

June 3, 2018
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

I was with my family on Tuesday, celebrating my sister-in-law, Paula's birthday. Her 22 year-old son, Drew, who lives in Eastern Washington, called her while we were together and she put him on speaker phone. She said, "Thank you so much Drew for calling me on my birthday." He replied, "Yeah, I didn't have anything to do, so I thought, 'I better call Mom on her birthday.'" I then said, "So, Drew, is that how you decide when it is time to call, your Mom, when you have nothing else to do?" We all laughed. There was the person who gave him life, and with reflecting upon what he was saying, he was not showing her the true respect that she is due. On the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we remember what God has given us and that we are called to give God true thanks in return.

One of the major themes of the Bible is the notion of "covenant," that God offers himself to us and then calls us offer ourselves to him. "I will be your God and you will be my people." God's covenant, first known through Abraham and Moses, and renewed over and over again with the prophets, is now fulfilled and made permanent through Jesus. We recall the everlasting covenant of Jesus Christ every time we celebrate the Mass. In today's first reading from the book of Exodus, Moses presents the terms of the covenant, or the ordinances and the people respond twice, "We will do everything that the Lord has told us." God offers himself to the people, and the people respond by offering themselves to God. The sprinkling of the blood of animals, which can sound strange to us, was a powerful symbol for the ancient people that God was offering life, blood being the symbol of life itself, and that they were accepting and committing themselves to live the life that God was promising to give them.

Hebrews makes clear the Jesus fulfills this covenant when we read, “For is the blood of goat and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.”

The Eucharist is the perfect worship of the living God. In the Mass we offer to God the very gift that God gives to us, the covenant that God had promised from the time of Abraham and Moses is fulfilled with the gift of the very body and blood of his only Son. Is there anything more loving that God could give us than his very self through his only Son? Is there anything more worthy that we could offer to God than the simple gifts of bread and wine that the power of the Holy Spirit changes into Body and Blood of his Son? When we open our hearts completely to Christ whom we receive in the Eucharist, we are transformed and our lives become a perfect offering to God through him.

Are we ready to respond to Jesus with the same words that the people said to Moses, “We will do everything that the Lord has told us”? God gives us everything in his Son Jesus through the Eucharist, and are we ready to give everything to him in return? What is our attitude about Sunday Mass? Is it the center of our week or is it something we will get to if we have time? The Mass Journal can be a tool to help us to do that. True love is a total gift of self and that is what God does for us in the perfect prayer of the Church, the Eucharist.