Jeremiah the people would be given a new covenant: *I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah. It will not be like the covenant which I made with their ancestors on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; it was they who broke that covenant of mine, therefore I rejected them!* The God who promised to give a new covenant is the same God who called Abraham and gave this promise and blessing: *Instead of being called Abram, as you have been until now, your name henceforward will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of a great number of people*. Then he added: *In your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed*.

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*From an Easter sermon of St. John Chrysostom (+407)*

Do you wish to know the power of this blood? Let us recall the figure found in the ancient writings, let us see what happened in Egypt. God was about to inflict the tenth plague on Egypt. He wished to destroy their first-born because they would not allow his first-born people to depart. What would he do, so that the Jews would not be stricken down with the Egyptians, for they all dwelt in the same place. Learn the virtue of the figure so that you may better understand the power of the truth. The blow sent by God was about to strike from heaven and the exterminating angel was making the round of the houses.

What did Moses do? "Immolate," said he, "a lamb without blemish and mark your door-posts with its blood." What are you saying, Moses? Can the blood of an irrational animal save man endowed with reason? Yes, says Moses, not because it is blood but because it is the figure of the blood of the Savior. Just as the statues of the emperors which have neither souls nor sensation protect men endowed with souls and sensation who seek refuge near them, not because they are made of bronze but because they are the image of the emperor; so this blood deprived of soul and sensation saved men endowed with a soul, not because it was blood but because it prefigured the blood of the Savior.

On that day the exterminating angel saw the blood which marked certain doors and dared not enter. Today, it is not the blood of prefiguration marking certain doors which the devil sees; the blood he sees on the lips of the faithful is the blood of truth marking the door of true temples of Christ. All the more reason, therefore, for him to withdraw. For if the mere figure restrained the destroying angel, how much more will the reality put the devil to flight.

## **RESPONSORY**

By faith Moses celebrated the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. -- God had something better in view for us. You know that you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as a Lamb without blemish and without spot. -- God had something better in view for us.

## **Day 3**

*A reading from the Book of Exodus.*

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.' And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings

and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, 'See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.' (*Exodus 24:3-8*)

*From "A Treatise Upon the Passion" by St. Thomas More (+1535)*

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus it is related that Moses, in confirmation of the old Law, put half the blood of the sacrifice into a cup, and the other half he shed upon the altar. And, after the book of the Law had been read, he sprinkled the blood upon the people and said unto them: This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in all these words. And so was the Old Testament ratified and confirmed with blood. And in like manner was the New Testament confirmed with blood, saving that, in order to declare the greater excellence of the New Testament brought by the Son of God, above the Old Testament brought by the prophet Moses, whereas the Old Testament was ratified with the blood of a brute beast, the New Testament was ratified with the blood of a rational man, and of that man who was also God, that is to say, with the blessed blood of our holy Saviour himself. And that self-same blood did our Lord here give unto his apostles in this blessed sacrament, as he plainly declared himself, saying: This is my blood of the New Testament, or: This is the chalice of the New Testament in my blood which shall be shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

When our Lord said this, he declared therein the efficacy of the New Testament above the old, in that the old Law in the blood of beasts could only promise the remission of sin that was to come later. For as Saint Paul says: It was impossible that sin should be taken away by the blood of brute beasts. But the new Law with the blood of Christ does perform the thing that the old Law promised, that is, the remission of sin. And therefore our Saviour said: This is the chalice of the New Testament in my blood – that is, to be confirmed in my blood – which shall be shed for the remission of sins.

His words also declared the wonderful excellence of this new blessed sacrament above the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, in these words: For you and for many. For in these words our Saviour spoke, says Saint Chrysostom, as though he meant to say: The blood of the paschal Lamb was shed only for the first-born among the children of Israel, but this blood of mine shall be shed for the remission of the sin of all the whole world.

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*From "a treatise on faith addressed to Peter" by Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe (+533)*

The sacrifices of animal victims which our forefathers were commanded to offer to God by the holy Trinity itself, the one God of the old and the new testaments, foreshadowed the most acceptable gift of all. This was the offering which in his compassion the only Son of God would make of himself in his human nature for our sake.

The Apostle teaches that Christ *offered himself for us to God as a fragrant offering and sacrifice*. He is the true God and the true high priest who for our sake entered once for all into the holy of holies, taking with him not the blood of bulls and goats but his own blood. This was foreshadowed by the high priest of old when each year he took blood and entered the holy of holies.

Christ is therefore the one who in himself alone embodied all that he knew to be necessary to achieve our redemption. He is at once priest and sacrifice, God and temple. He is the priest through whom we have been reconciled, the sacrifice by which we have been reconciled, the temple in which we have been reconciled, the God with whom we have been reconciled. He alone is priest, sacrifice and temple because he is all these things as God in the form of a servant; but he is not alone as God, for he is this with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of God.

Hold fast to this and never doubt it: the only-begotten Son, God the Word, becoming man offered himself for us to God as a fragrant offering and sacrifice. In the time of the old testament, patriarchs, prophets and priests sacrificed animals in his honor, and in honor of the Father and the Holy Spirit as well. Now in the time of the new testament

the holy catholic Church throughout the world never ceases to offer the sacrifice of bread and wine, in faith and love, to him and to the Father and the Holy Spirit, with whom he shares one Godhead.

Those animal sacrifices foreshadowed the flesh of Christ which he would offer for our sins, though himself without sin, and the blood which he would pour out for the forgiveness of our sins. In this sacrifice there is thanksgiving for, and commemoration of, the flesh of Christ that he offered for us, and the blood that the same God poured out for us. On this Saint Paul says in the Acts of the Apostles: *Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as bishops to rule the Church of God, which he won for himself by his blood.*

Those sacrifices of old pointed in sign to what was to be given to us. In this sacrifice we see plainly what has already been given to us. Those sacrifices foretold the death of the Son of God for sinners. In this sacrifice he is proclaimed as already slain for sinners, as the Apostle testifies: *Christ died for the wicked at a time when we were still powerless, and when we were enemies we were reconciled with God through the death of his Son.*

## **RESPONSORY**

Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, -- ‘See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you.’ We have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. -- ‘See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you.’

### **Day 4**

*A reading from the Book of Leviticus.*

Aaron shall present the bull as a sin-offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house; he shall slaughter the bull as a sin-offering for himself. He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of crushed sweet incense, and he shall bring it inside the curtain and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, so that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the covenant, or he will die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat he shall sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times.

He shall slaughter the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. No one shall be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the sanctuary until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement on its behalf, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

*(Leviticus 16:11-19)*

*From “The Hidden Life” by St. Edith Stein (Theresa Benedicta of the Cross) (+1942)*

Once a year on the greatest and most holy day of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest stepped into the Holy of Holies before the face of the Lord “to pray for himself and his household and the whole congregation of Israel.” He sprinkled the throne of grace with the blood of a young bull and a goat, which he had previously to slaughter, and in this way absolved himself and his house “of the impurities of the sons of Israel and of their transgressions and of all their sins.” No person was to be in the tent (i.e., in the holy place that lay in front of the Holy of Holies) when the high priest stepped into God’s presence in this awesomely sacred place, this place where no one but he entered and he himself only at this hour. And even now he had to burn incense “so that a cloud of smoke...would veil the judgment throne...and he not die.” This solitary dialogue took place in deepest mystery.

The Day of Atonement is the Old Testament antecedent of Good Friday. The ram that is slaughtered for the sins of the people represents the spotless Lamb of God (so did, no doubt, that other chosen by lot and burdened with the sins of the people that was driven into the wilderness). And the high priest descended from Aaron foreshadows the eternal high priest. Just as Christ anticipated his sacrificial death during the last supper, so he also anticipated the high priestly prayer. He did not have to bring for himself an offering for sin because he was without sin. He did not have to await the hour prescribed by the Law and nor to seek out the Holy of Holies in the temple. He stands, always and everywhere, before the face of God; his own soul is the Holy of Holies. It is not only God's dwelling, but is also essentially and indissolubly united to God. He does not have to conceal himself from God by a protective cloud of incense. He gazes upon the uncovered face of the Eternal One and has nothing to fear. Looking at the Father will not kill him. And he unlocks the mystery of the high priest's realm. All who belong to him may hear how, in the Holy of Holies of his heart, he speaks to his Father; they are to experience what is going on and are to learn to speak to the Father in their own hearts.

However, the way to the interior life as well as to the choirs of blessed spirits who sing the eternal *Sanctus* is Christ. His blood is the curtain through which we enter into the Holiest of Holies, the Divine Life. In baptism and in the sacrament of reconciliation, his blood cleanses us of our sins, opens our eyes to eternal light, our ears to hearing God's word. It opens our lips to sing his praise, to pray in expiation, in petition, in thanksgiving, all of which are but varying forms of adoration, i.e., of the creature's homage to the Almighty and All-benevolent One. In the sacrament of confirmation, Christ's blood marks and strengthens the soldiers of Christ so that they candidly profess their allegiance. However, above all, we are made members of the Body of Christ by virtue of the sacrament in which Christ himself is present. When we partake of the sacrifice and receive Holy Communion and are nourished by the flesh and blood of Jesus, we ourselves become his flesh and his blood. And only if and insofar as we are members of his Body, can his spirit quicken and govern us. "It is the Spirit that quickens, for the Spirit gives life to the members. But it only quickens members of its own body.... The Christian must fear nothing as much as being separated from the Body of Christ. For when separated from Christ's Body, the Christian is no longer his member, is no longer quickened by his Spirit...." However, we become members of the Body of Christ "not only through love..., but in all reality, through becoming one with his flesh: For this is effected through the food that he has given us in order to show us his longing for us. This is why he has submerged himself in us and allowed his body to take form in us. We, then, are one, just as the body is joined to the head...." As members of his Body, animated by his Spirit, we bring ourselves "through him, with him, and in him" as a sacrifice and join in the eternal hymn of thanksgiving. Therefore, after receiving the holy meal, the church permits us to say: "Satisfied by such great gifts, grant, we beseech you, Lord, that these gifts we have received be for our salvation and that we never cease praising you."

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*From a homily on Leviticus by Origen, priest (+253)*

Once a year the high priest, leaving the people outside, entered that place where no one except the high priest might enter. In it was the mercy-seat, and above the mercy-seat the cherubim, as well as the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense.

Let me turn to my true high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. In our human nature he spent the whole year in the company of the people, the year that he spoke of when he said: *He sent me to bring good news to the poor, to announce the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of forgiveness.* Notice how once in that year, on the day of atonement, he enters into the holy of holies. Having fulfilled God's plan, he passes through the heavens and enters into the presence of the Father to make him turn in mercy to the human race and to pray for all who believe in him.

John the apostle, knowing of the atonement that Christ makes to the Father for all men, says this: *Little children, I say these things so that you may not sin. But if we have sinned we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just one. He is the atonement for our sins.* In the same way Paul refers to this atonement when he says of Christ: *God appointed him to be the atonement for our sins in his blood, through faith.* We have then a day of atonement that remains until the world comes to an end.

God's word tells us: *The high priest shall put incense on the fire in the sight of the Lord. The smoke of the incense shall cover the mercy-seat above the tokens of the covenant, so that he may not die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull-calf and sprinkle it with his finger over the mercy-seat toward the east.*



God taught the people of the old covenant how to celebrate the ritual offered to him in atonement for the sins of men. But you have come to Christ, the true high priest. Through his blood he has made God turn to you in mercy and has reconciled you with the Father. You must not think simply of ordinary blood but you must learn to recognize instead the blood of the Word. Listen to him as he tells you: *This is my blood, which will be shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*

There is a deeper meaning in the fact that the high priest sprinkles the blood toward the east. Atonement comes to you from the east. From the east comes the one whose name is Dayspring, he who is mediator between God and men. You are invited then to look always to the east: it is there that the sun of righteousness rises for you, it is there that the light is always being born for you. You are never to walk in darkness; the great and final day is not to enfold you in darkness. Do not let the night and mist of ignorance steal upon you. So that you may always enjoy the light of knowledge, keep always in the daylight of faith, hold fast always to the light of love and peace.

## **RESPONSORY**

Today the Lord is making this agreement with you: you are to be a people peculiarly his own, as he promised you, and provided you keep all his commandments. Then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying -- "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you. In like manner Jesus took also the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you." -- "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you.

### **Day 5**

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.*

When the hour came, [Jesus] took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Luke 22:14-20)

*From "On the Paschal Solemnity" by Eusebius of Caesarea (+339)*

In the time of Moses, the paschal lamb was sacrificed only once a year, on the fourteenth day of the first month toward evening, but we of the new covenant celebrate our Passover every week on the Lord's day. We are continually being filled with the body of the Saviour and sharing in the blood of the Lamb. Daily we gird ourselves with chastity and prepare, staff in hand, to follow the path of the Gospel. Leaning on the rod, that came forth from the root of Jesse, we are always departing from Egypt in search of the solitude of the desert. We are constantly setting out on our journey to God and celebrating the Passover. The Gospel would have us do these things not only once a year but daily.

We hold our Eucharistic celebration every week on the day of our Lord and Saviour, for this is our paschal feast, the feast of the true Lamb who redeemed us. We do not circumcise the body with a knife, but with the sharp edge of the word of God we cut away all evil from our souls. We use no unleavened bread, except for that of sincerity and truth. Grace has freed us from outward Jewish customs and created us anew in the image of God. It has given us a new law, a new circumcision, a new Passover, and made us Jews inwardly, this releasing us from our former bondage.

On the fifth day of the week, while having supper with his disciples, the Saviour said to them: *With all my heart I have longed to eat this Passover with you.* It was not the old Jewish Passover that he desired to share with his disciples, but the new Passover of the new covenant that he was giving to them, and that many prophets and upright people before him had longed to see. He proclaimed his desire for the new Passover which he, the Word himself, in his infinite thirst for the salvation of the whole human race, was establishing as a feast to be celebrated by all peoples everywhere. The Passover of Moses was not for all peoples, indeed it could not be, because the law allowed

it to be celebrated only in Jerusalem. Christ's desire, then, must have been not for the old Passover, but for the saving mystery of the new covenant which was for everyone.

And so we too should eat this Passover with Christ. We should cleanse our minds of all the leaven of evil and wickedness and be filled with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, becoming Jews inwardly, in our souls, where the true circumcision takes place. We should anoint the lintel of our mind with the blood of the Lamb who was sacrificed for us, and so ward off our destroyer. We should do this not only once a year, but every week, continually.

On the day before the Sabbath we fast in memory of our Saviour's passion, as the apostles were the first to do when the bridegroom was taken from them. On the Lord's day we receive life from the sacred body of our saving Passover and our souls are sealed with his precious blood.

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*From the "Hymn of the Universe" by Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (+1955)*

The sacramental bread is made out of grains of wheat which have been pressed out and ground in the mill; and the dough has been slowly kneaded. Your hands, Lord Jesus, have broken the bread before they hallow it . . .

Who shall describe, Lord, the violence suffered by the universe from the moment it falls under your sway?

Christ is the goad that urges creatures along the road of effort, of elevation, of development.

He is the sword that mercilessly cuts away such of the body's members as are unworthy or decayed.

He is that mightier life which inexorably brings death to our base egoism so as to draw into itself all our capacities for loving.

That Christ may enter deeply into us we need alternatively the work that dilates the heart and the sorrow that brings death to it, the life that enlarges a man in order that he may be sanctifiable and the death that diminishes him in order that he may be sanctified.

The universe splits in two, it suffers a painful cleavage at the heart of each of its monads, as the flesh of Christ is born and grows. Like the work of creation which it redeems and surpasses, the Incarnation, so desired of man, is an awe-inspiring work: it is achieved through blood.

May the blood of the Lord Jesus — the blood which is infused into creatures and the blood which is shed and spread out over all, the blood of endeavour and the blood of renouncement — mingle with the pain of the world.

*Hic est calix sanguinis mei . . . This is the chalice of my blood...*

## **RESPONSORY**

Know that in this bread is the body of Christ which hung upon the cross, and in this cup, the blood of Christ which flowed from his side. Take, therefore, and eat his body; take and drink his blood, — and you will become members of his body. Eat this sacred food, so that your bond of unity with Christ may never be broken. Drink this sacred blood, the price he paid for you, so that you may never lose heart because of your sinfulness. — And you will become members of his body.

## **Day 6**

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.*

[Jesus said,] ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.’(John 6:53-58)

*From the “Mystagogical Catecheses” of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+386)*

*On the night he was betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: ‘Take, eat: this is my body.’ He took the cup, gave thanks and said: ‘Take, drink: this is my blood.’ Since Christ himself has declared the bread to be his body, who can have any further doubt? Since he himself has said quite categorically, *This is my blood*, who would dare to question it and say that it is not his blood?*

Therefore, it is with complete assurance that we receive the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. His body is given to us under the symbol of bread, and his blood is given to us under the symbol of wine, in order to make us by receiving them one body and one blood with him. Having his body and blood in our members, we become bearers of Christ and sharers, as Saint Peter says, in the divine nature.

Once when speaking to the Jews Christ said: *Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you shall have no life in you*. This so horrified them that they left him. Not understanding his words in a spiritual way, they thought the Saviour wished them to practise cannibalism.

Under the old covenant there was showbread, but it came an end with the old dispensation to which it belonged. Under the new covenant there is bread from heaven and the cup of salvation. These sanctify both soul and body, the bread being adapted to the sanctification of the body, the Word to the sanctification of the soul.

Do not, then, regard the Eucharistic elements as ordinary bread and wine: they are in fact the body and blood of the Lord, as he himself has declared. Whatever your senses may tell you, be strong in faith.

You have been taught and you are firmly convinced that what looks and tastes like bread and wine is not bread and wine but the body and the blood of Christ. You know also how David referred to this long ago when he sang: *Bread strengthens the heart and makes the face glow with the oil of gladness*. Strengthen your heart, then, by receiving this bread as spiritual bread, and bring joy to the face of your soul.

May purity of conscience remove the veil from the face of your soul so that by contemplating the glory of the Lord, as in a mirror, you may be transformed from glory to glory in Christ Jesus our Lord. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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*From an Easter sermon for the newly-baptized by St. Augustine (+430)*

You have all just now been born again of water and the Spirit, and can see that food and drink upon this table of the Lord’s in a new light, and receive it with a fresh love and piety. So I am obliged by the duty I have of giving you a sermon, and by the anxious care with which I have given you birth, that Christ might be formed in you, to remind you infants of what the meaning is of such a great and divine sacrament, such a splendid and noble medicine, such a pure and simple sacrifice, which is not offered now just in the one earthly city of Jerusalem, nor in that tabernacle which was constructed by Moses, nor in the temple built by Solomon. These were just *shadows of things to come* (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1). But *from the rising of the sun to its setting* (Mal 1:11; Ps 113:3) it is offered as the prophets foretold, and as a sacrifice of praise to God, according to the grace of the New Testament.

No longer is a victim sought from the flocks for a blood sacrifice, nor is a sheep or a goat any more led to the divine altars, but now the sacrifice of our time is the body and blood of the priest himself. About him, indeed, it was foretold so long ago in the psalms, *You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek* (Ps 110:4). While that Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offered bread and wine when he blessed our father Abraham, we gather from reading about it in the book of Genesis.

So Christ our Lord, who offered by suffering for us what by being born he had received from us, has become our high priest for ever, and has given us the order of sacrifice which you can see, of his body that is to say, and his blood. When his body, remember, was pierced by the lance, it poured forth the water and the blood by which he cancelled our sins. Be mindful of this grace as you work out your salvation, since it is God who is at work in you, and approach with fear and trembling to partake of this altar. Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side. You see, those old sacrifices of the people of God also represented in a variety of ways this single one that was to come. Christ himself, I mean, was both a sheep, because of his innocence and simplicity of soul, and a goat because of *the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3). And whatever else was foretold *in many and diverse ways* (Heb 1:1) in the sacrifices of the old covenant refers to this single one which has been revealed in the new covenant.

And therefore receive and eat the body of Christ, yes, you that have become members of Christ in the body of Christ; receive and drink the blood of Christ. In order not to be scattered and separated, eat what binds you together; in order not to seem cheap in your own estimation, drink the price that was paid for you. Just as this turns into you when you eat and drink it, so you for your part turn into the body of Christ when you live devout and obedient lives. He himself, you see, as his passion drew near, while he was keeping the passover with his disciples, took bread and blessed it, and said, *This is my body which will be handed over for you* (1 Cor 11:24). Likewise he gave them the cup he had blessed and said, *This is my blood of the new covenant, which will be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt 26:28). You were able to read or to hear this in the gospel before, but you were unaware that this eucharist is the Son. But now, your hearts sprinkled with a pure conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water, *approach him and be enlightened, and your faces will not blush for shame* (Ps 34:5). Because if you receive this worthily, which means belonging to the new covenant by which you hope for an eternal inheritance, and if you keep the new commandment to love one another, then you have life in yourselves. You are then, after all, receiving that flesh about which Life itself says, *The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world; and Unless people eat my flesh and drink my blood, they will not have life in themselves* (Jn 6:51. 53).

So then, having life in him, you will be in one flesh with him. This sacrament, after all, doesn't present you with the body of Christ in such a way as to divide you from it. This, as the apostle reminds us, was foretold in holy scripture: *They shall be two in one flesh* (Gn 2:24). *This, he says, is a great sacrament; but I mean in Christ and in the Church* (Eph 5:31-32). And in another place he says about this eucharist itself, *We, though many, are one loaf, one body* (1 Cor 10:17). So you are beginning to receive what you have also begun to be, provided you do not receive unworthily; else you would be eating and drinking judgment upon yourselves. That, you see, is what he says: *Any who eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But people should examine themselves, and in this way eat of the bread and drink of the cup; for those who eat and drink unworthily are eating and drinking judgment upon themselves* (1 Cor 11:27-29).

You receive worthily, however, if you avoid the yeast of bad doctrine, in order to be *unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth* (1 Cor 5:8); or if you keep hold of that yeast of charity, which the woman hid in three measures of flour until the whole of it was leavened. This woman, you see, is the Wisdom of God, who came through the virgin in mortal flesh, and who, having repaired the wide world after the flood through the three sons of Noah, disseminated her gospel throughout it, as in three measures until the whole should be leavened. This "whole" is what is called *holon* in Greek where, if you keep the bond of peace you will be "in accord with the whole," which in Greek is *catholon*, from which the Church is called "Catholic."

## RESPONSORY

And while they were at supper, Jesus, taking a cup, gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "All of you drink of this." -- "For this is my blood of the new covenant." Which is being shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. -- "For this is my blood of the new covenant."

## Day 7

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.*

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, ‘None of his bones shall be broken.’ And again another passage of scripture says, ‘They will look on the one whom they have pierced.’ (*John 19:31-37*)

*From the “Catecheses” by Saint John Chrysostom (+407)*

If we wish to understand the power of Christ’s blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. *Sacrifice a lamb without blemish*, commanded Moses, *and sprinkle its blood on your doors*. If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord’s blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so how much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master’s side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood, of the holy eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord’s side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

*There flowed from his side water and blood.* Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, *the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit*, and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!* As God then took a rib from Adam’s side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.

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*From “The Holy Grail and Eucharist” by Fr. Sergei Bulgakov (+1944)*

The blood and water that flowed into the world abide in the world. They sanctify this world as the pledge of its future transfiguration. The blood and water that flowed into the world abide in the world. They sanctify the world as the pledge of its future transfiguration. Through the precious streams of Christ’s blood and water that flowed out of his side, all creation was sanctified—heaven and earth, our earthly world, and all the stellar worlds. The image of the Holy Grail, in which the holy blood of Christ is kept, expresses precisely the idea that, even though the Lord ascended in His honourable flesh to heaven, the world received His holy relic in the blood and water that flowed out of His side; and the chalice of the Grail is the ciborium and repository of this relic. And the whole world is the chalice of the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail is inaccessible to veneration; in its holiness it is hidden in the world from

the world. However, it exists in the world as an invisible power, and it becomes visible, appears to pure hearts who are worthy of its appearance. [It] is not offered for communion but abides in the world as the mysterious holiness of the world, as the power of life, as the fire in which the world will be transfigured into a new heaven and new earth.

The whole world is the Holy Grail, for it has received into itself and contains Christ's precious blood and water. The whole world is the chalice of Christ's blood and water. The whole world partook of them in communion at the hour of Christ's death. And the whole world hides the blood and water within itself. A drop of Christ's blood dripped upon Adam's head redeemed Adam, but also all the blood and water of Christ that flowed forth into the world sanctified the world. [A]ll the blood and water of Christ that flowed forth into the world sanctified the world. This blood and water made the world a place of the presence of Christ's power, prepared the world for its future transfiguration, for the *meeting* with Christ in glory. The world has become Christ, for it is the holy chalice, the Holy Grail. The world has become indestructible and incorruptible, for in Christ's blood and water it has received the power of incorruption, which will be manifested in its transfiguration.

The world was not deprived of Christ's presence ('I will not leave you comfortless' [John 14:18]). Christ is not alien to the world; the world lives by Christ's power. The world has become Christ, for it is the holy chalice, the Holy Grail. The world has become indestructible and incorruptible, for in Christ's blood and water it has received the power of incorruption, which will be manifested in its transfiguration. The world is already paradise, for it has produced 'the tri-blessed tree on which Christ was crucified.'

## RESPONSORY

When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. -- But one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, -- and immediately there came out blood and water. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not a bone of him shall you break." -- and immediately there came out blood and water.

### Day 8

*A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.*

[Paul said,] 'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. (Acts 20:25-28)

*From the apostolic letter "Inde a primis" (On promoting devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ) of Pope St. John XXIII (+1963)*

From the very outset of our pontificate, in speaking of daily devotions we have repeatedly urged the faithful (often in eager tones that frankly hinted our future design) to cherish warmly that marvellous manifestation of divine mercy toward individuals and Holy Church and the whole world redeemed and saved by Jesus Christ: we mean devotion to his Most Precious Blood.

From infancy this devotion was instilled in us within our own household. Fondly we still recall how our parents used to recite the Litany of the Most Precious Blood every day during July.

The Apostle's wholesome advice comes to mind: "Keep watch, then, over yourselves, and over God's Church, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops; you are to be the shepherds of that flock which he won for himself at the price of his own blood." Now among the cares of our pastoral office, venerable brethren, we are convinced that, second only to vigilance over sound doctrine, preference belongs to the proper surveillance and development of piety, in both its liturgical and private expressions. With that in mind, we judge it most timely to call our beloved children's attention to the unbreakable bond which must exist between the devotions to the Most Holy Name and

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus — already so widespread among Christians — and devotion to the incarnate Word's Most Precious Blood, "shed for many, to the remission of sins."

It is supremely important that the Church's liturgy fully conform to Catholic belief ("the law for prayer is the law for faith"), and that only those devotional forms be sanctioned which well up from the unsullied springs of true faith. But the same logic calls for complete accord among different devotions. Those deemed more basic and more conducive to holiness must not be at odds with or cut off from one another. And the more individualistic and secondary ones must give way in popularity and practice to those devotions which more effectively actuate the fullness of salvation wrought by the "one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and gave himself as a ransom for them all." Through living in an atmosphere thus charged with true faith and solid piety the faithful can be confident that they are "thinking with the Church" and holding fast in the loving fellowship of prayer to Christ Jesus, the high priest of that sublime religion which he founded and which owes to him its name, its strength, its dignity.

The Church's wonderful advances in liturgical piety match the progress of faith itself in penetrating divine truth. Within this development it is most heart-warming to observe how often in recent centuries this Holy See has openly approved and furthered the three devotions just mentioned. From the Middle Ages, it is true, many pious persons practiced these devotions, which then spread to various dioceses and religious orders and congregations. Nevertheless it remained for the Chair of Peter to pronounce them orthodox and approve them for the Church as a whole.

Suffice it to recall the spiritual favours that our predecessors from the sixteenth century on have attached to practicing devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which in the previous century St. Bernardine of Siena untiringly spread throughout Italy. Approval was given first to the Office and Mass of the Most Holy Name and later to the Litany. No less striking are the benefits the popes have attached to practising devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose rise and spread owe so much to the revelations of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. So highly have all the popes regarded this devotion that again and again in their official acts they have expounded its nature, defended its validity, promoted its practice. Their crowning achievement on this devotion are three splendid encyclicals.

Likewise the devotion to the Most Precious Blood, which owes its marvellous diffusion to the 19th-century Roman priest, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, has rightly merited the approval and backing of this Apostolic See. We may recall that by order of Benedict XIV the Mass and Office in honour of the divine Saviour's adorable Blood were composed. And to fulfill a vow made at Gaeta Pius IX extended the feast to the whole Church. Finally, as a commemoration of the nineteenth centenary of our redemption, Pius XI of happy memory raised this feast to the rank of first-class double, so that the greater liturgical splendour would highlight the devotion and bring to men more abundant fruits of the redeeming Blood.

Following our predecessors' example we have taken further steps to promote the devotion to the Precious Blood of the unblemished Lamb, Jesus Christ. We have approved the Litany of the Precious Blood drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and through special indulgences have encouraged its public and private recitation throughout the Catholic world. Amid today's most serious and pressing spiritual needs, may this latest exercise of that "care for all the churches" proper to our sovereign office awaken in Christian hearts a firm conviction about the supreme abiding effectiveness of these three devotions.

As we now approach the feast and month devoted to honouring Christ's Blood — the price of our redemption, the pledge of salvation and life eternal — may Christians meditate on it more fervently, may they savour its fruits more frequently in sacramental communion. Let their meditations on the boundless power of the Blood be bathed in the light of sound biblical teaching and the doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. How truly precious is this Blood is voiced in the song which the Church sings with the Angelic Doctor (sentiments wisely seconded by our predecessor Clement VI) :

Blood that but one drop of has the world to win  
All the world forgiveness of its world of sin.

Unlimited is the effectiveness of the God-Man's Blood — just as unlimited as the love that impelled him to pour it out for us, first at his circumcision eight days after birth, and more profusely later on in his agony in the garden,[12] in his scourging and crowning with thorns, in his climb to Calvary and crucifixion, and finally from out that great wide wound in his side which symbolizes the divine Blood cascading down into all the Church's sacraments. Such sur passing love suggests, nay demands, that everyone reborn in the torrents of that Blood adore it with grateful love.

The Blood of the new and eternal covenant especially deserves this worship of latria when it is elevated during the sacrifice of the Mass. But such worship achieves its normal fulfilment in sacramental communion with the same Blood, indissolubly united with Christ's eucharistic Body. In intimate association with the celebrant the faithful can then truly make his sentiments at communion their own: "I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. . . The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul for everlasting life. Amen." Thus as often as they come worthily to this holy table they will receive more abundant fruits of the redemption and resurrection and eternal life won for all men by the Blood Christ shed "through the Holy Spirit." Nourished by his Body and Blood, sharing the divine strength that has sustained countless martyrs, they will stand up to the slings and arrows of each day's fortunes — even if need be to martyrdom itself for the sake of Christian virtue and the kingdom of God. Theirs will be the experience of that burning love which made St. John Chrysostom cry out:

Let us, then, come back from that table like lions breathing out fire, thus becoming terrifying to the Devil, and remaining mindful of our Head and of the love he has shown for us. . . This Blood, when worthily received, drives away demons and puts them at a distance from us, and even summons to us angels and the Lord of angels. . . This Blood, poured out in abundance, has washed the whole world clean. . . This is the price of the world; by it Christ purchased the Church. . . This thought will check in us unruly passions. How long, in truth, shall we be attached to present things? How long shall we remain asleep? How long shall we not take thought for our own salvation? Let us remember what privileges God has bestowed on us, let us give thanks, let us glorify him, not only by faith, but also by our very works.

If only Christians would reflect more frequently on the fatherly warning of the first pope: "Look anxiously, then, to the ordering of your lives while your stay on earth lasts.

You know well enough that your ransom was not paid in earthly currency, silver or gold; it was paid in the precious blood of Christ; no lamb was ever so pure, so spotless a victim." If only they would lend a more eager ear to the apostle of the Gentiles: "A great price was paid to ransom you; glorify God by making your bodies the shrines of his presence." Their upright lives would then be the shining example they ought to be; Christ's Church would far more effectively fulfill its mission to men. God wants all men to be saved, for he has willed that they should all be ransomed by the Blood of his only-begotten Son; he calls them all to be members of the one Mystical Body whose head is Christ. If only men would be more responsive to these promptings of his grace, how much the bonds of brotherly love among individuals and peoples and nations would be strengthened. Life in society would be so much more peaceable, so much worthier of God and the human nature created in his image and likeness.

This is the sublime vocation that St. Paul urged Jewish converts to fix their minds on when tempted to nostalgia for what was only a weak figure and prelude of the new covenant: "The scene of your approach now is mount Sion, is the heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God; here are gathered thousands upon thousands of angels, here is the assembly of those first-born sons whose names are written in heaven, here is God sitting in judgment on all men, here are the spirits of just men, now made perfect; here is Jesus, the spokesman of the new covenant, and the sprinkling of his blood, which has better things to say than Abel's had."

We have full confidence, venerable brethren, that these fatherly exhortations of ours, once brought to the attention of your priests and people in whatever way you deem best, will be put into practice not just willingly but enthusiastically.

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*From a letter to Bl. Raymond of Capua by St. Catherine of Siena (+1380)*



Dearest father in Christ sweet Jesus: I Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious Blood: with desire to see you a faithful servant and bridegroom of truth, and of sweet Mary, that we may never look back for any reason in the world, nor for any tribulations which God might send you: but with firm hope, with the light of most holy faith, pass through this stormy sea in all truthfulness; and let us rejoice in endurance, not seeking our own glory, but the glory of God and the salvation of souls, as the glorious martyrs did, who for the sake of truth made them ready for death and for all torments, so that with their blood, shed for love of the Blood, they built the walls of Holy Church. Ah, sweet Blood, that dost raise the dead! Thou givest life, thou dost dissolve the shadows that darken the minds of reasonable creatures, and dost give us light! Sweet Blood, thou dost unite those who strive, thou dost clothe the naked, thou dost feed the hungry and give to drink to those who thirst for thee, and with the milk of thy sweetness thou dost nourish the little ones who have made themselves small by true humility, and innocent by true purity. Oh, holy Blood, who shall receive thee amiss? The lovers of themselves, because they do not perceive thy fragrance.

So, dearest and sweetest father, let us divest us and clothe us in truth, so we shall be faithful lovers. I tell you that today I will to begin again, in order that my sins may not hold me back from such a good as it is to give one's life for Christ crucified. For I see that in the past, through my faults, this has been denied me. I had desired very much, with a new intensity, increased in me beyond all custom, to endure without fault for the honour of God and the salvation of souls and the reformation and good of Holy Church, so that my heart was melting from the love and desire I had to lay down my life. This desire was blessed and grievous; blessed it was for the union that I felt with truth, and grievous it was for the oppression which I felt from the wrong against God, and the multitude of demons who overshadowed all the city, dimming the eye of the mind in human beings. Almost it seemed that God was letting them have their way, through justice and divine discipline. Therefore my life could not but dissolve in weeping, fearful for the great evil which seemed on the point of coming, and because peace was hindered for this reason. But in this great evil, God, who despises not the desire of His servants, and that sweet mother Mary, whose name was invoked with pained and dolorous and loving desires, granted that in all the tumult and the great upheaval that occurred, we may almost say that there were no human deaths, except those which justice inflicted. So the desire I had that God would show His providence and destroy the power of the demons that they might not do so much harm as they were ready to do, was fulfilled; but my desire to give my life for the Truth and the sweet Bride of Christ was not fulfilled. But the Eternal Bridegroom played a great joke on me....

So I have reason to weep, because the multitude of my iniquities was so great that I did not deserve that my blood should give life, or illumine darkened "minds, or reconcile the sons with the father, or cement a stone in the mystical body of Holy Church. Nay, it seemed that the hands of him who wanted to kill me were bound. My words, "I am she. Take me, and let this family be," were a sword that pierced straight through his heart. O Babbo mine, feel a wonderful joy in yourself, for I never experienced in myself such mysteries, with so great joy! There was the sweetness of truth in it, the gladness of a clean and pure conscience; there was the fragrance of the sweet providence of God; there was the savour of the times of new martyrs, foretold as you know by the Eternal Truth. Tongue would not suffice to tell how great the good is that my soul feels. I seem to be so bound to my Creator that if I gave my body to be burned I could not satisfy the great mercy which I and my cherished sons and daughters have received.

All this I tell you that you may not conceive bitterness; but may feel an unspeakable delight, with softest gladness; and that you and I may begin to sorrow over my imperfection, because so great a good was hindered by my sin. How blessed my soul would have been had I given my blood for the sweet Bride, and for love of the Blood and the salvation of souls! Now let us rejoice and be faithful lovers.

## **RESPONSORY**

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? -- You were bought with a great price. Therefore glorify God in your body. -- You were bought with a great price.

## **Day 9**

*A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.*

But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. (*Romans 3:21-26*)

*From a "Commentary on the Letter to the Romans" by Origen (+253)*

Let us examine each of the names which Scripture gives to the Saviour, and study carefully the meaning expressed in them. We shall find that because it was God's will and pleasure to embody the fullness of divinity in him, Christ in his own person was at one and the same time the throne of mercy, the High Priest, and the victim offered for the people.

David in the psalms and the Apostle writing to the Hebrews both clearly describe Christ as High Priest. That he is also a sacrificial victim is declared in the words of John the Baptist: *This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world*. As victim, by the shedding of his own blood he becomes the atoning sacrifice which procures forgiveness of past offences. Nevertheless, this atonement comes to each individual believer through faith, for unless it brought him forgiveness of his past offences, it would remain ineffective for him. Since his sins have been forgiven, it is absolutely certain that atonement for them has been accomplished by the shedding of blood in sacrifice. As the Apostle says: *Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins*.

Saint Paul is not alone in representing Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our past sins; Saint John shares the same understanding, as you can judge from the following passage: *I write these things to you, my children, to keep you from sin. But if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just One. He is the expiation for our sins, and not our sins only but those of all the world*. It is through the atoning sacrifice of Christ's blood that we receive forgiveness of our past offences in the merciful forbearance of God; so is his justice made manifest.

When God refrains from punishing sinners at once, he exhibits that divine patience which Saint Paul says is meant to lead us to repentance, and, as the Apostle rightly adds, this is how God demonstrates his justice at the present time. As long as this world endures, God's justice is at work in his forbearance, but in the world to come it will be manifested in the payment to each of us of our just deserts.

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*From a Lenten sermon by St. Thomas of Villanova (+1555)*

Approach humbly the fountain of life, the fountain of salvation, *the fountain of water well enough to eternal life*. Approach devoutly; fill the jar of your soul with the water of grace. *All who thirst, come to the waters. It is the sixth hour*; Jesus was crucified in the sixth hour. Come to the waters, for the fountains of the great deep or broken open. And what else is the deep but the Word of God? The fountains were broken open with nails and spear; the fountains were broken open with whips and blows; the fountains were broken open with thorns and torments. *Come, you who thirst, come to the waters; come and milk without cost*. Buy for nothing.

But how can one buy this without price? This cannot be considered a purchase, for nothing is bought without price. What is received without price is received freely, is given freely; but then is it a purchase? Buy from God and give to God that which God suffered. Offer from his own resources that you might buy things that are his. Offer his sorrows and receive his consolations; offer his death and receive his life; offered his pains and receive his glory.

Oh happy purchase, without fraud and with the greatest profit! The seller's goods are bought with the seller himself paying the price. With your payment then, Lord, we buy your goods for ourselves. But why do I say your goods? I perceive something greater; I perceive and rejoice and grow faint in wonder. O good Jesus! O merciful Jesus! By your blood we buy you for ourselves; by your blood you have purchased us for the Father. O infinite generosity of

God, who gave himself up to death that he might give himself unto life? Your blood, good Jesus, is the cost. It is your payment and ours: by it you have purchased us for the Father; by it we purchase you for ourselves.

We buy, then, but without cost, since we buy you with your own payment. Twice you give yourself, when you offer yourself as the price, and when you offer yourself as what is purchased. Who ever possessed you without that price? Who without a large sum of money would dare to set a price for such an inheritance? Oh Lord, you were put up for sale publicly, auctioned off, as it were, but you are to be bought only by those who love you.

Nor may someone who offers much purchase you, but only he who offers all, though it be little. O soul, offer what you have, but offer it all, and you will receive all. If you have much, offer much, and you will receive all; if you have little, offer little, and you will receive little. *All who thirst, come to the waters. Come and buy.* Lord, increase the price as much as you want; the water of life which you are is of infinite value. Appraise it as you will, for we can give nothing from ourselves in payments. The water of salvation must be purchased for us but your own payment. If you ask much, then grant much; if you ask a little, then grant little.

## RESPONSORY

Once you were estranged from God, at enmity with him in heart and mind, and your deeds were evil. But now, by Christ's death in his mortal body, – God has reconciled you to himself. God made Christ's sacrificial death the means of expiating the sins of all believers. – God has reconciled you to himself.

### Day 10

*A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (*Romans 5:6-11*)

*From a letter of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153)*

Why should not righteousness come to me from another when guilt came upon me from another? One made me a sinner, the other justifies me from sin; the one by generation, the other by His blood. Shall there be sin in the seed of the sinner and not righteousness in the blood of Christ?... The offence, indeed, came to me, but so did grace; and not as the offence so also is the free gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification (Rom. v. 16). From the first man flowed down the offence, from the highest heaven came down the free gift: both from our father, one from our first father, the other from the Supreme Father. My earthly birth destroys me, and does not my heavenly much more save me I? And I am not afraid of being rejected by the Father of lights when I have been rescued in this way from the power of darkness, and justified through His grace by the blood of His Son: It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? He who had mercy on the sinner will not condemn the righteous; I mean that I am righteous, but it is in His righteousness, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. x. 4).

Therefore where there is reconciliation there is remission of sins. And what is that but justification? Whether, therefore, we call it reconciliation, or remission of sins, or justification, or, again, redemption, or liberation from the chains of the devil, by whom we were taken captive at his will, at all events by the death of the Only Begotten, we obtain that we have been justified freely by His blood, in whom, as S. Paul says again, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. i. 7). You say, Why by His blood when He could have wrought it by His Word? Ask Himself. It is only allowed me to know that it is so, not why it is so. Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, “Why hast Thou made me thus?”

Thus the Blood which was shed was so powerful for pardoning that it blotted out that greatest sin of all, by which it came to pass that it was shed; and, therefore, left no doubt whatever about the blotting out of that ancient and lighter sin. Thus he rejoins: "Is there any one to whom it does not seem cruel and unjust, that any one should require the blood of an innocent man as the price of some thing, or that the death of an innocent man should in any way give him pleasure, not to say that God should hold so acceptable the death of His Son as by it to be reconciled to the whole world?" God the Father did not require the Blood of His Son, but, nevertheless, He accepted it when offered; it was not blood He thirsted for, but salvation, for salvation was in the blood.

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*From the "Orations" by St. Gregory Nazianzen (+390)*

Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To Whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was It shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and High priest and Sacrifice. We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, a payment for whose sake it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether. But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next, On what principle did the Blood of His Only begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his Father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much we have said of Christ; the greater part of what we might say shall be revered with silence. But that brazen serpent was hung up as a remedy for the biting serpents, not as a type of Him that suffered for us, but as a contrast; and it saved those that looked upon it, not because they believed it to live, but because it was killed, and killed with it the powers that were subject to it, being destroyed as it deserved. And what is the fitting epitaph for it from us? O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? You are overthrown by the Cross; you are slain by Him who is the Giver of life; you are without breath, dead, without motion, even though you keep the form of a serpent lifted up on high on a pole.

Now we will partake of a Passover which is still typical; though it is plainer than the old one. For that is ever new which is now becoming known. It is ours to learn what is that drinking and that enjoyment, and His to teach and communicate the Word to His disciples. For teaching is food, even to the Giver of food. Come hither then, and let us partake of the Law, but in a Gospel manner, not a literal one; perfectly, not imperfectly; eternally, not temporarily. Let us make our Head, not the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly City; not that which is now trodden under foot by armies, but that which is glorified by Angels. Let us sacrifice not young calves, nor lambs that put forth horns and hoofs, in which many parts are destitute of life and feeling; but let us sacrifice to God the sacrifice of praise upon the heavenly Altar, with the heavenly dances; let us hold aside the first veil; let us approach the second, and look into the Holy of Holies. Shall I say that which is a greater thing yet? Let us sacrifice *ourselves* to God; or rather let us go on sacrificing throughout every day and at every moment. Let us accept anything for the Word's sake. By sufferings let us imitate His Passion: by our blood let us reverence His Blood: let us gladly mount upon the Cross. Sweet are the nails, though they be very painful. For to suffer with Christ and for Christ is better than a life of ease with others.

## **RESPONSORY**

If, when we were his enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, – now that we are his friends we can be even more sure that we shall be saved by the life of his Son. When we were still sinners, Christ died for us – now that we are his friends we can be even more sure that we shall be saved by the life of his Son.

## **Day 11**

*A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.*

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (*1 Corinthians 10:14-22*)

*From the "Commentary on the Gospel of John" by St. John Chrysostom (+407)*

The blood which we receive as food does not immediately nourish us, but only after it has passed through some other stage. But it is far different with this Blood, for It at once refreshes the soul and fills it with a great power. When worthily received, this Blood repels demons. It puts them to flight and even summons to us angels and the Lord of angels. Where they see the Blood of the Lord, demons flee, while angels foregather. This Blood, poured out in abundance, has washed the whole world clean. Blessed Paul has uttered many truths about it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This Blood has purified the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies.

Now if its type had so much power, both in the Temple of the Hebrews and in the midst of the Egyptians when sprinkled on the doorposts, the reality is much more powerful. In its types this Blood sanctified the golden altar. Without it, the high Priest did not dare to enter the sanctuary. This Blood has ordained priests! In its types it has washed away sins! And if it had such great power in its types, if death shuddered ... at the figure, how terrifying would the reality itself be, pray tell? This Blood is the salvation of our souls. Through it the soul is cleansed; through it, beautified; through it, inflamed. It makes our intellect grow brighter than fire. It renders our soul more radiant than gold. This Blood has been poured forth and has opened the way to heaven. This Blood was formerly foreshadowed continually on altars, in sacrifices of the Law. This is the price of the world. Through it Christ purchased the Church. Through it He adored her entirely. Just as a man purchases slaves with gold and, if he so desires, adorns them with gold, so also Christ has both purchased us with His Blood and adorned us with His Blood. Those who share in this Blood have taken their stand with angels, and archangels, and the powers from on high, clad in the royal livery of Christ with spiritual weapons in their hands. But all I have mentioned is very little, for they are adorned with the King Himself.

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*From the homilies on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians by St. John Chrysostom (+407)*

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ?* Do you seek, blessed Paul, to rouse your hearer to a sense of reverence when you mention tremendous mysteries, and call this fearful and awe-inspiring cup a cup of blessing? Yes, he replies, it is no small matter I have touched on. For when I speak of blessing, I mean to unfold the whole treasure of God's goodness to us, and call to mind his wonderful gifts. It is in gratitude for these and all other such blessings that we approach the Sacrament.

Why then, you Corinthians, asks Paul, is your behaviour so inconsistent? You praise God for having delivered you from idols, and then you run back to their tables. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ?* What great confidence and awe there is in these words! Paul means that in the cup is the same blood that flowed from Christ's side, and it is that of which we partake. He called it a cup of blessing because, when we hold it in our hands, we raise our hearts to God in wonder and amazement at his unspeakable gift. We praise him because Christ shed this very blood so that we might not remain in error; and not only did he shed his blood, but he gave all of us a share of it.

*The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ?* The Apostle did not say 'a participation', because he wanted to signify something more than this. For when we communicate it is not merely a matter of sharing and partaking, but of being united. In the same way as a body was united with Christ, so we are united with him by this bread. But why did he add, *which we break?* This we can see is done at the Eucharist, but it was not so

on the Cross; rather the contrary, for Scripture says: *Not a bone of his shall be broken*. But although he did not suffer this on the Cross, he suffers it now in his offering on your behalf; he allows himself to be broken so that all may be filled. Paul used the phrase: *a communion in the body*; but there is a difference between communicants and the body we receive in communion, and so he set about removing even this distinction, small as it might seem. For after he had spoken of *a communion in the body*, he still sought to define his meaning more accurately, and therefore added, *Because there is one bread, we although many are one body*.

Why then do I say ‘communion’? he asks. We are that very body. For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who partake of it become? The body of Christ. Not many but one body. Just as bread consists of many grains formed into a whole, so that the separate grains are invisible (for although they are certainly there, they cannot be distinguished from the whole), in the same manner are we united both with one another and with Christ. That is why the Apostle continued: *for we all partake of one bread*. But if we all partake of the same bread, and all become the same body, why do we not show the same love, and become one in that respect also? Formerly it was so, in the time of our fathers, for Scripture says: *The multitude of believers were of one heart and soul*.

## RESPONSORY

Know that in this bread is the body of Christ which hung upon the cross, and in this cup, the blood of Christ which flowed from his side. Take, therefore, and eat his body; take and drink his blood, – and you will become members of his body. Eat this sacred food, so that your bond of unity with Christ may never be broken. Drink this sacred blood, the price he paid for you, so that you may never lose heart because of your sinfulness. – and you will become members of his body.

## Day 12

*A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.*

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. (*1 Corinthians 11:23-29*)

*From the “Commentary on Psalm 1” by St. Ambrose of Milan (+397)*

First drink from the Old Testament, so that you may drink from the New as well. You cannot drink from the second without drinking from the first. Drink from the Old Testament to slake your thirst, and from the New to quench it completely. Compunction is found in the Old Testament; joy in the New.

Notice how the Lord, on his servants’ behalf, countered the wiles of the devil. With deceitful cunning the devil beguiled one man in order to overthrow all mankind in his person; but with salutary food Jesus redeemed all mankind, in order to restore with him all, even him who had been beguiled.

The Lord Jesus poured out water from the rock and everyone drank. Those who drank from the symbol were satisfied, but those who drank from the reality were inebriated. That was a good inebriation that steadied the walk of the sober mind; that was a good inebriation that watered the gift of eternal life. Drink of this cup, then, of which the Prophet said: *Your cup that inebriates, how noble it is!* Drink the cup of the Old Testament and of the New, for in both you drink Christ.

Drink Christ because he is the vine; drink Christ because he is the rock that poured out water. Drink Christ because he is the fountain of life; drink Christ because he is the river whose running waters give joy to the city of God, and because he is peace, and because out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Drink Christ to drink the blood which redeemed you; drink Christ to drink his words: the Old Testament is his word; the New Testament is his word. Holy Scripture is drunk and swallowed when the power of the eternal Word penetrates the depths of the mind and the virtue of the soul. In short, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Drink this word, but according to its own order. Drink it first in the Old Testament; then hasten to drink it also in the New.

*From "Can You Drink the Cup?" By Fr. Henri Nouwen (+1996)*

Many people feel cursed-cursed by God with illnesses, losses, handicaps, and misfortunes. They believe their cup doesn't carry any blessings. It is the cup of God's wrath, the cup Jeremiah speaks of when he says: For Yahweh, the God of Israel said this to me, "Take this cup of the wine of wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it; they will drink and reel and lose their wits, because of the sword I am sending among them.... You will say to them, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Drink! Get drunk! Vomit! Fall, never to rise again, before the sword that I am sending among you!' If they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, you will say to them, 'Yahweh Sabaoth says this: You must drink! Look, for a start, I am bringing disaster on the city that bears my name, so are you likely to go unpunished? You certainly will not go unpunished, for next I shall summon a sword against all the inhabitants of the land, Yahweh declares' " (Jeremiah 25:15-16, 27-29).

This is not a cup to lift "to life." It only brings misery. It is not surprising that no one wants to get close to the vengeful god that Jeremiah depicts. No blessing is found there. But when Jesus takes the cup on the evening before his death, it is not the cup of wrath but the cup of blessings. It is the cup of a new and everlasting covenant, the cup that unites us with God and with one another in a community of love. Paul writes to the people of Corinth: "I am talking to you as sensible people; weigh up for yourselves what I have to say. The blessing cup, which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:15-16).

The immense suffering of humanity can easily be understood as a sign of God's wrath, as a punishment. It often was understood that way, and it often still is. The Psalmist says: "Yahweh is holding a cup filled with a heady blend of wine; he will pour it, they will drink it to the dregs, all the wicked on earth will drink it" (Psalm 75:8). And we, looking at the horrors that plague our world, are saying, "How can there be a loving God when all this is happening? It must be a cruel, spiteful God who allows human beings to suffer so much!"

Jesus, however, took upon himself all this suffering and lifted it up on the cross, not as a curse but as a blessing. Jesus made the cup of God's wrath into a cup of blessings. That's the mystery of the Eucharist. Jesus died for us so that we may live. He poured out his blood for us so that we may find new life. He gave himself away for us, so that we can live in community. He became for us food and drink so that we can be fed for everlasting life. That is what Jesus meant when he took the cup and said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). The Eucharist is that sacred mystery through which what we lived as a curse, we now live as a blessing. Our suffering can no longer be a divine punishment. Jesus transformed it as the way to new life. His blood, and ours too, now can become martyr's blood – blood that witnesses to a new covenant, a new communion, a new community. When we lift the cup of our life and share with one another our sufferings and joys in mutual vulnerability, the new covenant can become visible among us. The surprise of it all is that it is often the least among us who reveal to us that our cup is a cup of blessings.

## **RESPONSORY**

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because we who are many are one bread and one body -- for we all partake of the one bread and one cup. Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily, will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord -- for we all partake of the one bread and one cup.

### **Day 13**

*A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians.*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (*Ephesians 1:3-10*)

*From the treatise "Against the Heresies" by St. Irenaeus of Lyons (+202)*

If our flesh is not saved, then the Lord has not redeemed us with his blood, the Eucharistic chalice does not make us sharers in his blood, and the bread we break does not make us sharers in his body. There can be no blood without veins, flesh, and the rest of the human substance, and this the Word of God actually became: it was with his own blood that he redeemed us. As the Apostle says: *In him, through his blood, we have been redeemed, our sins have been forgiven.*

We are his members and we are nourished by creation, which is his gift to us, for it is he who causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall. He declared that the chalice which comes from his creation was his blood and he makes it the nourishment of our blood. He affirmed that the bread which comes from his creation was his body and he makes it the nourishment of our body. When the chalice we mix and the bread we bake receive the word of God, the Eucharistic elements become the body and blood of Christ, by which our bodies live and grow. How then can it be said that flesh belonging to the Lord's own body and nourished by his body and blood is incapable of receiving God's gift of eternal life? Saint Paul says in his Letter to the Ephesians that *we are members of his body*, of his flesh and bones. He is not speaking of some spiritual and incorporeal kind of person, for spirits do not have flesh and bones. He is speaking of a real human body composed of flesh, sinews, and bones, nourished by the chalice of Christ's blood and receiving growth from the bread which is his body.

The slip of a vine planted in the ground bears fruit at the proper time. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and decays only to be raised up again and multiplied by the Spirit of God who sustains all things. The Wisdom of God places these things at our service and when they receive God's word they become the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ. In the same way our bodies which have been nourished by the Eucharist will be buried in the earth and will decay, but they will rise again at the appointed time, for the Word of God will raise them up to the glory of God the Father. Then the Father will clothe our mortal nature in immortality and freely endow our corruptible nature with incorruptibility, for God's power is shown most perfectly in weakness.

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*From "Revelation and Knowledge" of St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi (+1607)*

How truly wonderful you are, O Word of God, in the Holy Spirit; you cause him to infuse the soul with you, that it may join itself to God, conceive God, savour God, taste nothing but God. The Holy Spirit enters the soul, sealed with that precious seal of the blood of the Word, the Lamb that was slain. Indeed it is this blood that urges him to come, although the Spirit is moved of himself and desires to come. This moving Spirit in himself is the substance of the Father and of the Word, proceeding from the essence of the Father and the will of the Word, coming like a fountain into the soul, which is submerged in it. And just as two streams which rise separately mingle together so that the lesser loses its own name and takes the name of the greater, this divine Spirit acts in the same way when he enters the soul in order to join himself to it. The soul must lose its own name, which is the lesser, and relinquish it to the Spirit; it will do this if it so turns towards the Spirit that it becomes one with him. This Spirit, the dispenser of the treasures that are in the Father and keeper of the counsels that are between the Father and the Son, pours himself so sweetly into the soul that he is not perceived, and his greatness is understood by few. Drawn by the force of his love and yet moving with supreme freedom, he moves into all places that are suitable and disposed to receive him. He is heard by all in his frequent utterances and in his profound silence. By the force of love, being both unmoved



and swiftest of all in movement, he enters all things. You do not remain, Holy Spirit, in the unmoved Father, nor in the Word, and yet you are always in the Father and in the Word and in yourself, and in all blessed spirits and creatures. All creatures need you, since the only-begotten Word, by shedding his blood, in his burning love placed all creatures in need of him. You repose in creatures who dispose themselves so that, by receiving your gifts, they may in purity receive your own image in themselves. You repose in those who receive in themselves the effect of the blood of the Word, and make themselves worthy dwelling-places for you.

## RESPONSORY

God has predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ -- in whom we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us -- in whom we have redemption through his blood.

### Day 14

*A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians.*

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (*Ephesians 2:13-16*)

*From the "Sitio" of Ven. Mother Catherine Aurelia Caouette (+1905)*

The mysterious *Sitio* which the Divine Crucified One made resound from the height of his cross has found an echo in my poor heart. I have meditated on it, I have relished it, I have understood it and I, in turn, have cried out in burning ecstasy: "I thirst." In the ardent zeal urging me on, I would like to be a magnet to attract all hearts in order to give them all to Jesus Christ. But since, of myself I am nothing, I turn to him and in the name of his blood, of his love, I implore him that he himself bring all hearts under his gentle sway to make of them so many springs of living water where he may quench his burning thirst.

I cannot find words to express to the extent of the burning desire which gushed from the heart of my Jesus into mine. Jesus is thirsting for love. I would like hearts to return him love for love, to make up to him for the neglect, indifference and impiety of sinners; hearts that will unite to pray, make reparation and suffer in union with the holy victim who really knew how to love, obey and suffer for the happiness and salvation of souls. But those he has loved even to the folly of the cross, on whom he lavished his gifts, whom he has treated as friends, his sisters and brothers, leave him after insulting him and heaping abuse on him. In vain, O Jesus, do you cast upon them, to win them, a long and loving gaze. The follies of the world absorb them. They see nothing, they hear nothing. Others must devote themselves in their place...Inebriate them anew with your blood; then, come, drink from their hearts, quench there the insatiable thirst for souls enkindled in you by the fire of love...Like Jesus, through Jesus, in Jesus we must pray for those who do not pray, for those in anguish, for those who blaspheme, for those who risk their eternity for perishable interests, for those who are ungrateful, who ignore and forget the DIVINE CRUCIFIED ONE and who crucify him and new every day.

Come and drink of the chalice the Lord the Lord offers you; it is full of so delicious a draught that once you have touched it to your lips you will want to drain the cup. Come; here you will find the way that leads to true sorrow of soul, to the holy anguish of zeal which is no longer a penance but a grace. Come, come to rest on the sacred tree of the Cross; come, under its crimsoned boughs, take your delight and feed on its fruit; come and hide from the pursuit of the enemy of salvation; come and see from experience how sweet and light is the Lord's yoke. ... always be seen on the summit of the holy mountain holding in [your] hands the chalice of salvation and uniting [your] voices to that of the Precious Blood in order to beg grace and pardon for [yourselves] and all people. At the sight of this striking sign of the inexpressible love of his Word made flesh, the heart of our Father who is in heaven will be touched and the waves of his mercy will flow over every point of the globe.

Let me repeat: in order to walk faithfully in the footsteps of the Divine Liberator and make perpetual holocausts of ourselves, we must be untiring in spirit, aspiring to every act of self-giving and to every sacrifice. We have to be courageous souls who do not hesitate to shed our heart's blood in the sweat poured out in the austere practice of work and penance. Here are needed souls on fire with that love which made Jesus burn with desire to be baptized in a baptism of blood.

Love! Oh, Love! That is the divine seed which produced the fruit of the Cross. It is love that burdened Jesus with the wood of sacrifice and gave Him the strength to fly to the holy mountain. Yes, it is love that urged him to immolate himself for us. It is love that made of him the King of martyrs. The life of Christ was one perpetual act of love. In his Mother's womb, in the crib at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, on the bloody mountain, Jesus offered to his Father sacrifices of love. Now, on the altar, the new Calvary to which love enchains him, he immolates himself anew each day; he lances darts of fire on just souls to kindle in them the pure flame that consumes his heart, and on sinners to touch them, convert them, and draw them to the repentance of love.

Yes, our Jesus is all love; he is the perfect model of love. Enraptured by the charms of this Spouse of love, our souls burn with the desire to resemble him and walk in his footsteps; they choose the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense for their dwelling in exile. The road is short, the way is all outlined. Let us tread, my friends, my sisters, in the train of the Spouse of Blood become a victim or us, and desiring to continue *in us, with us, and for us* this life of immolation and praise to the glory of his Father and for the greater good of souls, Our Love was crucified; let us be crucified with him. He gave all his Blood; let us give him all our love; let us bathe his sacred wounds with tears of love. Each day, on the altar of the new Calvary, let us offer him a thousand victims of love; by our songs of love let us atone for the outrages he there receives. Solitary Lover, I thirst to be, with you, a victim in my turn; I thirst to share your sorrows, to weep for the outrages and forgetfulness of sinners.

GOD IS LOVE. He will forget the depth of our misery; he will bind us to his altar with unbreakable bonds. He will unite our will to his adorable will, merge our feeling with his own; he will transform in us everything opposed to the holiness of our state and with the burning seraphim permit us to offer perpetual homage of adoration to the chalice of his Blood.

*From a homily "On the Holy Resurrection of Christ" by St. Epiphanius of Salamis (+403)*

*This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it, with a spiritual gladness pleasing to God. This is our greatest feast, one that is celebrated by all the world, a feast of renewal and salvation. Today God has fulfilled all types, symbols, and prophecies. Christ our Passover, the true Passover, is sacrificed, and in Christ all is made new: there is a new creation, a new faith, new laws, a new people of God, a new Israel in place of the old, a new Passover, a new and spiritual circumcision, a new and unbloody sacrifice, a new divine covenant.*

We too must be renewed today; we must renew a right spirit within our hearts and so prepare to enter into the mysteries of this new and perfect feast and to exult in this day's heavenly joy. We shall then depart as initiates of the mysteries of the new Passover, mysteries fulfilling those of the old dispensation and which will never be superseded. We shall see how great the difference is between the Jewish mysteries and ours and be able to compare the type with the reality. With these thoughts, let us begin our meditation upon Christ, our Passover, and upon his mission.

Of old, Moses, the lawgiver, was sent by God from a high mountain to save his people and to symbolize the Law. The Lord, the Lawgiver, was also sent, God by God, mountain from the highest mountain of heaven, to save our people and to be the Law. Moses delivered his people from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but Christ has made peace between his two peoples and united heaven and earth.

Israel kept the symbolic Passover by night: we celebrate the true Passover by the light of day. They kept it in the evening of the day: we keep it in the evening of the world. Then the doorposts and lintels were sprinkled with blood: now it is the hearts of the faithful that are sealed with the blood of Christ. Then the sacrifice was offered by night and the crossing of the Red Sea took place at night, but now we are saved by the Red Sea of Baptism that glows with the fire of the Spirit. In Baptism the Spirit of God truly descends and appears in the waters in which the head of the serpent, the prince of serpents and demons, is crushed. Moses gave Israel its baptism by night and a cloud overshadowed the people, but it is the power of the Most High that overshadows the people of Christ.

Moses had recourse to a rock of this creation, but we turn to the rock of faith. Then, the tablets of the Law were broken in pieces as a sign that the Law would be abrogated: now, the Laws of God stand forever. Then, the making of a molten calf brought retribution on the people: now, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God is the salvation of the people. Then, water poured from the rock when it was struck by a rod: now, from the pierced and life-giving side of the rock which is Christ, both blood and water flow. The Jews of old were given quails from heaven: our gift from on high is the Dove, the Holy Spirit. They fed on perishable manna and died: the bread that we eat brings us everlasting life.

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## RESPONSORY

You who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. – For he is our peace, he who made both one. It pleased God to reconcile all things to himself through him. – For he is our peace, he who made both one.

### Day 15

*A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians.*

[Christ Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (*Colossians 1:15-20*)

*From “The Liturgical Year” by Dom Prosper Louis Paschal Guéranger*

The Church, [prior to the Feast of the Precious Blood], it is true, has already made known to the children of the New Covenant, and in a much more solemn manner, the price of the Blood that redeemed them, its nutritive strength, and the adoring homage which is its due. Yes; on Good Friday, earth and heaven beheld all sin drowned in the saving stream, whose eternal flood-gates at last gave way, beneath the combined effort of human violence and of the love of the divine Heart. The festival of Corpus Christi witnessed our prostrate worship before the altars whereon is perpetuated the Sacrifice of Calvary, and where the outpouring of the Precious Blood affords drink to the humblest little ones, as well as to the mightiest potentates of earth, lowly bowed in adoration before it. How is it, then, that Holy Church is now inviting all Christians to hail, in a particular manner, the stream of life ever gushing from the sacred fount? What else can this mean, but that the preceding solemnities have by no means exhausted the mystery? The peace which the Blood has made to reign in the high places as well as in the low; the impetus of its wave bearing back the children of Adam from the yawning gulf, purified, renewed, and dazzling white in the radiance of their heavenly apparel; the Sacred Table outspread before them, on the waters’ brink, and the Chalice brimful of inebriation; all this preparation and display would be objectless, if the human race were not brought to see therein the wooings of a Love that could never endure its advances to be outdone by the pretensions of any other. Therefore, the Blood of Jesus is set before our eyes, at this moment, as the Blood of the Testament; the pledge of the alliance proposed to us by God; the dower stipulated upon by Eternal Wisdom for this divine union to which he is inviting all people, and whereof the consummation in our soul is being urged forward with such vehemence by the Holy Spirit.

The Blood of the Man-God being the pledge of peace between heaven and earth, the object of profoundest worship, yea, itself the very center of the whole Liturgy, and our assured protection against all the evils of this present life, deposits, even now, in the souls and bodies of those whom it has ransomed, the germ of eternal happiness. It was by His own Blood that the Son of God entered into heaven; this divine Blood continues to be the means whereby we also may be introduced into the eternal alliance.

The Blood Divine has rendered us participators of Christ: it is our part not to squander, as though it were worthless, this immense treasure, this initial incorporation which unites us to Christ, the divine Head; but let us abandon

ourselves, without fear and without reserve, to the energy of this precious leaven whose property it is to transform our whole being into Him.

And you, O soul, long rebellious to the secret touches of choicest graces, be not disconsolate; say not: "Love is no more for me!" However far away the old enemy may, by wretched wiles, have dragged you, is it not still true that to ever winding way, yea, alas! perhaps even to every pitfall, the streamlets of this Sacred Fount have followed you? Do you think, perhaps, that your long and tortuous wanderings from the merciful course of these ever pursuant waters may have weakened their power? Do but try: do but, first of all, bathe in their cleansing wave; do but quaff long draughts from this stream of life; then, O weary soul, arming you with faith, be strong, and mount once more the course of the divine torrent. For, as in order to reach you, it never once was separated from its fountain head, so likewise be certain that by so doing, you must reach the very Source Itself. Believe me, this is the whole secret of the Bride, namely, that from wherever she may come, she has no other course to pursue than this, if she would fain hear the answer to that yearning request expressed in the Sacred Canticle: Show me, O you whom my soul loves, where you rest in the midday! So much so indeed, that by reascending the sacred Stream, not only is she sure of reaching the Divine Heart, but moreover she is ceaselessly renewing, in its waters, that pure beauty which makes her become, in the eyes of the Spouse, an object of delight and of glory to Him. For your part, carefully gather up today the testimony of the Disciple of love; and congratulating Jesus, with the Church, his Bride and your Mother, on the brilliancy of her emurpled robe, take good heed likewise to conclude with St. John: Let us then love God, since He hath first loved us.

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*From "The Precious Blood" by Fr. Frederick William Faber (+1863)*

All God's works are in a certain sense part of the life of God. It is this which gives to creation its interest as well as its significance. It is in this way that time participates in eternity. The life of the Precious Blood may be divided into seven epochs; or it would be more true to call them seven lives, both because they do not follow each other in order of time, and also because they are not all actual periods of its existence. These seven lives are as follows: the life of the Precious Blood in the Mind of God before creation; its life of efforts in the world from creation to the Incarnation; its life upon earth during the Thirty-Three Years; its life of energy in the Church afterward, up to the day of Doom; its contemporaneous life all that time in Heaven; its contemporaneous life on earth in the Blessed Sacrament during that same time; and finally its eternal life in Heaven, when the Doom is past. In all these lives of the Precious Blood there is a hidden life which we cannot reach, and whose mysteries are not only above our comprehension but beyond our imagination. Its union with the Divinity is inexplicable. Its peculiar redeeming value, in that it is blood, is also a secret hidden from our intelligence. It represents abysses of the Divine wisdom, which are not only unfathomable but nameless. It bears upon itself the imprint of unsuspected perfections in the broad majesty of God. The jubilee of its life is a height of creation lost to our eyes in the burning vicinity of the uncreated. To this innermost inward life we cannot penetrate; but we can see, and understand, and love much of an inward, though less secret, life, which we could not see when we regarded the Precious Blood under the figure of a Procession. It is of this inward life we must now endeavor to get some idea.

The life of the Precious Blood in the Mind of God from all eternity is in one sense a real life, and in another sense an unreal one. It was not an actual life. It was a life of predestination, of foreseen beauty, of multiplied divine intentions. It was a specially Divine invention, if we may use such a word. It was an idea which could not have come to any mind but that of God, and therefore the complacency which it caused in the Divine Mind was immense. It was a sort of second Word to God, a created expression of His uncreated perfection. It was part of the most grand and glorious thought of God, the Incarnation. It was a most important part of it. It was also a specially chosen part, selected for the accomplishment of our redemption, and for the restoring of a revolted creation to the dominion of its Maker. In the most dear and dread Mind of God it was a fountain always flowing. The beauty of its flowing had been one of His unbeginning gladnesses. It was the fountain which gave forth, multitudinous and beautiful as the creation of the radiant Angels, the countless predestinations of the infinitely varying souls of men. The mystery of all election was from the first glassed in its beaming depths. It was its spray, which caught the golden light of eternal things, and fell down before the throne, even as it is still falling now, in starry showers of splendor. It was a mirror too in which the manifold countenances of the Divine perfections looked always, and loved to make their beauty bearable to mortal eye. It is there to this day, that the oppositions in God are seen to be harmonies most simple and most worshipful. All parts of creation give us double views of God, simultaneous views of His seeming opposite

perfections, just as on the Mount of Olives the eye may rest at will either on the Dead Sea or on the Holy City. But of no part of creation is this so true, or true in so high a sense, as of the Precious Blood. Redeeming grace tells the whole history of God, so far as it can be told, unfolds His character in all of its breadth which is comprehensible, and as it were recites and magnifies each separate perfection: and redeeming grace is the speciality of the Precious Blood.

Moreover, the Precious Blood dwelt also in the Mind of God as the type and model of all creation, whether fallen or unfallen. In its unity lay the germs of all created loveliness and of all created variety. Mary was its first shadow, its first reflection, the freshest copy of the original. No wonder then that it was an infinite delight to the Three Divine Persons. To them it was none the less real because it was not yet actually created; for to God the solidest created substance is but as shadow compared with the reality of His ideas. Thus from all eternity did the Precious Blood reign like a sovereign thing in the adorable complacency of God.

As it had lived an eternal life in the Mind of God before creation, so also did it live a life of visible effects and real jurisdiction from the beginning of the world, before it had become itself an actual created thing in the mystery of the Incarnation. It was the Precious Blood which hindered the fall of man from being as irretrievable as the fall of Angels had been. It did real work in every single soul which was created in those four thousand years. It altered their position in the world. It made the eye of God look differently on them. It rained supernatural graces upon their hearts. It diminished temporal chastisements. Neither was it less influential in the counsels of God than in the souls of men. It caused His compassion to overspread the whole earth. It turned the chronicles of the world into a succession of types, and shadows, and predictions of itself. While it was itself preparing all things for its own coming and shedding, it so controlled all things that they rather seemed to be a preparation for itself. It sounded in every thing that God said. It impressed its character upon every thing that God did. It underlay all heathen life, and all Hebrew life. It was the significance of the most significant, and also of the most insignificant, events. It molded all sanctity into an onlooking for itself. It beautified the hearts of men for God with supernatural desires. For all those forty ages it was the secret meaning and the hidden agent of the world. All that blossomed upon earth blossomed only because the Precious Blood watered the soil under ground. Who would not long to see it, as it would one day be, in the actual Human Heart which was to be its living chalice? Even the patience of the long-waiting God might vouchsafe to yearn for the actual creation of the Precious Blood. How sweet then to Him must have been that dear sanctity of Mary, whose beautiful compulsion caused the Word to anticipate His time!

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## **RESPONSORY**

You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. -- For he is our peace, who has made both one. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, and to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. -- For he is our peace, who has made both one.

## **Day 16**

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), 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. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Hence not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been told to all the people by Moses in accordance with the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you.' And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the

vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (*Hebrews 9:11-22*)

*From the "Homilies on Joshua" by Origen (+253)*

It is necessary to make some comments on the death of Moses, because unless we understand in what sense Moses is said to be dead, we shall not be able to grasp the sense in which the leadership is said to have passed to Joshua (whose name in Greek is Jesus).

I would ask you, then, to consider the present condition of Jerusalem. The city has been destroyed and its altar abandoned. There are no more sacrifices, no victims or libations, no high priest or temple priesthood, no levitical ministry. Now, having considered all this, say to yourself: *Moses, the servant of God, is dead.*

No longer can anyone be observed presenting himself three times a year before the Lord, making offerings in the temple, slaying the Passover lamb, eating unleavened bread, bringing the firstfruits of his harvest or consecrating his firstborn. Take note of this, and say: *Moses, the servant of God, is dead.*

In place of these things, I ask you to observe how the Gentiles are turning to the faith and building churches. Altars are not sprinkled with the blood of dumb beasts anymore; they are consecrated by the precious blood of Christ. Instead of the blood of bulls and goats, priests and deacons minister the word of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit. All this must lead you to conclude that Jesus has taken the place of Moses as leader of the people – not Jesus who is called Joshua, the son of Nun, but Jesus the Son of God.

*Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed and we now eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* The good soil yields a thirty, sixty, or hundredfold harvest in the Church; the descendants of Israel have been multiplied by the adoption of all those born *not of blood or of the will of man or of the will of flesh, but of God himself.* God's scattered children have been reunited. His people now keep the Sabbath not by abstaining from their ordinary work but by refraining from sinful practices. After taking all these things into consideration, say to yourself: *Moses, the servant of God, is dead, and Jesus has taken over the leadership.*

There exists a little work that treats of this mystery in figurative language, though admittedly it does not form part of the canon of Scripture. This book describes the appearance of two Moses figures, one a living spirit, the other a dead body. Surely this vision has a prophetic meaning. The letter of the Law, lifeless and empty of all those things of which we have just spoken, may be regarded as the dead body of Moses. But if you know how to remove the veil from the Law and understand that *the Law is spiritual*, there you have the Moses who continues to live in the spirit.

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*From "The Explanation of the Psalms" by Saint Ambrose of Milan (+397)*

In reconciling the world to God, Christ stood in no need of reconciliation for himself. What sin of his was there to atone for, sinless as he was? When he was asked for the temple-tax, a sin-offering imposed by the law, he said to Peter: *Simon, from whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute or tax? From their own sons or from strangers? Peter replied: From strangers. The Lord said to him: Then the sons are free. But so as not to give scandal to them, cast a hook and take the first fish that comes; open its mouth, and you will find a shekel. Take it and give it to them for me and for you.*

Christ shows that he does not need to atone for sin on his own behalf: he is no slave of sin but, as Son of God, is free from all sin. The Son sets free, a slave remains in his sin. Christ is therefore free of all sin, and does not pay the price of his own redemption. His blood could pay the ransom for all the sins of the whole world. The one who has no debt to pay for himself is the right person to set others free.

It is not only that Christ has no ransom to pay or atonement to make for his own sins; if we apply his words to every individual man they can be taken to mean that individuals do not need to make atonement for themselves, for Christ

is the atonement for all, the redemption for all.

Is any man's blood fit to redeem him, seeing that it was Christ who shed his blood for the redemption of all? Is anyone's blood comparable to Christ's? Is anyone great enough to make atonement for himself over and above the atonement which Christ has offered in himself, Christ who alone has reconciled the world to God by his blood? What greater victim, what more excellent sacrifice, what better advocate can there be than he who became the propitiation for the sins of all, and gave his life for us as our redemption?

We do not need, then, to look for an atonement or redemption made by each individual, because the price paid for all is the blood of Christ, that blood by which the Lord Jesus has redeemed us, he who alone has reconciled us to the Father. He has labored even to the end, shouldering our burdens himself. *Come to me*, he says, *all you that labor, and I will refresh you.*

## RESPONSORY

Let us run with patience to the fight set before us, looking towards the author and finisher of faith, Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured a cross, despising shame, and sits at the right hand of the throne of God. Therefore he is able at all times to save those who come to God through him. -- He lives always to make intercession for them. And when perfected, he became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation. -- He lives always to make intercession for them.

### Day 17

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

It was necessary for the sketches of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (*Hebrews 9:23-28*)

*From the "Treatise on the Holy Spirit" by St. Basil of Caesarea (+379)*

The type manifests things to come by imitating them, foreshadowing future events in order to make them understood. For example, Adam was a type of the One who was to come, the rock was a type of Christ, and the water that flowed from the rock was a type of the life-giving power of the Word, for the Lord said: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The manna typified the living bread that came down from heaven and the serpent fixed to the pole typified the saving Passion consummated upon the Cross, which is why all who looked at it were saved.

Similarly, the reason the story is told of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt is that they prefigure those who are saved by baptism. The firstborn of the Israelites were saved in the same way as are the bodies of the baptized, since grace was given to those marked by the blood. For the blood of the lamb was a symbol of the first man who was created and who of necessity still exists in us, transmitted through succeeding generations until the end of the world.

The sea and the cloud had the immediate effect of producing faith because of the amazement they aroused, but in relation to the future they were types foreshadowing the grace to come. Who is wise enough to understand these things, to understand how the sea is a type of baptism because it separated the Israelites from Pharaoh just as baptism separates us from the tyranny of the devil? In its waters the sea destroyed the enemy and in baptism is slain our enmity with God. From those waters the people emerged unharmed, and we emerge from the waters of baptism as though we had died and come to life again, saved by the grace of him who called us. As for the cloud, that foreshadowed the gift of the Spirit, who cools the heat of the passions by the mortification of our body.

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*From "Ego and Archetype" by Edward Edinger (1998)*

Jung has demonstrated that the figure of Christ is a symbol of the Self and this discovery has enabled us to go a long way toward relating traditional Christian mythology to modern depth psychology. An important corollary image associated with the symbolism of Christ is the image of the blood of Christ. My attention was first directed to this theme when I encountered several dreams referring to the blood of Christ. Such dreams indicate that the blood of Christ is a living symbol which still functions in the modern psyche.

Since primitive times blood has carried numinous implications. The blood was considered to be the seat of life or soul. Since life ebbed away as one bled to death, the equation of blood and life was natural and inevitable. Since it carried these meanings, blood was the most appropriate gift to God, which accounts for the wide-spread practice of blood sacrifice.

Thus, understood psychologically, blood represents the life of the soul, of transpersonal origin, exceedingly precious and potent. It is to be revered as divine and any effort of the ego to manipulate, appropriate or destroy it for personal purposes provokes vengeance or retribution. Blood spilled requires more blood to pay the debt. The books must be balanced. Such thinking illustrates the law of the conservation of psychic energy. There is so much psychic life to be lived. If it is denied fulfillment in one area, it must be made up elsewhere. There must be blood for blood. Repression, which is internal murder, will out. It is a crime against life for which payment will be extracted.

Another feature of ancient blood symbolism is the notion that blood establishes a bond or covenant between the divine or demonic powers and man. The blood here serves as a kind of glue or binding agent. Half of it is thrown on Yahweh, represented by his altar, and half is thrown on the people. The people are thus united with God "in one blood." God and people have participated in a joint baptism or *solutio*, which unites them in a communion. The idea of the "blood of the covenant" is picked up again in the New Testament and applied to the blood of Christ. Just as the blood of the sacrificial animals poured out by Moses cemented the old bond between God and Israel, so Christ's blood, willingly poured out by himself, cements the new bond between God and man. This parallel is made explicit in the Ninth Chapter of Hebrews (15-26).

This passage demonstrates how Hebrew myth and ritual merges with Platonic thought in evolving the Christian symbolism of the blood of Christ. The Hebrew "blood of the covenant" is considered a "copy" of the genuine article and it is sprinkled on the tabernacle of Yahweh which is a copy of the eternal heaven. This idea, together with the statement that Christ's blood is only once for all time, implies psychologically that a transformation has occurred in the archetypal level of the collective psyche. God himself has undergone a change so that the cementing and redeeming fluid which unites man with God, i.e. the ego with the Self, is now continually available through the initiative of the Self as Christ.

In the new dispensation the "blood of the covenant" becomes the blood of the communion meal. This connection is made in the account of the last supper where it is said: "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matt. 26:27-28RSV. See also Mark 14:23-24 and 1 Cor. 11:25). Thus the Old Testament injunction to eat no blood has been superseded, at least for symbolic and ritual purposes. Drinking the blood of Christ becomes a means of cementing the connection between God and man.

Understood psychologically, it is joint libido investment which generates brotherhood. People engaged in a mutual enterprise, sharing the same goals, the same ordeals and the same value-commitments are those who experience themselves as brothers of one blood. Likewise, in the inner life of the individual, it is from occasions of intense affect faced consciously that the ego discovers the existence of the Self and becomes bound to it. Libido intensity symbolized by blood is necessary to forge the connection between man and man and between man and God. With these observations in mind, the drinking of Christ's blood in the ritual of the Roman Catholic Mass can be seen symbolically to represent a two-fold cementing process. First, the individual communicant cements his personal relation to God. Secondly, he becomes psychologically identified with all the other communicants as part of the mystical body of Christ. Christ's action of offering his blood as a nourishing drink (like the pelican) is an expression



of the positive mother archetype, or rather, that component of the Self. The same meaning must be attached to the cup or chalice symbolism which has gathered round the blood of Christ.

The Son is the cup, i.e. the human incarnation in personal, temporal life is the vessel which contains and transmits the archetypal life energy. For this life-fluid to be realized in its essential nature the cup, its particular personal container, must be emptied. In other words, archetypal life meaning which connects the individual with his transpersonal source must be extracted from the particular incarnations in which it expresses itself in one's personal, concrete life.

The symbol of the blood of Christ is active in the modern psyche as evidenced by dreams of patients in psychotherapy. As previously indicated this symbol belongs to the phenomenology of the Self and its presence indicates that the transpersonal center of individual identity is activated and is pouring an influx of energy and meaning into the conscious personality. In summary, the blood of Christ represents the primal power of life itself as manifested on the psychic plane, with profound potentiality for good or ill. As a symbol of the fluid essence of Selfhood and totality it contains and reconciles all opposites. If it comes as a fiery influx of undifferentiated energy it can destroy the petrified or undeveloped ego. On the other hand it is the nourishing, supporting, binding, life-promoting energy which flows from the transpersonal center of the psyche and which maintains, validates and justifies the continuing existence of the personal center of the psyche, the ego. As a combination of water and fire, it is both comforting, calming, protecting and also inspiring, agitating and invigorating. It is the essence beyond time which carries and renders meaningful personal temporal existence. It is the eternal column on which the present moment of conscious existence rests. Whenever a sterile, stagnant, or depressing state of consciousness is released by an influx of meaningful images, feelings or motivational energies it can be said that an archetypal dynamism represented by the blood of Christ has begun to operate. Such experiences confirm the reality of the "power for redemption" which is the essential quality of the blood of Christ.

## **RESPONSORY**

In the days of his earthly life, Jesus was heard because of his reverent submission. -- And son though he was, learned obedience from the things that he suffered. He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. -- And son though he was, learned obedience from the things that he suffered.

### **Day 18**

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshippers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body you have prepared for me;  
in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, “See, God, I have come to do your will, O God”  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).’

When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sin-offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), then he added, ‘See, I have come to do your will.’ He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (*Hebrews 10:1-10*)

*From a sermon by St. John Chrysostom (+407)*

This blood makes the seal of our King bright in us; it produces an inconceivable beauty; it does not permit the nobility of the soul to become corrupt, since it refreshes and nourishes it without ceasing. This blood both refreshes the soul and instills a certain great power in it. This blood, when worthily received, drives away demons and puts them at a distance from us and even summons us angels and the Lord of Angels. Where they see the blood of the Lord, demons flee, while angels gather. This blood, poured out in abundance, has washed the whole world clean. This blood is the salvation of our souls; by it the soul is cleansed; by it, beautified; by it, inflamed. It makes our intellect brighter than fire; it renders our soul more radiant than gold. This blood has been poured forth and has opened the way to heaven. This fountain is a fountain of light, shedding abundant rays of truth. And beside it the Powers from on high have taken their stand, gazing on the beauty of its streams, since they perceive more clearly than we the power of what lies before us and its unapproachable flashing rays. This blood was formerly foreshadowed continually on altars, in sacrifices of the Law. This is the price of the world; by it Christ purchased the Church; by it He adorned her entirely. Christ has both purchased us with His blood and adorned us with His blood. Those who share in this blood have taken their stand with angels, and archangels, and the Powers from on high, clad in the royal livery of Christ.

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*From the Diary "Divine Mercy in My Soul" by St. Faustina Mary Kowalska (+1938)*

At the feet of the Lord. Hidden Jesus, Eternal Love, our Source of Life, divine Madman, in that You forget yourself and see only us. Before creating heaven and earth, You carried us in the depths of Your Heart. O Love, O depth of Your Abasement, O mystery of happiness, why do so few people know You? Why is Your love not returned? O Divine Love, why do You hide Your beauty? O infinite One beyond all understanding, the more I know You the less I comprehend You; but because I cannot comprehend You, I better comprehend Your greatness. I do not envy the Seraphim their fire, for I have a greater gift deposited in my heart. They admire you in rapture, but Your Blood mingles with mine. Love is heaven given us already here on earth. Oh, why do You hide in faith? Love tears away the veil. There is no veil before the eye of my soul, for You Yourself have drawn me into the bosom of secret love forever. Praise and glory be to You, O indivisible Trinity, One God, unto ages of ages! [278]

I sense keenly how Your divine Blood is circulating in my heart; I have not the least doubt that Your most pure love has entered my heart with Your most sacred Blood. I am aware that You are dwelling in me, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, or rather I am aware that it is I who am living in You, O incomprehensible God! I am aware that I am dissolving in You like a drop in an ocean. I am aware that You are within me and all about me, that You are in all things that surround me, in all that happens to me. O my God, I have come to know You within my heart, and I have loved You above all things that exist on earth or in heaven. Our hearts have a mutual understanding, and no one of humankind will comprehend this. [478]

O merciful Jesus, how longingly You hurried to the Upper Room to consecrate the Host that I am to receive in my life. Jesus, You desired to dwell in my heart. Your living Blood unites with mine. Who can understand this close union? My heart encloses within itself the Almighty, the Infinite One. O Jesus, continue to grant me Your divine life. Let Your pure and noble Blood throb with all its might in my heart. I give You my whole being. Transform me into Yourself and make me capable of doing Your holy will in all things and of returning Your love. O my sweet Spouse, You know that my heart knows no one but You. You have opened up in my heart an insatiable depth of love for You. From the very first moment it knew You, my heart has loved You and has lost itself in You as its one and only object. May Your pure and omnipotent love be the driving force of all my actions,. Who will ever conceive and understand the depth of mercy that has gushed forth from Your Heart? [832]

I am going forward through life amidst rainbows and storms, but with my head held high with pride, for I am a royal child. I feel that the blood of Jesus is circulating in my veins, and I have put my trust in the great mercy of the Lord. [992]

Hail to You, Eternal Love, my Sweet Jesus, who have condescended to dwell in my heart! I salute You, O glorious Godhead who have deigned to stoop to me, and out of love for me have so emptied Yourself as to assume the insignificant form of bread. I salute You, Jesus, never-fading flower of humanity. You are all there is for my soul. Your love is purer than a lily, and Your presence is more pleasing to me than the fragrance of a hyacinth. Your friendship is more tender and subtle than the scent of a rose, and yet it is stronger than death. O Jesus,

incomprehensible beauty, it is with pure souls that You communicate best, because they alone are capable of heroism and sacrifice. O sweet, rose-red blood of Jesus, ennoble my blood and change it into Your own blood, and let this be done to me according to Your good pleasure. [1575]

God, You could have saved thousands of worlds with one word; a single sigh from Jesus would have satisfied Your justice. But You Yourself, Jesus, purely out of love for us, underwent such a terrible Passion. Your Father's justice would have been propitiated with a single sigh from You, and all Your self-abasement is solely the work of Your mercy and Your inconceivable love. On leaving the earth, O Lord, You wanted to stay with us, and so You left us Yourself in the Sacrament of the Altar, and You opened wide Your mercy to us. There is no misery that could exhaust You; You have called us all to this fountain of love, to this spring of God's compassion. Here is the tabernacle of Your mercy, here is the remedy for all our ills. To You, O living spring of mercy, all souls are drawn; some like deer, thirsting for Your love, others to wash the wound of their sins, and still others, exhausted by life, to draw strength. At the moment of Your death on the Cross, You bestowed upon us eternal life; allowing Your most holy side to be opened, You opened an inexhaustible spring of mercy for us, giving us Your dearest possession, the Blood and Water from Your Heart. Such is the omnipotence of Your mercy. From it all grace flows to us. [1747]

## RESPONSORY

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, -- but a body you have prepared for me. 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sin-offerings' -- but a body you have prepared for me.

### Day 19

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy 'on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (*Hebrews 10:19-31*)

*From the "Commentary on Hebrews" by St. Thomas Aquinas (+1274)*

When [Paul] says, how much more the blood of Christ . . . cleanses our conscience, he lays down the consequent. As if to say: If blood and ashes can do this, what could Christ's blood do? Certainly much more. Then the Apostle mentions three things, which show the efficacy of Christ's blood: first, he shows whose blood it is, namely, it is Christ's. From this it is evident that His blood cleanses: 'For he will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21). Secondly, the reason why Christ shed His blood, because this was done by the Holy Spirit, through Whose movement and instinct, namely, by the love of God and neighbor He did this: 'When he shall come as a violent stream which the spirit of the Lord drives on' (Is. 59:10). But the Spirit cleanses: 'If the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall wash away the blood of Jerusalem out of the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning' (Is. 4:4). Therefore, he says, who by the Holy Spirit offered himself: 'Christ has loved us and has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph. 5:2). Thirdly, he describes His condition, because He is without blemish: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish, a male, of one year' (Ex. 12:5); 'What can be made clean by the unclean?' (Sir. 34:4).

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*From the encyclical letter "Dominum et vivificantem" (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World) by Pope St. John Paul II (+2005)*

The redemptive value of Christ's sacrifice is expressed in very significant words by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, who after recalling the sacrifices of the Old Covenant in which "the blood of goats and bulls..." purifies in "the flesh," adds: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Though we are aware of other possible interpretations, our considerations on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the whole of Christ's life lead us to see this text as an invitation to reflect on the presence of the same Spirit also in the redemptive sacrifice of the Incarnate Word.

The words of the Letter to the Hebrews now explain to us how Christ "offered himself without blemish to God," and how he did this "with an eternal Spirit." According to the Letter to the Hebrews, on the way to his "departure" through Gethsemani and Golgotha, the same Christ Jesus in his own humanity opened himself totally to this action of the Spirit-Paraclete, who from suffering enables eternal salvific love to spring forth. Therefore he "was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." In this way this Letter shows how humanity, subjected to sin, in the descendants of the first Adam, in Jesus Christ became perfectly subjected to God and united to him, and at the same time full of compassion towards men. Thus there is a new humanity, which in Jesus Christ through the suffering of the Cross has returned to the love which was betrayed by Adam through sin. This new humanity is discovered precisely in the divine source of the original outpouring of gifts: in the Spirit, who "searches...the depths of God" and is himself love and gift.

The Son of God Jesus Christ, as man, in the ardent prayer of his Passion, enabled the Holy Spirit, who had already penetrated the inmost depths of his humanity, to transform that humanity into a perfect sacrifice through the act of his death as the victim of love on the Cross. He made this offering by himself. As the one priest, "he offered himself without blemish to God: In his humanity he was worthy to become this sacrifice, for he alone was "without blemish." But he offered it "through the eternal Spirit," which means that the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this absolute self-giving of the Son of Man, in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love.

We have said that, at the climax of the Paschal Mystery, the Holy Spirit is definitively revealed and made present in a new way. The Risen Christ says to the Apostles: "Receive the Holy Spirit." Thus the Holy Spirit is revealed, for the words of Christ constitute the confirmation of what he had promised and foretold during the discourse in the Upper Room. And with this the Paraclete is also made present in a new way. In fact, he was already at work from the beginning in the mystery of creation and throughout the history of the Old Covenant of God with man. His action was fully confirmed by the sending of the Son of Man as the Messiah, who came in the power of the Holy Spirit. At the climax of Jesus' messianic mission, the Holy Spirit becomes present in the Paschal Mystery in all his divine subjectivity: as the one who is now to continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross. Of course Jesus entrusts this work to humanity: to the Apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in these men and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent principal agent of the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world: the invisible and at the same time omnipresent Paraclete! The Spirit who "blows where he wills."

The words of the Risen Christ on the "first day of the week" give particular emphasis to the presence of the Paraclete-Counselor as the one who "convinces the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment." For it is only in this relationship that it is possible to explain the words which Jesus directly relates to the "gift" of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. He says: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Jesus confers on the Apostles the power to forgive sins, so that they may pass it on to their successors in the Church. But this power granted to men presupposes and includes the saving action of the Holy Spirit. By becoming "the light of hearts," that is to say the light of consciences, the Holy Spirit "convinces concerning sin," which is to say, he makes man realize his own evil and at the same time directs him toward what is good. Thanks to the multiplicity of the Spirit's gifts, by reason of which he is invoked as the "sevenfold one," every kind of human sin can be reached by God's saving power. In reality-as St. Bonaventure says-"by virtue of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit all evils are destroyed and all good things are produced.

Thus the conversion of the human heart, which is an indispensable condition for the forgiveness of sins, is brought about by the influence of the Counselor. Without a true conversion, which implies inner contrition, and without a sincere and firm purpose of amendment, sins remain “unforgiven,” in the words of Jesus, and with him in the Tradition of the Old and New Covenants. For the first words uttered by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, according to the Gospel of Mark, are these: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” A confirmation of this exhortation is the “convincing concerning sin” that the Holy Spirit undertakes in a new way by virtue of the Redemption accomplished by the Blood of the Son of Man. Hence the Letter to the Hebrews says that this “blood purifies the conscience.” It therefore, so to speak, opens to the Holy Spirit the door into man’s inmost being, namely into the sanctuary of human consciences.

The laborious effort of the human heart, the laborious effort of the conscience in which this “metanoia,” or conversion, takes place, is a reflection of that process whereby reprobation is transformed into salvific love, a love which is capable of suffering. The hidden giver of this saving power is the Holy Spirit: he whom the Church calls “the light of consciences” penetrates and fills “the depths of the human heart.” Through just such a conversion in the Holy Spirit a person becomes open to forgiveness, to the remission of sins. And in all this wonderful dynamism of conversion-forgiveness there is confirmed the truth of what St. Augustine writes concerning the mystery of man, when he comments on the words of the Psalm: “The abyss calls to the abyss.” Precisely with regard to these “unfathomable depths” of man, of the human conscience, the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit is accomplished. The Holy Spirit “comes” by virtue of Christ’s “departure” in the Paschal Mystery: he comes in each concrete case of conversion- forgiveness, by virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross. For in this sacrifice “the blood of Christ...purifies your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Thus there are continuously fulfilled the words about the Holy Spirit as “another Counselor,” the words spoken in the Upper Room to the Apostles and indirectly spoken to everyone: “You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

If man rejects the “convincing concerning sin” which comes from the Holy Spirit and which has the power to save, he also rejects the “coming” of the Counselor-that “coming” which was accomplished in the Paschal Mystery, in union with the redemptive power of Christ’s Blood: the Blood which “purifies the conscience from dead works.” We know that the result of such a purification is the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, whoever rejects the Spirit and the Blood remains in “dead works,” in sin.

Those who are converted, therefore, are led by the Holy Spirit out of the range of the “judgment,” and introduced into that righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, and is in him precisely because he receives it from the Father, as a reflection of the holiness of the Trinity. This is the righteousness of the Gospel and of the Redemption, the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount and of the Cross, which effects the purifying of the conscience through the Blood of the Lamb. It is the righteousness which the Father gives to the Son and to all those united with him in truth and in love.

## **RESPONSORY**

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us. -- We have a great priest over the house of God. Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience -- We have a great priest over the house of God.

### **Day 20**

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (*Hebrews 12:18-24*)

*From the encyclical letter “Evangelium vitae” (The Gospel of Life) by Pope St. John Paul II (+2005)*

“The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground” (Gen 4:10). It is not only the voice of the blood of Abel, the first innocent man to be murdered, which cries to God, the source and defender of life. The blood of every other human being who has been killed since Abel is also a voice raised to the Lord. In an absolutely singular way, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us, the voice of the blood of Christ, of whom Abel in his innocence is a prophetic figure, cries out to God: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God ... to the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (12:22, 24).

It is the sprinkled blood. A symbol and prophetic sign of it had been the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, whereby God expressed his will to communicate his own life to men, purifying and consecrating them (cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 17:11). Now all of this is fulfilled and comes true in Christ: his is the sprinkled blood which redeems, purifies and saves; it is the blood of the Mediator of the New Covenant “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28). This blood, which flows from the pierced side of Christ on the Cross (cf. Jn 19:34), “speaks more graciously” than the blood of Abel; indeed, it expresses and requires a more radical “justice”, and above all it implores mercy, it makes intercession for the brethren before the Father (cf. Heb 7:25), and it is the source of perfect redemption and the gift of new life.

The blood of Christ, while it reveals the grandeur of the Father’s love, shows how precious man is in God’s eyes and how priceless the value of his life. The Apostle Peter reminds us of this: “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pt 1:18-19). Precisely by contemplating the precious blood of Christ, the sign of his self-giving love (cf. Jn 13:1), the believer learns to recognize and appreciate the almost divine dignity of every human being and can exclaim with ever renewed and grateful wonder: “How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he “gained so great a Redeemer’ (Exsultet of the Easter Vigil), and if God gave his only Son” in order that man should not perish but have eternal life’ (cf. Jn 3:16)!”

Furthermore, Christ’s blood reveals to man that his greatness, and therefore his vocation, consists in the sincere gift of self. Precisely because it is poured out as the gift of life, the blood of Christ is no longer a sign of death, of definitive separation from the brethren, but the instrument of a communion which is richness of life for all. Whoever in the Sacrament of the Eucharist drinks this blood and abides in Jesus (cf. Jn 6:56) is drawn into the dynamism of his love and gift of life, in order to bring to its fullness the original vocation to love which belongs to everyone (cf. Gen 1:27; 2:18-24).

It is from the blood of Christ that all draw the strength to commit themselves to promoting life. It is precisely this blood that is the most powerful source of hope, indeed it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God’s plan life will be victorious. “And death shall be no more”, exclaims the powerful voice which comes from the throne of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:4). And Saint Paul assures us that the present victory over sin is a sign and anticipation of the definitive victory over death, when there “shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:54-55).

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*From the “Moral Reflections” on Job by Saint Gregory the Great (+604)*

Holy Job is a type of the Church. At one time he speaks for the body, at another for the head. As he speaks of its members he is suddenly caught up to speak in the name of their head. So it is here, where he says: *I have suffered this without sin on my hands, for my prayer to God was pure.*

Christ suffered without sin on his hands, for he committed no sin and deceit was not found on his lips. Yet he suffered the pain of the cross for our redemption. His prayer to God was pure, his alone out of all mankind, for in the midst of his suffering he prayed for his persecutors: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*

Is it possible to offer, or even to imagine, a purer kind of prayer than that which shows mercy to one's torturers by making intercession for them? It was thanks to this kind of prayer that the frenzied persecutors who shed the blood of our Redeemer drank it afterward in faith and proclaimed him to be the Son of God.

The text goes on fittingly to speak of Christ's blood: *Earth, do not cover over my blood, do not let my cry find a hiding place in you.* When man sinned, God had said: *Earth you are, and to earth you will return.* Earth does not cover over the blood of our Redeemer, for every sinner, as he drinks the blood that is the price of his redemption, offers praise and thanksgiving, and to the best of his power makes that blood known to all around him.

Earth has not hidden away his blood, for holy Church has preached in every corner of the world the mystery of its redemption.

Notice what follows: *Do not let my cry find a hiding place in you.* The blood that is drunk, the blood of redemption, is itself the cry of our Redeemer. Paul speaks of the sprinkled blood that calls out more eloquently than Abel's. Of Abel's blood Scripture had written: *The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the earth.* The blood of Jesus calls out more eloquently than Abel's, for the blood of Abel asked for the death of Cain, the fratricide, while the blood of the Lord has asked for, and obtained, life for his persecutors.

If the sacrament of the Lord's passion is to work its effect in us, we must imitate what we receive and proclaim to mankind what we revere. The cry of the Lord finds a hiding place in us if our lips fail to speak of this, though our hearts believe in it. So that his cry may not lie concealed in us it remains for us all, each in his own measure, to make known to those around us the mystery of our new life in Christ.

## RESPONSORY

O Lord, the blood of your Son, our brother, cries out to you from the earth. – Blessed the earth that drank in the blood of the Redeemer. The blood he shed is more eloquent than the blood of Abel. – Blessed the earth that drank in the blood of the Redeemer.

## Day 21

*A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.*

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them. We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (*Hebrews 13:7-16*)

*From "Divine Intimacy" by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen*

In [the liturgy for the Feast of the Precious Blood] the majestic figure of Jesus stands before us as that of a king who presents himself to his people robed in his royal mantle. The first antiphon of Vespers says: "Who is this that cometh . . . With dyed garments? This beautiful one in his robe." But the mantle Jesus wears is not beautiful by reason of fine linen or purple, but rather because it is sprinkled with His Blood, which was shed for our sins. "He was clothed in a robe sprinkled with blood, and His Name is called the Word of God." That blood which the Word, when He became incarnate, took from our human nature, He gave back to us—every drop of it—as the price of our redemption. And He gave it back, not as if constrained by anyone, but freely, because He willed to, because He loved us. "Christ . . . hath loved us," says St. John, "and washed us from our sins in His own Blood." All the mysteries of our redemption are mysteries of love; and, therefore, all urge us to love. But the one on which we meditate today is especially moving, since it makes us consider the redemption from its most terrible aspect: the shedding of the Blood of Jesus,

which, from Calvary, flowed forth to crimson the whole world, to sprinkle all souls. Christ has redeemed us, “neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own Blood,” St. Paul exclaims in the Epistle. This is a great truth which, if really understood, would more than suffice to make us genuine saints. We must have a “sense” of Christ’s Blood, that Blood which He shed to the last drop for us, and which, through the Sacraments, especially Penance, continually flows over our souls to cleanse them, purify them and enrich them with the infinite merits of the Redeemer. “Bathe in His Blood, immerse yourself in His blood, clothe yourself in the Blood of Christ,” “was St. Catherine of Siena’s continual cry.

In the Office of the day, St. Paul earnestly invites us to correspond with Christ’s gift. “Jesus . . . that He might sanctify the people by His own Blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us go forth therefore to Him. . . Bearing His reproach.” If we want the Blood of Christ to bear all its fruit in us, we must unite our own blood with it. His alone is most precious, so precious that a single drop is sufficient to save the whole world; nevertheless, Jesus, as always, wants us to add our little share, our contribution of suffering and sacrifice, “bearing His reproach.” If we are sincere we will have to admit that we do all in our power to escape Christ’s shame and disgrace. A lack of consideration, a slight offense, a cutting word, are all that it takes to arouse our passions. How can we say that we know how to share in Christ’s humiliations? Behold our divine Master treated like a malefactor, dragged amidst the coarse insults of the soldiers outside the gate of Jerusalem and there crucified between two thieves! And we? What part do we take in His Passion? How do we share in His reproach?

To redeem us, “Jesus ... endured the Cross despising the shame...: and “you,” St. Paul reproaches us, “have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Can we say that we know how to struggle “unto blood” to overcome our faults, our pride, our self-love? Oh! How weak and cowardly we are in the struggle, how self-indulgent and full of pity for ourselves, especially for our pride! Jesus, Innocence itself, expiated our sins even unto a bloody, ignominious death! We, the guilty ones, far from atoning for our faults unto blood, cannot even sacrifice our self-love. The blood which flows from sincere, total renunciation of self, from humble, generous acceptance of everything that mortifies, breaks, and destroys our pride : this is the blood which Jesus asks us to unite with His! The Precious Blood of Jesus will give us the strength to do so, “for the soul which becomes inebriated and inundated by the Blood of Christ, is clothed with true and genuine virtue” (St. Catherine of Siena).

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*From “Christ in His Mysteries” by Bl. Columba Marmion (+1923)*

On the day of his ascension Christ, the supreme high priest of the human race, having conferred on us a legal title, bears us up with him in hope to heaven. We must never forget that it is only through him that we can gain entrance there. No human being can penetrate the Holy of Holies except with him; no creature can enjoy eternal happiness except in the wake of Jesus; it is his precious merits that win us infinite bliss. For all eternity we shall say to him, ‘Because of you, Jesus Christ, because of the blood you shed for us, we stand before God’s face. It is your sacrifice, your immolation, that wins our every moment of glory and happiness. To you, the Lamb that was slain, be all honour and praise and thanksgiving!’

In this interval of time until Christ comes to fetch us as he promised, he is *preparing a place* for us, and above all he is supporting us by his prayer. Indeed, what is our High Priest doing in heaven? The Letter to the Hebrews gives the answer: he has entered heaven *in order to stand now in God’s presence our behalf*. His priesthood is eternal, and therefore eternal too is his work as mediator. How infinitely powerful is his influence! There he stands before his Father, unceasingly offering him that sacrifice recalled by the marks of the wounds he has voluntarily retained; there he stands, *alive for ever, ever interceding for us*.

As high priest he is unfailingly heard, and for our sake he speaks again the priestly prayer of the last supper: *Father it is for them that I pray. They are in the world. Guard those whom you have given me. I pray for them, that they may have in themselves the fullness of joy. Father, I will that they may be with me where I am.*

How could these sublime truths of our faith fail to inspire us with unwavering confidence? People of scanty faith though we are, what have we to fear? And what may we not hope? Jesus is praying for us, and praying always. Let



us then trust absolutely in the sacrifice, the merits, and the prayer of our High Priest. He is the beloved Son in whom the Father delights; how could he be refused a hearing, after showing his Father such love?

Father, look upon your Son. Through him and in him grant us to be one day where he is, so that through him and with him we may also render to you all honour and glory.

## RESPONSORY

Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. -- Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. -- Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the gate, bearing His reproach.

## Day 22

*A reading from the First Letter of St. Peter*

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (*1 Peter 1:1-9*)

*From the "Commentary on the First Letter of Peter" by St. Bede (+735)*

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood.* This compliment was addressed through Moses in time gone by to God's ancient people, and now the Apostle Peter rightly addresses it to the Gentiles. For they have come to believe in Christ, who as the cornerstone has associated the Gentiles with the salvation which belonged to Israel.

He calls them a 'chosen race' on account of their faith, to distinguish them from those who rejected the living rock and themselves have been rejected.

He calls them a 'royal priesthood' because they are members of the body of the supreme King and true Priest. As king he grants to his people a kingdom; as High Priest he washes away their sins by the sacrifice of his own blood. He names them a 'royal priesthood' as a reminder to hope for an eternal kingdom, and to offer to God without ceasing the sacrifice of a sinless life.

They are called also 'a holy nation and God's own people', in accordance with the Apostle Paul's explanation of the teaching of the Prophet: "*My righteous one lives by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*" *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.* And in the Acts of the Apostles St Paul says: *The Holy Spirit has made you guardians to rule the Church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood.*

We have become 'God's own people' through the blood of our Redeemer; for in time gone by the people of Israel was redeemed from Egypt by the blood of the lamb.

Accordingly in the following verse he once more recalls the mystical sense of this event in the Old Testament, and explains that it is to be fulfilled again spiritually by the new people of God in these words: *That you may declare his*

*wonderful deeds.* The people who were freed by Moses from slavery in Egypt, after the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army, sang a hymn of triumph to the Lord; so too, since we have received pardon for our sins in Baptism, we should express due thanks for the heavenly graces we have received.

For the Egyptians, who oppressed God's people, and who stand for darkness and suffering, are an apt symbol for the sins which harass us, but which have been destroyed in Baptism.

The liberation of the children of Israel, and the journey by which they were led to the homeland they had long ago been promised, correspond to the mystery of our redemption through which we make our way to the brightness of our heavenly home, with the grace of Christ as our light and our guide. The light of grace is symbolized by the pillar of cloud and fire which throughout their journey protected them from the darkness of the night, and led them along their secret path to their home in the promised land.

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*From the "Commentary on the Apocalypse" by Abbot Rupert of Deutz (+1129)*

*He has made us a royal race of priests to the honour of God, his Father.* In this text Scripture shows us Christ's marvellous kindness and condescension. Our minds are too limited to grasp a statement of such magnitude, our tongues too weak to render adequate praise. The truth is that when Christ bought us at such great cost to himself - at the cost indeed of his most precious blood - it was not with the intention of making us his slaves; his purpose was to create a royal race of priests to the honour of God his Father. We were to be his Father's kingdom, and priests in the service of God. He alone was King and Priest in his own right, yet he resolved to make kings of the slaves of sin and priests of the children of death. To that end he shed his blood.

*O Lord our God, how wonderful is your name, how wonderful the majesty and honour with which you have crowned the Lord Jesus as King of kings!* You have set on his head the crowns of all those kings who form your kingdom, for yours is a kingdom of kings, resplendent in their regalia, each consecrated to you by the blood of Christ.

We are also told that he has made us priests who share in that sacrifice by which Christ himself triumphed over the devil and so destroyed the dominion of sin. We do not all possess the fullness of the priesthood here on earth, with the power to bring about the real presence of our Lord's body and blood by pronouncing the words of consecration, but all of us are called to exercise a priestly function by offering ourselves to God according to that exhortation of the Apostle Paul: *I beseech you to present your bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him, since this is the service required of rational beings.* In no other way shall we be permitted to enter into the celestial Holy of Holies, by which I mean heaven itself.

In heaven the sacramental species of bread and wine, which constitute our present sacrifice, will find no place. None of us, however, will ever lack matter for sacrifice there. Our lips will always be able to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, a hymn of rejoicing and the proclamation of God's mighty works. Indeed the next verse from the Apocalypse supplies us with a model for such a heavenly sacrifice in the acclamation: *Glory and power to him for ever and ever! Amen.* And this is certainly what the law of justice requires of us, namely, that creatures should return thanks and praise to their creator for all the benefits they have received. As an example, we can take Moses and the children of Israel. When they had been delivered from bondage in Egypt by the immolation of the passover lamb, and had seen Pharaoh and his army drowned in the Red Sea, they sang a canticle of praise to the Lord.

To keep one's mouth closed and to silence one's tongue, instead of voicing one's thanks in acknowledgment of a favour received, is a sure sign of ingratitude. Therefore when John intones this short hymn of praise and thanksgiving, *Glory and power to him forever and ever!* let us all reply: *Amen.* In the words of the Apostle Paul: *Let every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

## RESPONSORY

Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as: -- You know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. But with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot. -- You know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold.

### Day 23

*A reading from the First Letter of St. Peter*

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. (*1 Peter 1:17-21*)

*From "Meditations on the Passion" by Richard Rolle (+1349)*

My lord, is the unkindness of my feeble heart greater than the power of your precious death, which worked such miracles and many others beside, if the commemoration doesn't stir up my heart? Please, lord, a drop of your blood to drip on my soul in memory of your passion can heal all my disease, make pliable and soft what is so hard, and make it undergo dyeing when you wish it too.

Come then, heavenly healer, as it is your wish, and enlighten me as you know my need; kindle in my heart a tiny spark of your passion, of love and of compassion, to bring it to life with, and so, completely aflame with love above everything else, I may forget the entire world and lave myself in your blood. Then I shall bless the time when I shall be able to feel your grace so arousing me that all worldly possessions and all physical pleasure seem distasteful to me compare with the recollection of your death.

And as a true sign of the healing of our souls, showing that all had been completed by the blessing of your blood, you last spoke: *Consummatum est*, that is, "All is finished."

Here, sweet Jesu, I implore you, wash my soul with that blood and anoint and decorate my soul and my consciousness with that precious blood, and send me the grace, through your great compassion, to judge and criticize myself with full comprehension, so that my soul may be saved.

Like this I will lie here to catch some of your blood, sweet Jesu; I will not stir from here until I am completely reddened with your precious blood, until I am marked with your precious blood as one of your own flock, and my soul is softened in that pleasant bath; and in that way it may come about, sweet Jesu, that is may open my hard heart, which now is as hard as stone, to make it soft, to make what was dead in sin spring to life for your sake through the special influence of your blood.

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*From the hymns of St. Hildegard of Bingen (+1179)*

O bloodshed  
that rang out on high,  
when all the elements  
joined together  
in a voice of lamentation  
and a vast tremor,  
because the blood of their creator  
had touched them:  
anoint us

where we are sick.

\*

O lover sweet,  
so sweet the embrace:  
Help us to keep  
our virginity!

In dust we were begotten—  
alas!—  
in Adam's guilt.  
So rough it is now to refuse  
whatever tastes of that one fruit.  
Set us aright, O Savior Christ!

We burn in our desire to follow you.  
How hard it is for us, the wretched,  
to imitate your innocence,  
the spotless King of angels.

Yet we have put our trust in you,  
for you desire to seek again a gem in putrefaction.

Now unto you we cry, our bridegroom and our consolation,  
who has redeemed us on the Cross.

For in your blood we are betrothed to you—  
your blood our wedding gift;  
for mortal husbands we refuse, choosing you instead,  
the Son of God.

O beauteous form, O fragrance sweeter than  
the most desired of delights:  
our sighs of longing ever seek for you  
within this lonely wilderness of tears.  
When shall we look on you  
and with you ever stay?

We live within the world,  
and you within our minds,  
and we embrace you in our hearts  
as if you're present even now.

The mighty lion, you have burst the heavens,  
descending to the Virgin's palace-womb,  
destroying death  
and building life within a golden city.

Grant us her company  
to dwell with you, O bridegroom sweet,  
who saved us from the devil's jaws  
who dragged our primal parents into death.

\*

O ruby blood  
which flowed from on high  
where divinity touched.  
You are a flower  
that the winter  
of the serpent's breath  
can never injure.

\*

O victors in your triumph!  
Your blood poured out, you hail  
the building of the Church  
for you have entered in the Lamb's own blood,  
and now enjoy the feast with the slaughtered calf.

How great is your reward!  
Your living bodies you've despised  
in imitation of God's Lamb  
his pain you take as glory,  
for through it he has brought you  
to your inheritance restored!

\*

O Virgin Mother Church,  
lament and mourn!  
A savage wolf has snatched  
your children from your side.  
O woe to serpent's trickery!  
But O, how precious is  
the Savior's blood  
that with the royal banner sealed  
his bridegroom's promise  
to the Church,  
whose children  
he is seeking.

## **RESPONSORY**

The price of your redemption was not something of fleeting value like gold or silver, but the costly shedding of the blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish. – Through him, in the one Spirit, we can approach the Father. The blood of Jesus Christ washes away all our sins. – Through him, in the one Spirit, we can approach the Father.

## **Day 24**

*A reading from the First Letter of St. John*

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (*1 John 1:5-10*)

*From the "Commentary on the Psalms" by Saint John Fisher (+1535)*

Our high priest is Christ Jesus, our sacrifice is his precious body which he immolated on the altar of the cross for the salvation of all men.

The blood that was poured out for our redemption was not that of goats and calves (as in the old law) but that of the most innocent lamb, Christ Jesus our Savior.

The temple in which our high priest offered sacrifice was not one made by hands but built by the power of God alone. For he shed his blood in the sight of the world, a temple fashioned by the hand of God alone.

This temple, however, has two parts. The first is the earth, which we now inhabit. The second is as yet unknown to us mortals.

Christ offered sacrifice here on earth, when he underwent his most bitter death. Then, clothed in the new garment of immortality, with his own blood he entered into the holy of holies, that is, into heaven. There he also displayed before the throne of the heavenly Father that blood of immeasurable price which he had poured out seven times on behalf of all men subject to sin.

This sacrifice is so pleasing and acceptable to God that as soon as he has seen it he must immediately have pity on us and extend clemency to all who are truly repentant.

Moreover, it is eternal. It is offered not only each year (as with the Jews) but also each day for our consolation, and indeed at every hour and moment as well, so that we may have the strongest reason for comfort. That is why the Apostle adds: *He has secured an eternal redemption.*

All who have embarked on true contrition and penance for the sins they have committed, and are firmly resolved not to commit sins again for the future but to persevere constantly in that pursuit of virtues which they have now begun, all these become sharers in this holy and eternal sacrifice.

Saint John sets this before us in these words: *My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for those of the whole world.*

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*From a letter to the Corinthians by Saint Clement I (+99)*

Let the person truly possessed by the love of Christ keep his commandments. Who can express the binding power of divine love? Who can find words for the splendor of its beauty? Beyond all description are the heights to which it lifts us. Love unites us to God; it cancels innumerable sins, has no limits to its endurance, bears everything patiently. Love is neither servile nor arrogant. It does not provoke schisms or form cliques, but always acts in harmony with others. By it all God's chosen ones have been sanctified; without it, it is impossible to please him. Out of love the Lord took us to himself; because he loved us and it was God's will, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his life's blood for us—he gave his body for our body, his soul for our soul.

See then, beloved, what a great and wonderful thing love is, and how inexpressible its perfection. Who are worthy to possess it unless God makes them so? To him therefore we must turn, begging of his mercy that there may be found in us a love free from human partiality and beyond reproach. Every generation from Adam's time to ours has passed away; but those who by God's grace were made perfect in love have a dwelling now among the saints, and when at last the kingdom of Christ appears, they will be revealed. *Take shelter in your rooms for a little while, says Scripture, until my wrath subsides. Then I will remember the good days, and will raise you from your graves.*

Happy are we, beloved, if love enables us to live in harmony and in the observance of God's commandments, for then it will also gain for us the remission of our sins. Scripture pronounces *happy those whose transgressions are pardoned, whose sins are forgiven. Happy the man, it says, to whom the Lord imputes no fault, on whose lips there*

*is no guile.* This is the blessing given those whom God has chosen through Jesus Christ our Lord. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## RESPONSORY

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all -- and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another -- and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

### Day 25

*A reading from the First Letter of St. John*

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (*1 John 5:6-12*)

*From "The Sacramentary" by Bl. Ildefonso Schuster*

The meaning of this festival [of the Precious Blood] is closely akin to that of the Sacred Heart. The precious Blood is the price of universal redemption, which love would not have to be anything less than itself. There is a very close connection between the Heart and the Blood not only because, according to saint John, after the death of Jesus, blood and water flowed from his wounded Heart, but because of the first chalice in which that divine Blood was consecrated and vivified was precisely the Heart of the incarnate Word.

The apostle in Rome of this special devotion to the most precious Blood of Jesus was the Blessed Gaspare del Bufalo, founder of the congregation of missionaries of that name.

Redemption is universal because God is essentially Love, which has neither measure nor limit. Therefore the most heroic sanctity is possible in every class and in all conditions of life, as we may see from the records of the Church.

It is impossible to despair of one's own salvation after the sacrifice of Calvary. If the blood of the lawful victims of the Jewish Temple possessed such efficacy, of how much greater power will not be his Blood, who, inflamed with the fervour of the Paraclete, offered himself wholly to the sanctity and justice of the Father for the redemption of the world? Each time, then, that we raise our eyes to the image of our crucified Saviour and look upon those wounds and that Blood, let us say to him with loving confidence: "My merits, O Lord, consist only in those wounds which thou hast suffered for me."

Our Saviour shed his Blood profusely in his passion, therefore we ask ourselves the question why St John alludes in such solemn terms to the last effusion of his blood mixed with water when the heart of Jesus had already ceased to beat. The Father reply that it is because of its symbolic meaning. The false *gnosis* asserted that the divine nature of Jesus had abandoned him at the moment when he exclaimed upon the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" St John, on the other hand, who had previously declared that the testimony borne by the Holy Spirit to the divine nature of Jesus at the river Jordan was identical with that shown by the symbolism of the water and the blood which flowed from his Heart after his death, here purposely relates the symbolic miracle guaranteeing its authenticity by his own authority as an apostle of the Word.

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*From "The Dialogue" of St. Catherine of Siena (+1380)*

The soul also receives Baptism in another way, speaking in figurative terms, by special providence of my divine love. I was well aware of human fragility and weakness, that leads human beings to offend me. Persons are not constrained by this nor by any other thing to commit the fault, if they do not wish, but being weak they commit mortal sins, thus losing the grace they received in holy baptism by virtue of the Blood. For this reason it was necessary that Divine Love should make available a continual baptism of the Blood. This baptism comes about through a contrite heart and through confession of sins to a priest, when possible, for they have the keys of the Blood, the Blood the priest pours upon the soul when he absolves the person. If some one is unable to confess, contrition of heart is sufficient. Then my mercy bestows on you the fruit of this precious Blood, but if you can confess I want you to do so, and whoever being able does not confess, will remain deprived of the benefit of the Blood. However, it is true that whoever, at the moment of death wants to confess and is unable to do it, he likewise shall receive the fruit of the Blood. But let nobody be so foolish at life's end, hoping to set his soul in order, because it is not certain that I, due to his obstinacy, may say in consonance with my divine justice: "You did not remember me during your life, when you had time. I do not remember you now at the point of death!"

Let no one procrastinate it, but even if there should be somebody who has wilfully done so, he ought not omit baptizing himself with hope in the Blood even if it were the last day. You see then how this baptism is continual and the soul must be baptized in it until life's end, as I have indicated. Through this baptism you can understand that the torment of the cross ended, but the fruit of this torment, which you received from me is infinite. This is due to my infinite divine nature, united to finite human nature. This human nature suffered in me, Word, clothed with your humanity. Since one nature is joined and kneaded with the other, the eternal divinity brought upon itself the torment which I bore with such ardent love.

That is why this my action can be said to be infinite, not because the torment suffered bodily is infinite, nor the torment of my desire of accomplishing your redemption, which really finished and came to an end on the cross when the soul was separated from the body. But the fruit that sprang from that torment and the desire for your salvation are infinite. That is the reason why you can unsparingly receive this fruit. If it had not been infinite then humanity would not have been redeemed: people of the past, the present and the future. It would not have been possible for persons who sin to be purified from their sins, if this baptism of blood had not been offered without measure, because the fruit of the Blood is infinite.

I showed you this in my open side, where you discover the secret of my heart: namely, that I love you much more than what I could show you with the finite torment. I have shown you that my love is infinite. In what way? With the baptism of the Blood, joined to the fire of my charity, that out of love was poured out; and through baptism, understood in the common sense, given to Christians, to whoever wishes to receive it, baptism of water joined to blood and to fire, in which the soul is kneaded with my blood. To show you all this I wanted blood and water to flow forth from my side. Now I have answered your request."

## **RESPONSORY**

This is the one who came in water and blood, Jesus Christ; – not in water only, but in water and blood. It is the Spirit who gives testimony, because the Spirit is truth; – not in water only, but in water and blood.

### **Day 26**

#### *A reading from the Book of Revelation*

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near. John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.



To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. (*Revelation 1:1-8*)

*From the works of St. Bonaventure (+1274)*

You who have been redeemed, consider who it is who hangs on the cross for you, whose death gives life to the dead, whose passing is mourned by heaven and earth, when even the hard stones are split. Consider how great he is; consider what he is.

In order that the Church might be formed from the side of Christ as he slept on the cross, in order that the word of Scripture might be fulfilled – *They shall look on him whom they have pierced* – God's providence decreed that one of the soldiers should open his sacred side with a spear, so that blood with water might flow out to pay the price of our salvation. This blood, which flowed from its source in the secret recesses of his heart, gave the sacraments of the Church power to confer the life of grace, and for those who already live in Christ was a draught of living water welling up to eternal life.

Arise, then, bride of Christ, be like the dove that nests in the rock-face at the mouth of a cavern, and there, like a sparrow which finds its home, do not cease to keep vigil; there, like a turtle-dove, hide the fledglings of your chaste love; place your lips there to draw water from the wells of your Saviour. For this is the spring flowing from the middle of paradise; it divides and becomes four rivers, then spreads through all devout hearts, and waters the whole world and makes it fruitful.

O soul devoted to God, whoever you may be, run to this source of life and light eager longing. And with the power of your inmost heart cry out to him: O indescribable beauty of God most high! O pure radiance of everlasting light! O life that gives life to all life! O light that illuminates every light, and preserves in its undying splendour the myriad flames that have shone before the throne of your Godhead from the dawn of time!

'O water eternal and inaccessible, clear and sweet, flowing from the spring that is hidden from the eyes of all mortal men; the spring whose depths cannot be plumbed, whose height cannot be measured, whose shores cannot be charted, whose purity cannot be muddied.'

From this source flows the river which makes glad the city of God, so that with glad shouts we sing to you our hymns of praise, and by experience prove that with you is the fountain of life; and in your light we shall see light.

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*From "The Showings" of Julian of Norwich (+1416)*

And after this as I watched, I saw the body bleeding copiously in representation of the scourging, and it was thus. The fair skin was deeply broken into the tender flesh through the vicious blows delivered all over the lovely body. The hot blood ran out so plentifully it that neither skin nor wounds could be seen, but everything seemed to be blood. And as it flowed down to where it should have fallen, it disappeared. Nonetheless, the bleeding continued for a time until it could be plainly seen. And I saw it so plentiful that it seemed to me that if it had in fact and in substance been happening there, the bed and everything all around it would have been soaked in blood.

Then it came into my mind that God has created bountiful waters on the earth for our use and our bodily comfort, out of the tender love he has for us. But it is more pleasing to him that we accept for our total cure his blessed blood to wash us of our sins, for there is no drink that is made which pleases him so well to give us. For it is the most

plentiful, as it is most precious, and that through the power of the blessed divinity. And it is of our own nature, and blessedly flows over us by the power of his precious love.

The precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as truly as it is most precious, so truly is it most plentiful. Behold and see the power of this precious plenty of his precious blood. It descended into hell and broke its bonds, and delivered all who were there and who belong to the court of heaven. The precious plenty of his precious blood overflows all the earth, and it is ready to wash from their sins all creatures who are, have been and will be of good will. The precious plenty of his precious blood ascended into heaven in the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is flowing there in him, praying to the Father for us, and this is and will be so long as we have need. And furthermore, it flows in all heaven, rejoicing in the salvation of all mankind which is and will be there, and the filling up the number which is lacking.

## **RESPONSORY**

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father -- to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him -- to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

### **Day 27**

#### *A reading from the Book of Revelation*

Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.' (*Revelation 5:6-10*)

#### *From "The Hidden Life" by St. Edith Stein (Theresa Benedicta of the Cross) (+1942)*

"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rv 5:6). When the seer of Patmos had this vision, the unforgettable day on the Jordan when John the Baptist showed him the "Lamb of God" who "takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29) was still fresh in his memory. At that time, he had understood the word and now he understood the image. He who had once walked along the Jordan and who now appeared to him in white raiment with flaming eyes and with a judge's sword, the "first and the last" (Rv 1:17) he had in truth accomplished what the rites of the Old Covenant had suggested symbolically. When on the most momentous and holiest day of the year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, into the supremely holy place of God's presence, he had previously taken two goats from the people: one on which to lay the people's sins, which were then carried out into the wilderness; the other to sprinkle its blood on the tent and ark of the covenant (Lv 16). This was the sin offering for the people. In addition, he had to provide a young bullock for himself and his house as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering. He also had to sprinkle the throne of grace with the blood of the bullock. When he had prayed, unseen by human eyes, for himself and his house and for all the people of Israel, he came out to the waiting people, and sprinkled the outer altar to cleanse it from his sins and those of the people. Then he sent the living goat into the wilderness, brought forward his own burnt offering and that of the people, and had the rest of the sin offering burned before the camp (and later before the gates). The Day of Atonement was a monumental and holy day. People remained in the holy place praying and fasting. And in the evening when everything had been accomplished, there was peace and joy in their hearts because God had taken away the burden of sin and given grace.

But what had effected the reconciliation? Not the blood of the slaughtered animals and not the high priest of Aaron's descent St Paul made this so compellingly clear in his letter to the Hebrews but rather the real sacrifice of reconciliation which was anticipated in all these legally prescribed sacrifices, and the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was represented by the priests of Aaron's line. He was also the true Passover Lamb for whose sake the angel of death passed over the houses of the Hebrews when he slew the Egyptians. The Lord himself made the disciples understand this when he ate the lamb of sacrifice with them for the last time and then gave himself to them as food.

But why did he choose the lamb as the preferred symbol? Why did he continue to reveal himself in this form on the eternal throne of glory? Because he was innocent as a lamb and meek as a lamb; and because he came in order to allow himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter (Is 53:7). This, too, John had witnessed when the Lord permitted himself to be bound at the Mount of Olives and nailed to the cross at Golgotha. There on Golgotha the true sacrifice of reconciliation was accomplished. Thereby the old sacrifices lost their efficacy; and soon they ceased entirely, as did also the old priesthood when the temple was destroyed. John had witnessed all of this. Therefore, he was not surprised at the Lamb on the throne. And because he was a faithful witness to the Lamb, the Bride of the Lamb was also shown to him.

He saw "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband" (Rv 21:2 and 9ff.). As Christ himself descended to earth from heaven, so too his Bride, the holy church, originated in heaven. She is born of the grace of God, indeed descended with the Son of God himself; she is inextricably bound to him. She is built of living stones; her cornerstone was laid when the Word of God assumed our human nature in the womb of the Virgin. At that time there was woven between the soul of the divine Child and the soul of the Virgin Mother the bond of the most intimate unity which we call betrothal.

Hidden from the entire world, the heavenly Jerusalem had descended to earth. From this first joining in betrothal, there had to be born all the living building blocks to be used for the mighty structure: each individual soul awakened to life through grace. The Bridal Mother was to become the mother of all the redeemed. Like a spore from which new cells stream continually, she was to build up the living city of God. This hidden mystery was revealed to St John as he stood beneath the cross with the Virgin Mother and was given over to her as her son. It was then that the church came into existence visibly; her hour had come, but not yet her perfection. She lives, she is wedded to the Lamb, but the hour of the solemn marriage supper will only arrive when the dragon has been completely conquered and the last of the redeemed have fought their battle to the end.

Just as the Lamb had to be killed to be raised upon the throne of glory, so the path to glory leads through suffering and the cross for everyone chosen to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb. All who want to be married to the Lamb must allow themselves to be fastened to the cross with him. Everyone marked by the blood of the Lamb is called to this, and that means all the baptized. But not everyone understands the call and follows it. There is a call to following more closely that resounds more urgently in the soul and demands a clear answer.

The fountain from the heart of the Lamb has not dried up. We can wash our robes clean in it even today as the thief on Golgotha once did. Trusting in the atoning power of this holy fountain, we prostrate ourselves before the throne of the Lamb and answer his question: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). Let us draw from the springs of salvation for ourselves and for the entire parched world. Give us the grace to speak the bride's words with a pure heart: Come! Come, Lord Jesus. Come soon!

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*From a letter to Don Giovanni of the Cells of Vallombrosa by St. Catherine of Siena (+1380)*

Dearest father in Christ sweet Jesus: I Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious Blood: with desire to see you an hungered for souls, on the table of the most holy Cross, in company with the humble and immaculate Lamb. I do not see, father, that this sweet food can be eaten anywhere else. Why not? Because we cannot eat it truly without enduring much; it must be eaten with the teeth of true patience and the lips of holy desire, on the Cross of many tribulations, from whatsoever side they may come—complaints, or the scandals in the world; and we must endure all things till death. Now is the time, dearest father, to show whether we

are lovers of Christ crucified and rejoice in this food or not. It is time to give honour to God and our toils to our neighbour: toils, I say, of the body, with much endurance, and toils of the mind, with grief and bitterness offering tears and sweats, humble and continual prayer, and suffering desire, before God. For I do not see that in any other way the wrath of God may be pacified toward us, and His mercy inclined, and through His mercy the many sheep recovered who are perishing in the hands of devils, unless in the way I said, through great grief and compassion of heart, and the very greatest devotion in prayer.

Therefore I invite you, dearest father, on behalf of Christ crucified, to begin anew with me to lose ourselves, and to seek only the honour of God in the salvation of souls, without any slavish fear: never to slacken our steps either on account of our sufferings, or in order to please our fellow-creatures, or because we might have to bear death, or for any other reason; but let us run, as inebriate with love and grief over the persecution that is wrought upon the Blood of Christ crucified. For on whatever side we turn we see it persecuted. If I turn me toward ourselves, rotten members that we are, we are persecuting it with our many faults, and such stench of mortal sins and empoisoned self-love as poisons the whole world. And if I turn me to the ministers of the Blood of the sweet and humble Lamb, my tongue cannot even narrate their faults and sins. If I turn me to the ministers who are under the yoke of obedience, I see them so imperfect—the accursed root of self-love not being yet dead in them—that not one has come to the point of wishing to give his life for Christ crucified; but they have encouraged fear of death and pain rather than holy fear of God and reverence for the Blood. And if I turn me to the secular people who have already released their affections from the world, they have not exercised virtue enough to leave the place where they were, or suffer death rather than to do that which ought not to be done. They have behaved so through imperfection, or else they are doing so through prudence. If I had to teach them prudence, I should advise them that if they wanted to reach perfection they should rather choose death, and if they felt themselves weak, they should flee the place and cause of sin, just as far as we can. This same counsel, if any chance came in your way, I should think that you and every servant of God ought to give. For you know that it is never lawful for us to commit a little sin in any way, surely not for fear of suffering or death, since not even for accomplishing some great good. So, then, on whatever side we turn us, we find nothing but faults. For I do not doubt that if one single person had had perfection enough to give his life, during the events which have happened and are happening every day, the Blood would have called for mercy, and bound the hands of divine justice, and broken those Pharaoh-hearts which are hard as diamond stone; and I see no way in which they can break other than through blood.

Ah me, ah me, misfortunate my soul! I see the Christian religion lying a dead man, and I neither weep nor mourn over him. I see darkness invading the light, for by the very light of most holy faith, received in the Blood of Christ, I see men's sight become confused and the pupil of their eye dried up; so that we see them fall as blind men into the ditch, into the mouth of the wolf of Hell, stripped of virtue and dead by cold; being stripped of the love of God and their neighbour, and released from the bond of love, and lost to all reverence for God and for the Blood. Ah me! I believe that my iniquities have been the cause of it.

So I beg you, dearest father, to pray God for me, that He take from me so great iniquities, and that I be not the cause of so great ill: or may He give me death. And I beg you to lift these sons of ours as dead up to the table of the most holy Cross, and there do you eat this food, bathed in the Blood of Christ crucified. I tell you that if you and the other servants of God, and all of us, do not persuade ourselves with many prayers, and others, to correct themselves of evils so great, divine judgment will come, and divine justice will draw forth its rod. Indeed, if we open our eyes, one of the greatest judgments that we can know in this life is already befallen—that is, that we are deprived of light, and do not see the loss and ill of soul and body. He who does not see cannot correct himself, because he does not hate evil or love true good. So, not correcting himself, he falls from bad to worse. So it seems to me that we are doing, and we are at a worse point now than the first day. It is essential, then, that we should never stop, if we are true servants of God, in our much endurance and true patience, and in giving our toils to our neighbour, and honour to God, with many prayers and grieving desire; let sighs be food to us and tears our drink, upon the table of the Cross; for another way I do not see. Therefore I said to you that I desired to see you an hungered for souls upon the table of the most holy Cross.”

## **RESPONSORY**

And they sang a new canticle, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.” -- For you were slain, and have redeemed us for God with your blood. And you made them for our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign over the earth.” -- For you were slain, and have redeemed us for God with your blood.

## Day 28

### *A reading from the Book of Revelation*

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice,

‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honour and glory and blessing!’

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

‘To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honour and glory and might  
for ever and ever!’

And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshipped. (Revelation 5:11-14)

### *From the “Dialogues” of St. Mary Magdalen de’ Pazzi (+1607)*

The first fruit, my daughter (she speaks in the Person of the Eternal Father), of my union is the inheritance I cause the soul to enjoy by means of the Incarnate Word, the Spirit breathing in human hearts; and this inheritance I am myself. Though the Word has shown it to you in a shadowy way, when, dwelling here below amongst you, he was asked by the mother of the sons of Zebedee, that one might sit at His right and the other at His left, and He answered her that they knew not what they asked, and that it was not his to give the right or the left, showing thereby the greatness of this inheritance, because they did not and could not understand it: *Nescitis quid petatis*. “You know not what you ask” (Matth. xx, 22); and because it was so great that his own humanity could not give it. And dost thou know how this immense inheritance can be acquired? It can be acquired by you, in virtue of the Incarnate Word, by the sprinkling and infusion of his Blood. This outpouring he made copiously on the cross, and makes it now at my right, whilst by the channels of the Sacraments, the grace he merited, is infused into you and communicated by this Blood. And take notice, daughter, that this infusion produces in you many and various effects.

First, it causes to bud, then it nourishes, inebriates, transforms, and glorifies. It causes the lilies of jocundity to blossom around a beautiful fountain, and among these lilies the Word hides and feeds: *Qui pascitur inter lilia*. “Who feedeth among the lilies” (Cant, ii, 16); breathing into the souls, his brides, an ardent feeling of love, whereby he constantly infuses into them the virtues and graces, so that some are always drowning and dying, for love, therein, whilst some survive in the same Blood. A soul dies to herself for love, living only for me and in me, and seeking nothing in all her operations but my honor and the salvation of the creatures; all of which proceeds from charity. Others die also all along the way; for, by the infusion of this Blood they remain so absorbed in God that they are as if dead, and, ceasing from all works, they attend but to commune with and enjoy me, and, though still here below, they are absorbed in the sublime and divine contemplation. The fountain is of blood and water; of water, to cleanse; of blood, to embellish; and from the water and the blood they receive that most sweet odor which is afterwards felt everywhere: *Christi bonus odor sumus*. “We are the good odor of Christ” (2 Cor. ii, 15).

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### *From the “Treatise on the Love of God” by St. Francis de Sales (+1622)*

NOTHING so much wounds a loving heart as to perceive another wounded with the love of it. The pelican builds her nest upon the ground, wherefore serpents often sting her young ones. Now when this happens, the pelican, as an excellent physician, with the point of her beak wounds these poor chicks all over, to cause the poison which the serpents’ sting had spread through all the parts of their bodies to flow out with the blood; and to get out all the poison she lets out all the blood, and thus consequently, permits this little pelican-brood to perish. But seeing them dead she wounds herself, and spreading her blood over them she vivifies them with a new and purer life. Her love wounded them, and forthwith by the same love she wounds herself. Never do we wound a heart with the wound of love but we ourselves are wounded with the same. When the soul sees her God wounded by love for her sake, she

immediately receives from it a reciprocal wound. Thou hast wounded my heart, said the heavenly lover to the Sulamitess, and the Sulamitess cries out: Tell my beloved that I languish with love. Bees never wound without being themselves wounded to death. And we, seeing the Saviour of our souls wounded to death by love of us, even to the death of the cross,—how can we but be wounded for him, but wounded with a wound as much more dolorously amorous as his was amorously dolorous, and a wound as great as is our inability to love him as much as his love and death require?....

Our Saviour has bred us up from our tender youth, yea he formed us and received us as a loving nurse into the arms of his divine Providence, even from the instant of our conception. Not being yet, thy holy hand did make me; Scarce born, into thy arms thy love did take me. He made us his own by Baptism, and tenderly nourishes both our soul and our body with an incomprehensible love; to purchase us life he suffered death, he has fed us with his own flesh and blood. Ah! what remains then, my dear Theotimus, what conclusion are we to draw from this except that those who live should live no more to themselves but to him that died for them: that is to say, that we should consecrate all the moments of our life to the divine love of our Saviour's death, bringing home to his glory all our prey, all our conquests, all our actions, all our thoughts, and all our affections. Let us behold him, Theotimus, this heavenly Redeemer, extended upon the cross as upon a funeral pile of honour, where he dies of love for us, yea of a love more dolorous than death itself, or a death more amorous than love itself. Ah! why do we not spiritually cast ourselves upon him to die upon the cross with him, who has truly willed to die for love of us? I will hold him, should we say, if we had the eagle's generosity, and will never depart from him. I will die with him and burn in the flames of his love, one and the same fire shall consume this divine Creator and his poor creature. My Jesus is wholly mine, and I am wholly his: I will live and die upon his breast, nor life nor death shall ever separate me from him. Thus then is made the holy ecstasy of true love, when, we live not according to human reason and inclinations, but above them, following the inspirations and instincts of the divine Saviour of our souls.

## **RESPONSORY**

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!” – for ever and ever. “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might -- for ever and ever!”

## **Day 29**

*A reading from the Book of Revelation.*

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing,

‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom  
and thanksgiving and honour  
and power and might  
be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,

and worship him day and night within his temple,  
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat;

for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,

and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’ (Revelation 7:9-17)

*From a prayer by St. Albert the Great (+1280)*

“I adore You, O Precious Blood of Jesus, flower of creation, fruit of virginity, ineffable instrument of the Holy Spirit, and I rejoice at the thought that You came from the drop of virginal blood on which eternal Love impressed its movement; You were assumed by the Word and deified in His person. I am overcome with emotion when I think of Your passing from the Blessed Virgin’s heart into the heart of the Word, and, being vivified by the breath of the Divinity, becoming adorable because You became the Blood of God.

I adore You enclosed in the veins of Jesus, preserved in His humanity like the manna in the golden urn, the memorial of the eternal Redemption which He accomplished during the days of His earthly life. I adore You, Blood of the new, eternal Testament, flowing from the veins of Jesus in Gethsemane, from the flesh torn by scourges in the Praetorium, from His pierced hands and feet and from His opened side on Golgotha. I adore You in the Sacraments, in the Eucharist, where I know You are substantially present....

I place my trust in You, O adorable Blood, our Redemption, our regeneration. Fall, drop by drop, into the hearts that have wandered from You and soften their hardness.

O adorable Blood of Jesus, wash our stains, save us from the anger of the avenging angel. Irrigate the Church; make her fruitful with Apostles and miracle-workers, enrich her with souls that are holy, pure and radiant with divine beauty.”

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*From “The Grail Legend” by Emma Jung (1955) and Marie-Louise von Franz (1998)*

It is clear that blood is essentially a mana substance and anything which possess egret mana invariably owes its effectiveness to an underlying *archetypal* idea. In this case it is the belief in the identity of blood=life=soul. The conception of blood as soul prevailed in the Middle Ages, too, according to which the Eucharistic blood represented the soul of Christ, and for the same reason the Grail vessel also contained his soul.

If such mysterious power is attributed to ordinary human or even to animal blood, how much more then to the blood of Christ! In the Christian doctrine it is precisely this blood that is the means of salvation for all humanity. It strikes one as significant that it is not only the death of Christ, the actual fact of his dying, that is stressed as the redeeming factor, but just as much, if not more so, the blood shed in the process, because it is in the blood that the essentially atoning power adheres. When, in most of the versions, the bleeding lance appears as pertaining to the Grail, this is because *it is the instrument by which the redeeming blood was brought forth into manifestation*. The drops of blood flowing from the tip, which in some versions drip into the Grail vessel, naturally also symbolize the sacrificial death of Christ, eternally taking place. By reason of these views the blood became the central sacrament and mystery of the Christian ritual. At all times, but quite particularly in the Middle Ages, this concept of the blood and the ideas connected with it stirred men’s feelings to their depths. Evidence for this is to be found in abundance in the writings of the Church, for the Church took great pains to grasp the wondrous mystery intellectually, and in the accounts of pious believers who sought, through self-abnegation and participation in the mystery, to experience the meaning of Christ’s suffering.

Inasmuch as Longinus’ lance causes the redeeming blood of the Saviour to flow, it is of the greatest importance...It therefore symbolizes *the human capacity for continually being able to discern what is essential in the latent symbol of God*, and this enables the symbol increasingly to dispense its inexhaustible, life-giving, spiritual strength to humanity. In so far as Christ ascended to Heaven with his body, he left no traces of his physical life on earth apart from this very blood which remained on the lance and in the Grail vessel. It is therefore the only permanent evidence of his *earthly* life and of the “substance of his soul.” Thus the lance is also man’s arrow of love, aimed at the heart of Christ, and it was looked upon as such in the Middle Ages.

In that way, fantasies, feelings and emotions rising up from the unconscious, as well as audacious new thought contents had a better chance of finding expression in those traditions, so that it could in fact be said that the living essence of Christ, his blood, lived on especially intensively in such interpretations and that in transforming itself, it also developed further....The vessel containing Christ's blood is a symbol that emerges with absolute spontaneity....It is as though it contained the living remnant of Christ and *his soul-substance, that element out of which a mystical continuation of his being is made possible.*

## RESPONSORY

The redeemed cried out in a loud voice: – Salvation comes from our God and from the Lamb. To our God be blessing, glory and wisdom. – Salvation comes from our God and from the Lamb.

### *Day 30*

*A reading from the Book of Revelation.*

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,  
'Now have come the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of his Messiah,  
for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down,  
who accuses them day and night before our God.  
But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony,  
for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.  
Rejoice then, you heavens  
and those who dwell in them!  
But woe to the earth and the sea,  
for the devil has come down to you  
with great wrath,  
because he knows that his time is short!' (*Revelation 12:7-12*)

*From a sermon "On the Subjects of the Day" by St. John Henry Newman (+1890)*

Elijah thought himself solitary, though he was not so; the world invisible was hid from him. Though ministered to by angels, though sustained miraculously by almighty God, yet, like Saint John Baptist when he sent to ask Christ, *Art thou he that should come*, he seemed to himself one against many. But Elisha had the privilege of knowing that he was one of a great host who were fighting the Lord's battles, though he might be solitary on earth.

To him was revealed in its measure the comfortable Christian doctrine of the communion of saints. His eyes were purged to see sights which the world could not see; and that so clearly, that he could even comfort his attendant, who felt that fear which had overtaken Elijah when he fled from Jezebel. Hear Elijah's words – *I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.* On the other hand, when Elisha's servant, on finding the host of the Syrians round about them, said to the prophet, *Alas! my master, how shall we do?* Elisha answered, *Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.* And then he besought almighty God to give to his servant for an instant a glimpse of that glorious vision which he in faith, or by inspiration, enjoyed continually. He *prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.*



How well does this vision correspond to that blessed privilege which, as the Apostle assures us, is conferred upon us Christians! *You are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel!*

An innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just - we dwell under their shadow; we are baptized into their fellowship; we are allotted their guardianship; we are remembered, as we trust, in their prayers. We dwell in the very presence and court of God himself, and of his eternal Son, our Saviour, who died for us, and rose again, and now intercedes for us before the throne. We have privileges surely far greater than Elisha's; but of the same kind. Angels are among us, and are powerful to do anything. And they do wonders for the believing, which the world knows nothing about. According to our faith, so it is done unto us. Only believe, all things are ours. We shall have clear and deeply-seated convictions in our minds of the reality of the invisible world, though we cannot communicate them to others, or explain how we come to have them.

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*From a homily by Pope Benedict XVI*

The visitor to this [Westminster, London] Cathedral cannot fail to be struck by the great crucifix dominating the nave, which portrays Christ's body, crushed by suffering, overwhelmed by sorrow, the innocent victim whose death has reconciled us with the Father and given us a share in the very life of God. The Lord's outstretched arms seem to embrace this entire church, lifting up to the Father all the ranks of the faithful who gather around the altar of the Eucharistic sacrifice and share in its fruits. The crucified Lord stands above and before us as the source of our life and salvation, "the high priest of the good things to come", as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews calls him in today's first reading (Heb 9:11).

It is in the shadow, so to speak, of this striking image, that I would like to consider the word of God which has been proclaimed in our midst and reflect on the mystery of the Precious Blood. For that mystery leads us to see the unity between Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the Eucharistic sacrifice which he has given to his Church, and his eternal priesthood, whereby, seated at the right hand of the Father, he makes unceasing intercession for us, the members of his mystical body.

Let us begin with the sacrifice of the Cross. The outpouring of Christ's blood is the source of the Church's life. Saint John, as we know, sees in the water and blood which flowed from our Lord's body the wellspring of that divine life which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit and communicated to us in the sacraments (Jn 19:34; cf. 1 Jn 1:7; 5:6-7). The Letter to the Hebrews draws out, we might say, the liturgical implications of this mystery. Jesus, by his suffering and death, his self-oblation in the eternal Spirit, has become our high priest and "the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb 9:15). These words echo our Lord's own words at the Last Supper, when he instituted the Eucharist as the sacrament of his body, given up for us, and his blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant shed for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20).

Faithful to Christ's command to "do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19), the Church in every time and place celebrates the Eucharist until the Lord returns in glory, rejoicing in his sacramental presence and drawing upon the power of his saving sacrifice for the redemption of the world. The reality of the Eucharistic sacrifice has always been at the heart of Catholic faith; called into question in the sixteenth century, it was solemnly reaffirmed at the Council of Trent against the backdrop of our justification in Christ....

The Eucharistic sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ embraces in turn the mystery of our Lord's continuing passion in the members of his Mystical Body, the Church in every age. Here the great crucifix which towers above us serves as a reminder that Christ, our eternal high priest, daily unites our own sacrifices, our own sufferings, our own needs, hopes and aspirations, to the infinite merits of his sacrifice. Through him, with him, and in him, we lift up our own bodies as a sacrifice holy and acceptable to God (cf. Rom 12:1). In this sense we are caught up in his eternal oblation, completing, as Saint Paul says, in our flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his

body, the Church (cf. Col 1:24). In the life of the Church, in her trials and tribulations, Christ continues, in the stark phrase of Pascal, to be in agony until the end of the world (*Pensées*, 553).

We see this aspect of the mystery of Christ's precious blood represented, most eloquently, by the martyrs of every age, who drank from the cup which Christ himself drank, and whose own blood, shed in union with his sacrifice, gives new life to the Church. It is also reflected in our brothers and sisters throughout the world who even now are suffering discrimination and persecution for their Christian faith. Yet it is also present, often hidden in the suffering of all those individual Christians who daily unite their sacrifices to those of the Lord for the sanctification of the Church and the redemption of the world. My thoughts go in a special way to all those who are spiritually united with this Eucharistic celebration, and in particular the sick, the elderly, the handicapped and those who suffer mentally and spiritually.

Here too I think of the immense suffering caused by the abuse of children, especially within the Church and by her ministers. Above all, I express my deep sorrow to the innocent victims of these unspeakable crimes, along with my hope that the power of Christ's grace, his sacrifice of reconciliation, will bring deep healing and peace to their lives. I also acknowledge, with you, the shame and humiliation which all of us have suffered because of these sins; and I invite you to offer it to the Lord with trust that this chastisement will contribute to the healing of the victims, the purification of the Church and the renewal of her age-old commitment to the education and care of young people. I express my gratitude for the efforts being made to address this problem responsibly, and I ask all of you to show your concern for the victims and solidarity with your priests.

Dear friends, let us return to the contemplation of the great crucifix which rises above us. Our Lord's hands, extended on the Cross, also invite us to contemplate our participation in his eternal priesthood and thus our responsibility, as members of his body, to bring the reconciling power of his sacrifice to the world in which we live. The Second Vatican Council spoke eloquently of the indispensable role of the laity in carrying forward the Church's mission through their efforts to serve as a leaven of the Gospel in society and to work for the advancement of God's Kingdom in the world (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7). The Council's appeal to the lay faithful to take up their baptismal sharing in Christ's mission echoed the insights and teachings of John Henry Newman. May the profound ideas of this great Englishman continue to inspire all Christ's followers in this land to conform their every thought, word and action to Christ, and to work strenuously to defend those unchanging moral truths which, taken up, illuminated and confirmed by the Gospel, stand at the foundation of a truly humane, just and free society.

How much contemporary society needs this witness! How much we need, in the Church and in society, witnesses of the beauty of holiness, witnesses of the splendour of truth, witnesses of the joy and freedom born of a living relationship with Christ! One of the greatest challenges facing us today is how to speak convincingly of the wisdom and liberating power of God's word to a world which all too often sees the Gospel as a constriction of human freedom, instead of the truth which liberates our minds and enlightens our efforts to live wisely and well, both as individuals and as members of society....

Dear friends, in this Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood, I invite you once more to look to Christ, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection (cf. *Heb* 12:2). I ask you to unite yourselves ever more fully to the Lord, sharing in his sacrifice on the Cross and offering him that "spiritual worship" (*Rom* 12:1) which embraces every aspect of our lives and finds expression in our efforts to contribute to the coming of his Kingdom.

## **RESPONSORY**

And I heard as it were a voice of a great crowd, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia! for the Lord, our God Almighty, now reigns! -- for the marriage of the Lamb has come. And his spouse has prepared herself in fine linen, the just deeds of the saints. -- for the marriage of the Lamb has come.

## **Day 31**

*A reading from the Book of Revelation.*

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. (*Revelation 19:11-16*)

*From the "Flowing Light of the Godhead" by St. Mechtild of Magdeburg (+1282)*

On the last day, Christ Jesus shall hold aloft a glorious scale before his Father. Upon it will lie his holy toil and his innocent suffering, and in it and next to it all the blameless torment, humiliation, and interior pain that was ever suffered by human beings for the love of Christ. Indeed, when the right side of the scale sinks, those rejoice the most who have much upon it. The blood of virgins by its nature, the blood of martyrs shed for their Christian faith, and other blood spilled through killing but shed in innocence during justified self-defense: this is what the holy Son of God shall weigh together with his blood, because it was poured out in true innocence.

Our Lord, the heavenly Father, in his divine wisdom has stored away many ineffable gifts with which he intends to adorn his chosen children after the last day. Especially for his only begotten Son, Jesus our Redeemer, has the heavenly Father prepared and fashioned a crown with such rich and exquisite workmanship that all the craftsmen who ever existed, are now, and ever shall be could not fully capture the splendor and rich delights of this crown.

At the time of the Antichrist the crown shall be crenelated with many a glorious image, such as that of Elias and Enoch, and many holy martyrs shall be there before them wearing the flowers of the holiness of their life and enhanced by their precious blood.

The crown shall also be dyed in the blood of the Lamb, and shall shine forth and be gilded with the powerful love that broke the sweet heart of Jesus in two.

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*From an address by Pope Francis*

Since the beginnings of Christianity, the mystery of the Blood of Christ has fascinated many people.... the Blood of Christ is the source of salvation for the world. God chose the sign of blood, because no other sign is so eloquent to express the supreme love of life given for others. This donation is repeated in every Eucharistic celebration, in which alongside the Body of Christ, His precious blood is made present; the Blood of the new and eternal Covenant, shed for all for the redemption of sins (cf. *Mt 26: 26*).

The meditation of Christ's sacrifice leads us to perform works of mercy, giving our life for God and for our brothers, without sparing. Meditation of the mystery of the Blood of Christ shed on the cross for our redemption drives us, in particular, towards those who could be cured from their moral and physical sufferings, and who instead are left to languish on the margins of a society of consumption and indifference. It is from this perspective that your service to the Church and to society becomes evident in all its importance. For my part, I suggest to you three aspects that may help you in your activity and in your witness: the *courage of the truth*, *attention to all*, *especially to the most distant*, and *the ability to fascinate and to communicate*.

*The courage of the truth.* It is important to be brave people, build courageous communities that are not afraid to stand up to affirm the values of the Gospel and the truth about the world and man. It is a matter of speaking plainly and not turning away in the face of attacks on the value of human life from conception to its natural end, on the dignity of the human person; before social ills, and before the various forms of poverty. The witness of the disciples of Jesus is called to touch the lives of the parishes and neighbourhoods, not to leave indifferent but to affect, transforming people's hearts and lives.

The second aspect is *attention to all, especially to those who are distant*. In your mission you are called to reach out to everyone, to make yourselves understood by all, to be “popular” by using a language through which everyone can understand the message of the Gospel. The recipients of the love and goodness of Jesus are all: neighbours, but above all those who are most distant. Therefore, we need to identify the most suitable ways of being able to bring together a multiplicity of people in homes, in social environments and on the street. To do this, you have before you the example of Jesus and of the disciples who walked the streets of Palestine announcing the Kingdom of God with the many signs of healing that confirmed the Word. Strive to be an image of a Church who walks the street, among the people, even running personal risks, sharing the joys and hardships of those you meet.

The third aspect that I suggest for your witness is the *ability to fascinate and communicate*. This is aimed especially at preaching and catechesis, the itineraries for a deeper understanding of the Word of God. It is a question of inspiring ever greater involvement in order to offer the contents of the Christian faith and to allow it to be savoured, encouraging new life in Christ. The Gospel and the Holy Spirit evoke words and gestures that enflame hearts and help them to open up to God and to others. For this ministry of the Word, we can draw inspiration from the attitude with which Jesus dialogued with people so as to reveal His mystery to all, to fascinate ordinary people with lofty and demanding teachings. The strength of this attitude is hidden in “the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weaknesses and failings: ‘Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom’ (Lk 12: 32)” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 141). Imitating the style with which Jesus preached, He helps us to approach others by making them perceive God’s tenderness. I think we are living in a time in which it is necessary to bring about the revolution of tenderness.

Here are three characteristics that can be useful for your journey of faith and your apostolate. But let us not forget that the true strength of Christian witness comes from the Gospel itself. And this is where the centrality of the Blood of Christ and its spirituality emerges. It is a question of relying above all on the “superabundance of love” expressed in the Blood of the Lord, which brought to light the Church Fathers and the great saints and mystics of Christian history, from Saint Bonaventure to Saint Catherine of Siena, up to a Saint especially dear to you: Saint Gaspar del Bufalo. This Roman priest, founder of the Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood, endeavoured to keep alive the ardour of faith in the Christian people by travelling through the regions of central Italy. With the example of his love for God, his humility, his charity, he was able to bring reconciliation and peace everywhere, tending to the spiritual and material needs of the most fragile people who lived on the margins of society.

## **RESPONSORY**

He has a name written which no one knows except himself. And he is clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood, -- and his name is called the Word of God. And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords -- and his name is called the Word of God.

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