

# **THE BODY & BLOOD OF CHRIST**

## **THE NINTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

- .....
- Sun.    **The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ**  
June 3    **CHRIST'S LIVED LESSON IN LOVING**  
            A reflection developed from a homily by St. John Chrysostom
- Mon.    **Monday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**  
4         **CONTEMPLATING CHRIST'S GIFT OF SELF**  
            A reflection developed from a text by St. Hildegard of Bingen
- Tues.    **The Memorial of St. Boniface**  
5         **LOVING THE CHURCH AS ONESELF**  
            A reflection developed from the "Franciscan Media" Web-site
- Wed.    **Wednesday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**  
6         **USING ALL WE ARE IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST**  
            A reflection developed from a homily by Basil of Seleucia
- Thurs.    **Thursday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**  
7         **WHAT FLOWS FROM THE PIERCED SIDE OF CHRIST**  
            A reflection from The Dialogues by St. Catherine of Sienna
- Fri.     **THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS**  
8         **THE MESSAGE OF THE SACRED HEART**  
            A reflection developed from the encyclical of Pope Pius XII
- Sat.     **Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**  
9         **HOW MARY LEADS US INTO JESUS**  
            A reflection developed from a text of Journeying with the Lord  
            by Carlo Cardinal Martini

# **CHRIST'S LIVED LESSON IN LOVING**

**A reflection developed from a homily by St. John Chrysostom**

**Christ gave us the Eucharist at the time of the Passover in order to teach us by every possible means that He himself, as the Only Begotten Son of the Heavenly Father, is giving us a New Law that fulfills everything given Israel in its Law. As they were eating he took bread and broke it and revealed to them the faith by which He can be seen. The fact that he did this in the evening indicated that the fullness of all time had come and that the mystery of God's becoming human was about to be fulfilled in Him just as the Father wills it to be fulfilled in us. God is to be revealed in and through each of us. Christ did this by giving thanks (literally, "eucharisting") to show us how we ought to celebrate these mysteries of God's presence within and among us. He showed us he did not go to his passion against his will and so showed us how to accept with thanksgiving all we have to suffer. Out of our very sufferings we receive a hope of everlasting blessedness.**

**If mere "types", hints of the full reality of God's gifts, could free an entire people from earthly bondage, how much more can that full reality liberate the whole world. Through Christ's death the greatest of blessings comes upon our race. Christ fulfilled the lesson of the greatest festival of Israel and of its sacred meal by offering us an even more sacred and awe-inspiring festival and meal. Take and eat this, he says, this is my body which is being broken for the many. In effect, he tells us that the reason he suffered is to take away our sins and that this brings us a New Law and a New Promise.**

**As God's covenant with Israel was first ratified by the blood of sacrificial animals, so the New Covenant is being ratified by the blood of the Lord. In speaking of shedding his own blood he reminds us of the symbolic giving of our life to God proper to the covenant with Israel, and indicates what his death is to accomplish in reality rather than symbol. This is my blood, he said, which is being poured out for everyone for the forgiveness of sin. He added: Do this in memory of me. Is this commandment, this New Commandment, to be fulfilled in a merely symbolic way? God convinced Israel of his saving power by the miracles performed in Egypt. Now God convinces us to give ourselves, our lives, completely by giving his own human life for us. He gives exactly what he asks us to give. And in this we find forgiveness of sin. Jesus showed us that his passion and cross reveal a mystery.**

**This is a comfort and a challenge. Moses told Israel that the Passover should be for them a never-ending memorial that God saves all, symbolized by the saving of Israel's first born, the ones through whom the continuation of their families was effected. Now the Lord tells us to do what he has done, "in memory" of him—"until I come". Jesus longed to eat this Passover meal with his disciples so that he might hand over to them this new mystery and the rites by which it is celebrated. He tells us how he has longed to make us into a people moved by God's Spirit. What are we moved to do? We are moved to give our lives for love, both of our God and of one another. Thus, we enter completely into the gift of the forgiveness of our sins and those of the world.**

# **CONTEMPLATING CHRIST'S GIFT OF SELF**

**A reflection by St. Hildegard of Bingen**

The Son of God celebrated with his disciples the consummation of his mission. He was to pass out of the world. He would no longer live among ordinary events but fulfill the Heavenly Father's will by enduring his Passion and cross. He did it with supreme devotion and called us to find in his Eucharistic body and blood the same devotion to mankind's salvation. Then he showed us how faith sees in our coming from the Father and our returning to the Father, even in dreadful sufferings, that the Father's will is love. Was it possible, because the flesh is so weak, to avoid this chalice? It could not be. He blessed the bread in remembrance of the sweat of his body and the anguish of the Passion as he submitted to the Father's command. He was willing to die on the cross and he gave his body and blood to his disciples so they would not forget his example.

Jesus, the Lord, broke the bread for his disciples. The passion was hard for him to bear bodily. None the less, he obeyed the Father and conquered cruel death by bodily death. He shows that his body and blood are to be given to believers that they too might do such things "in His name" just as he was doing them for love of them. It was in a humble voice that he said, "You who humbly wish to follow me, take with ardent love this example that I leave you—my passion and my works. I have done all at the Father's command. He sent me to teach and to manifest the Kingdom. Eat faithfully what I give for it is my body."

What does all this mean? We eat Christ's body because we must imitate Christ's works in our spirits and through our flesh. Accept this whenever the Holy Spirit inspires such love in your hearts. As a person swallows food and sends it to the stomach so all who wish to keep my precepts are to follow me in my works. You do all this when you eat his body.

Then the Son of God took the saving cup for our salvation and gave thanks to the Father. When blood poured forth from his side grace was given to believers that was so strong that it conquered the ancient serpent, delivered lost humanity and strengthened the entire Church in faith for all time. The Savior in his love gave his precious example to all the faithful, summoning all with gentle inspiration. Drink this saving cup with confidence, all you who long to follow me faithfully. For love of me chastise your bodies by privation and self-restraint and pour out your blood in toil so as to deny yourselves while strengthening the Church. Even as I submitted to the Passion and shed my blood to redeem you, not thinking of the tenderness and weakness of my flesh but thirsting for your salvation, so you must do. This blood is shed for the salvation of all.

I have shed my blood on the cross to redeem people who contemplate me by faith. As I gave it on the cross for the deliverance of the human race, so I give it on the altar. I give it to cleanse those who faithfully receive it. I free them from fear of suffering and even death so that they too may give themselves wholly to our God.

## **LOVING THE CHURCH AS ONESELF**

**A reflection developed from “Franciscan Media” Web-site**

Today’s saint was a monk living under the Rule of St. Benedict who felt a call to help the Church in Germany. With permission, he went to Germany to discover what was needed and returned to find he had been elected abbot. He refused the election and returned to the continent. He had seen the German church needed reform and put love for others ahead of attending to himself.

In Germany, however, he found he could do little without authority. He went to Rome and asked for authorizing letters from the pope. Eventually these were given him. The pope also changed his name to Boniface. He then returned to what is now France and got authority from Charles Martel (father of Charlemagne) to force reform. With these authorizing documents he began reforming the clergy and trying to educate them. With this in mind he founded monasteries to teach by example how one lives a really Christian life and to provide schools to help priests learn to read and live a life of seeking God. From a letter to the pope we can see the situation he faced.

*“It is the custom of people in trouble to seek consolation and advice from those who have wisdom and affection. So relying on your wisdom, Holy Father, I lay before you my difficulties. There is conflict and anxiety because of false priests and hypocrites who defy God and rush to their own damnation while leading the faithful astray by scandals and errors. They sow weeds among the wheat so that the Word is choked or perverted into something poisonous. What we plant they make no attempt to water so that it may grow but offer to the faithful ever new falsehoods and new sects.”*

All had to be accomplished through constant preaching and persuasion, first because those who were priests were using their pastoral offices for personal profit only, and second to attract those who were not yet Christian. He used the monasteries he founded to show how people who work for their living can live a deeply and thoroughly Christian life. It was during a trip to confirm some of the newly baptized that his retinue was attacked during the night—probably with the hope of finding something valuable to steal. Boniface was killed during the attack, which was largely in vain because he carried nothing valuable except books. Illiterate robbers are unable to appreciate the value of what they cannot understand, just as Christians who try to use their faith to gain earthly goods can’t appreciate its genuine value. We are called to make that value known by the way we live.

Love, after the model provided us by Jesus Christ, is the greatest value in and beyond this world we now inhabit. One can’t love oneself rightly if one doesn’t learn to love Christ and Christ’s Church rightly. Such love gives self freely and in service rather than seeking to take from others so that one may have what one wrongly imagines will make life better, but doesn’t.

## **USING ALL WE ARE IN SERVICE OF GOD**

**A reflection developed from a homily by Basil of Seleucia**

**When God came down into human nature and so assumed all that is human, our hearts and minds and all our members had been thoroughly corrupted. By his coming the Only-Begotten Son so sanctified and transformed our humanity that henceforth we could put our members to higher and better uses than before. For instance, we are taught to use our mouth to cry out, “Lord, open my lips, and let my mouth proclaim your praise”. In a similar way we were taught to use our eyes in a new way by seeing God’s works and presence everywhere. Now we could see that “the eyes of all creatures look to you, O Lord, and you give all living things their food in due season”. We were shown how our hands can be stretched out to God and do marvelous things in God’s service: “Lift up your hands in the holy place and praise the Lord through the night”. “Let the lifting up of my hands be like an evening sacrifice”. We are reminded that our feet too are for God’s service. “Our feet are standing in your courts, O Jerusalem” and there they find how many good things they can carry us to do and to enjoy in God.**

**Now you might say: You’ve told us how the outer members of our body can praise God, but what of the “inner members”? Are our minds and hearts and intellects and wills excused from service? Of course, they aren’t! The soul and all its faculties have been given us for such service. What you are doing now as you listen to my words and notice how they apply to your conduct is a service to God, and this is made the seedbed of many other inner and outer deeds. We can’t serve God with our outer members if the inner members don’t direct them to do it. Scripture counsels us to cry out: “Bless the Lord, my soul, and let all that is within me bless God’s holy name”.**

**By our sin we had made our entire selves rotten and in need of a mighty physician. The Lord Jesus is that physician, able even to raise the dead. But primarily he is a spiritual physician. In him we are told that the whole fullness of the Godhead came to dwell. In this way God clothed our nature in the Divine Nature so as to heal it completely. He had eyes and feet and hands and ears and all human organs and energies and these were totally devoted to serving the Heavenly Father in a way designed to open all a path leading to salvation.**

**The life of a Christian is to be used to help others, and let them help us, in seeing the many opportunities we have to serve God by serving one another. This begins in our hearts and minds as we develop our abilities to see our God’s presence to us in the various tasks that fill our lives. It may be that our faith enables us to see the presence of God more clearly than another’s faith does. Then our insight can become a gift which opens the faith-eyes of such others to this wonderful truth. It may be that one of us has learned to see God in others, even in those who seem not to reflect God in what they long for or seek to do. This too can become a gift to help others see Christ in all those with whom they live and work. These are gifts calling for joy and gladness transforming hearts and lives.**

## **WHAT FLOWS FROM THE PIERCED SIDE OF CHRIST**

**A reflection from The Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena**

**Why was it, I asked my Savior, that you as a spotless lamb should want your side to be pierced and blood to flow forth from your very heart? Jesus answered, “There were many reasons but I will tell you one of the most important. My longing for the salvation of human kind knows no limit but I could only show a part of this by bearing pain and torment for you. So, I wanted you to see all that was within me so that you might know that I am wholly give to love for you.**

**By letting both blood and water pour forth I showed you holy baptism, not only of water but by the Holy Spirit. The baptism of blood calls for a love which is ready to shed all your own blood. It also prepared you for a baptism of fire and desire brought about by the Holy Spirit for those who lovingly long to give all for God but don’t receive that grace in the usual way. There is no baptism of water without the baptism of blood, which I underwent, and without this there is no baptism of fire, fusing the fire of divine charity with human weakness so that all of one’s life can be a shedding of one’s blood for God.**

**There is a way people receive a baptism of blood that seems figurative but isn’t. I know people sin due to weakness. Of course, neither weakness nor anything else can force them to sin if they do not want to, but they do fall into sin even to the point of losing the grace that came to them from my shed blood and through the water of baptism. So divine charity has left them a kind of ongoing baptism which comes through heartfelt contrition and holy confession. My blood is poured out over all who confess their sins and receive holy absolution.**

**You can see how this sort of baptism is ongoing and how every soul ought to be baptized in this way right up to the end of earthly life. In this way you can also come to experience how infinite is my love for you and so the full depths of what I give you by my suffering and death. I was clothed in your human nature and because it was in a sense fused with the Divine Nature the suffering I endured became an infinite love. It is not that either my suffering or my longing to accomplish your redemption can actually be infinite but its fruit is infinite in that it lasts infinitely. The whole of humanity could not find God’s love apart from the power of my blood shed for you and this couldn’t be effective for all apart from the ongoing character of the baptism of blood and desire that is given without any limit. All this is what I show you in the opening of my side, and of the heart that was pierced when it was opened. Rejoice in this gift every day!**

## **THE MESSAGE OF THE SACRED HEART**

### **A reflection from an encyclical by Pope Pius XII**

To understand the message of Jesus one must, so to speak, enter into his heart. It was a special instrument of the Godhead for carrying out the work of divine grace and mercy. Most certainly, his heart is an appropriate symbol of the immense love that moved our Savior to pour out his blood and so enter into a mystical marriage with the Church, and so with each of us. It was out of charity that he suffered for the sake of the Church and united it to himself as bride.

From the wounded heart of our Redeemer the Church was born and it is to pour out this blood until the end of time. It is from this heart that has sprung the endless profusion of graces through the sacraments so that all can be filled with supernatural life. The liturgy proclaims: "From that heart by spear-point severed the Church is born, the bride of Christ. Praise be to your heart, Lord Jesus Christ, font of grace for humankind".

This theme comes to us from the Fathers of the Church and is echoed by all later writers. St. Thomas Aquinas puts it thus: From Christ's side, there flowed water to wash us and blood to redeem us; the blood stands for the sacrament of the Eucharist while the water corresponds to the sacrament of baptism, which derives its cleansing property from that of Christ's blood". What is said of Christ's side, wounded and laid open by the spear, is also affirmed of his heart. It was certainly pierced by the spear thrust because the soldier drove it home precisely in order to make sure he was dead. The wound made in the most sacred heart of Jesus at the moment when he had finished with this mortal life has been through the ages the vivid image of the freely given love by which God gave his only Son to redeem the human race.

Christ loves us so intensely that he immolated himself as a blood-soaked victim on Calvary for our sake. Christ loved and delivered himself for us as a sacrificial offering to God in the fragrant sweetness of devotion. Our Savior has ascended to heaven in his body adorned with the brightness of eternal glory and taken his seat at the Father's right hand. He never ceases to pursue his bride with the burning love that throbs in his risen heart. He bears in his heart the unlimited treasures of love and grace which are the result of his triumph. He pours them out so plentifully on all of us.

This is a source of great hope and comfort and consolation for us. He who descended is the same one who has ascended above the highest heaven of our universe, and who seeks only to pour out love and mercy on all. If we are willing to love as he loves then all he gives us becomes a gift that we can pass on to others as received from his own hands, and heart. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a sign calling us to love as he has loved us and commanded us to love one another. It is not what we do that is important but that we do whatever our way of life makes possible to lead others to this love poured out. When all open their hearts to this gift, and then give it in turn by their own deeds of grace-inspired service, the world will find itself more and more becoming a Kingdom of God.

## HOW MARY LEADS US INTO JESUS

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

The Eucharist is, so to speak, a first fruit of the love of Christ. We are called to let ourselves be pierced, as it were, by the Eucharist. Think of Simeon's words to Mary, "*A sword shall pierce your own soul*". The sword that pierced her was love for Jesus as she beheld him crucified. Her love so united her to him that she shared his torment, and also his triumph. This seems to come to us through the Eucharist. So I ask: Can you allow Eucharistic love to pierce your heart? Can we all open ourselves in this way? This seems to me to be fundamental.

Allowing oneself to be shaped by the Eucharist means making oneself receptive and open. The opposite of this is the attitude of one who refuses to listen without reserve. We ought not to presume that we know all the Eucharist has to offer. Indeed, its power and reality are those of Christ. St. Paul said: "*All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection*". It is this knowledge that caused him to forget what lay in the past and reach out for what is to come.

That is genuine knowledge of the Lord, the Christ. It is the knowledge, and love, which was expressed by Mary's response to the angel: Let it be done to me as the Lord wills. This is openness. This is forgetting all that is past and stepping forward into God's future. Look what she became. What do we call that openness when we celebrate it? We call it Mary's "immaculate heart".

The Eucharist is a gift God gives us continually and which instills in us an attitude of silence and of listening. What God is sharing with us can't be understood by racking our brains or pouring over books. To contemplate it is to open ourselves to a dynamic force that causes us to walk with Christ in love and mercy. Unless we live—walk—in this way we cannot grasp the message of the Eucharist. It isn't a message of the head but of the heart. Mary grasped it fully, though not in words she could have written down. She grasped it by living with Jesus in his total gift of self to the Heavenly Father.

We are called to go forward as Mary did, and with an equal humility. It is only in the totality of a human life lived with a heart as open to God's leading as was Mary's that what is given us in the Eucharist is fully grasped by being fully lived. Of course, this means expanding what happens in the liturgy of the Word so that it becomes our entire life. Thus, we are called to live a genuinely "eucharistic" communal life. You may think of this by recalling what Mary did during the wedding at Cana. She leads us into her love for Jesus and her trust of Jesus and her confidence that in Jesus. There one finds the fullness of life. It leads to the wedding feast in God's Kingdom. That is what it means to enter into Jesus by living with and through and for Him as Mary did with an immaculate heart.