

The Blood *of* Christ



A MONTH OF MEDITATIONS

Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S.

**THE BLOOD OF CHRIST:
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2018

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
CINCINNATI PROVINCE,
DAYTON, OHIO

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

A longstanding tradition in Catholicism has been to dedicate a month to reflection on one of the great Christian mysteries. May is Mary's month, June is the month of the Sacred Heart, and November is the month of the holy souls. July is the month dedicated to meditating more deeply on the mystery of the Precious Blood.

Over 200 years ago, St. Gaspar del Bufalo founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, a society of apostolic life dedicated to spreading the good news of God's mercy in the mystery of the Precious Blood. Among his writings are several outlines for reflection on the Precious Blood during the month of June, which was at that time the month dedicated to this mystery. St. Gaspar's close friend, the Passionist St. Vincent Strambi, composed a book of daily meditations for the month of the Precious Blood, which St. Gaspar highly recommended.

Don Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S., has authored a new book of meditations on this mystery, using a format used in celebrations of the Word. There is a theme for each day, a passage from the Scriptures related to that theme, and a brief reflection. Following the reflection is a selection from one of the Fathers of the Church or other sacred author, concluding with several petitions and a closing prayer. Specifically aimed at use during the month of July, the

Originally published as:
Il Sangue di Cristo:
Mese di luglio
Sanguis Editrice
Rome, 2003

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ISBN 978-0-9820516-6-5

meditations can certainly be used at any time.

This format would serve well either for public or private use, and over the period of thirty-one days reveals the richness of this devotion. St. John XXIII, in an apostolic letter of 1960, recommended just such a method of reflection on this mystery: "Let...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."

Don Tullio has certainly taken the words of the beloved John XXIII to heart in giving us this book of meditations.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Every salvation event should be experienced in its totality. This could give rise to hesitation when encountering a work that emphasizes a period completely dedicated to reflection on a single mystery. In doing this, the desire is not to relegate the unlimited to a certain period, but rather is to better aid the orientation of the faithful.

The month of July, therefore, can continue as a most suitable month which Christian piety has traditionally dedicated to the mystery of the blood of Christ.

The method employed in this volume, "Celebrating the Word," reflects the general approach of the Church in our times. It is enriched by the reflections of the Fathers of the Church and of sacred authors that have always been part of the treasure from which we have drawn throughout the centuries.

SALVATION IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The price of our liberation is the blood of Christ, paschal lamb whom God chose from eternity and in whom he consecrates his new people of believers.

From the first letter of Peter, apostle

(1 Pt: 17-21)

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.

Reflection

In the fullness of time, God sent among us the one who was announced by the prophets, and the one whom all the just longed for since antiquity. Jesus came to accomplish salvation.

Sin brought about an abyss between the soul and God, and only an infinite Being could fill it. The slavery of sin is the saddest: it upsets the peace and turns the splendor of the sun into darkness. Sin renders the thought of death so frightening.

The Son of God, by means of his blood, saves

humanity, restoring the splendor of divine dignity. The human person thus participates in the family of God, and in it, through the fatherhood of God, becomes a blood relative of Christ.

Liberation by the Precious Blood of Christ, as the unblemished lamb, comes from the eternal plan of the Father, who thus consecrates his new community of believers.

Reading

From the *Commentary on the First Letter of Peter* by the Venerable Bede, priest

The apostle Peter calls Christians a *royal priesthood* (1 Pt 2:9) because they are united to the body of him who is the supreme and true priest. As king, he gives his kingdom to his own, and as high priest, purifies their sins with the sacrifice of his blood. He calls them a *royal priesthood* so that they remember to hope in a kingdom without end and always to offer God the sacrifices of unblemished conduct.

They are also called a *holy nation and a people God has acquired for himself* (ibid.) with the blood of our Redeemer, just as once the people of Israel were redeemed by the blood of the lamb in Egypt.

The ancient story must be understood spiritually of the new people of God. As those who were freed from slavery in Egypt sang a triumphal hymn to the Lord after passing through the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army, so also must we, after receiving the remission of sins in baptism, worthily give thanks for the heavenly benefits.

With grateful hearts we offer our prayer and say: *We thank you, Lord.*

- O Jesus, who by sacrificing yourself have freed us from all iniquity to acquire for yourself a people pure and full of eagerness for good works:
We thank you, Lord.
- Because with your blood you have purchased us for God from every tribe, tongue, and people:
We thank you, Lord.
- Because you offered yourself as a victim for our sins:
We thank you, Lord.

All powerful God, who have established Jesus as redeemer of the world, free us from all evil by the power of his blood. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE NEW COVENANT IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS

On the evening of Holy Thursday Jesus institutes a new rite, with which God inaugurates the definitive covenant with humanity.

From the Gospel according to Matthew (26:26-29)

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Reflection

For the offense against God caused by sin, Jesus presents the gift of the sacrifice of reconciliation. He does not offer an object, but himself. He is the Servant of God who bears on his shoulders the weight of the sins of all humanity. It is he who offers expiation and reconciliation with the Father to men and women through the sacrifice of his own life, thus establishing in his blood the new and definitive covenant.

Once, in the desert of Sinai, the blood of the victims signified the covenant of the Lord with his people. Now, on the cross, the blood of Jesus, the perfect victim, signifies the new covenant between God and humanity, announced by the prophets.

Jesus has the mission of universal redemption. His life is broken for the benefit of all, so that all can be freed from whatever ruins and destroys life. He offers his existence without asking anything in exchange, without claiming the benefit of a return. He thus initiates a long line of gifts which stream down upon a history too often stiffened by egoism and hardness of heart.

The presence of the blood remains forever the greatest sign of the presence of love.

Reading

From *Interpretation of the Letter to the Hebrews* of St. John Chrysostom, bishop (Homily 16)

Tell me then why is the book of the testament sprinkled, and the people, except on account of the Precious Blood, prefigured from the first? Why “with hyssop?” It is dense and retentive. And why the “water”? It shows forth also the cleansing by water. And why the “wool”? This also [was used], that the blood might be retained. In this place blood and water show forth the same thing, for baptism is his passion. Because those [ordinances] were not a perfect purification, nor a perfect remission, but half-complete and in a very small degree. But in this case, [Jesus] says, “This is the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins.” (Matt. 26: 28.) This word, instead of hyssop, having been dipped in the blood, sprinkles all. And there indeed the body was cleansed outwardly, for the purifying was bodily; but here, since the purifying is spiritual, it enters the soul, and cleanses it, not being simply sprinkled over, but gushing forth in our souls.

Prayer litany

Grateful to God who has given us pardon of our sins and the hope of salvation, let us pray together and say: *We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.*

– For the coming of your reign of love on the whole earth, for the priests and people of God:

We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.

– For all who suffer:

We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.

– In your blood, poured out for us, you have established the new and eternal covenant; grant that by observing the law of love we may remain faithful to the new covenant:

We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.

O all powerful and eternal God, grant that we may draw near to Jesus, mediator of the new covenant, and that we may participate with faith in the sacrifice of the altar, where the shedding of his blood is renewed. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord.

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD IN THE CIRCUMCISION

The first shedding of the blood of Jesus takes place at the dawn of his life, on the eighth day after his birth. In this rite the baby is also given a name according to the Jewish law.

From the Gospel according to Luke (2:21)

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Reflection

The rite of circumcision had great importance in the faith of the Israelites: through it the newborn boy became part of the people with whom God had made his covenant. It became a guarantee of the blessing promised by God. Only the male who was circumcised could take part in the paschal meal.

Jesus, in observing the law, shed the first drops of his blood. The shadow of the cross was already appearing above the head of the child.

This rite leads us to another biblical understanding: the circumcision of the heart. The one who submits to God and admits his guilt, professing his faith in a God who is faithful to the covenant, is circumcised by the Lord. This is a new dedication to God, an integral dedication and not purely formal and cultic.

Reading

From the homilies of Saint Lorenzo di Novae, bishop

(Homily 1)

The Jews received a sign, what sign? That of circumcision. Christians have also received a sign, what sign? That of compassion. See the sign of the Jews: circumcision of the flesh. For Christians it is circumcision of the heart. This is more excellent than the former. In the former there is the blood of the incision; in the latter, the water of remission. There, the wound of the flesh; here the palm of piety. There, the rigid observance; here the royal forbearance. Christ, hanging from the cross, brought together these two signs when water and blood flowed from his wound, giving the Jews the sign of blood, and to Christians, indeed, the revelation of the water.

Therefore, you have received from the font not the Jewish sign, but the Gospel sign. From that day and from that hour in which you came out of the bath, he himself is for you an eternal font and enduring remission.

With a spirit grateful for the salvation we have received, we direct our prayer to the Lord and say: *We give you thanks, Lord.*

- Because you have given to all the sign of salvation in the shedding of your blood when you were still a baby:

We give you thanks, Lord.

- Because you have willed to show us since then how love flows abundantly to humanity from your heart:

We give you thanks, Lord.

- Because with the offering of your blood you show us the importance of being a good example to the innocent:

We give you thanks, Lord.

O Jesus, may your blood always increase in the hearts of young people a great zeal to respond to your divine inspirations. You who live and reign forever. Amen.

JESUS SWEATS BLOOD IN THE GARDEN

The second shedding of blood takes place under conditions of extreme inner suffering. On the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, Jesus prays in the Garden of Olives.

From the Gospel according to Luke

(22:39-46)

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

Reflection

Gethsemane is the arena of combat for Jesus, whose weapon is prayer, which he commends to his disciples to overcome the test.

He used to go there often and would spend the night in prayer. It will also be the site of the Ascension.

Jesus does not take the ordinary position of prayer but assumes a posture of humility and kneels. He asks the

Father that the chalice of suffering may pass from him. The chalice stands to indicate the destiny of Jesus: he will die in Jerusalem because God has commanded him to carry out a ministry of the kingdom for the oppressed, the disadvantaged of this world. Jesus is committed to the battle through his awareness of God's will and accepting it obediently, not as a victim, nor as one who has lost control or who is subject to an irrational passion. The angel comforts Jesus. His sweat is the sweat of a moral athlete who seeks victory in battle.

Reading

From the *Dialogue with Trypho* by St. Justin Martyr (no. 103)

The statement, "All my bones are poured out and dispersed like water; my heart has become like wax, melting in the midst of my belly (Ps 22:14)," was a prediction of that which happened to him on that night when men came out against him to the Mount of Olives to seize him. For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by his apostles and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that his sweat fell down like drops of blood while he was praying, and saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass: (Lk 22:42)." his heart and also his bones trembling; his heart being like wax melting in his belly: in order that we may perceive that the Father wished his Son really to undergo such sufferings for our sakes, and may not say that he, being the Son of God, did not feel what was happening to him and inflicted on him.

Prayer litany

Let us direct our common prayer to God the Father and say: *We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.*

- For the glory of your holy name, for the coming of your kingdom, and for the salvation of all:
We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.
- For the consecration of work and pain, for the poor and suffering:
We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.
- That all sinners hear the call of the suffering Christ:
We offer you, O Father, the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Father, open our hearts to receive your will with the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may have the strength to watch and pray with Jesus in fighting against evil. May our sharing in his sufferings lead us to hope in the power of his resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD IN THE SCOURGING

The scourging marks the third shedding of the blood of Jesus. It takes place during the trial before Pilate, who accedes to the tactics of the Jewish authorities. Jesus presents himself as the suffering Servant announced by the prophet Isaiah.

From the Gospel according to Mark

(Mk 15:12-15)

Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection

The scourging was administered as a preparation for crucifixion. The victim was bound to a pillar and a leather whip with pieces of stone or metal attached was used.

Jesus was left to the mercy of soldiers who reduced his body to a single great wound with the horrible punishing blows of the scourge. The divine blood gushed freely.

Jesus was scourged and scorned as "king" at the center of a process in which he declared really to be a king.

It seems that we Christians do not reflect on the severity of his suffering. Otherwise, we would readier to take up our cross. We should not avert our gaze from the one who asks nothing that he himself has not done.

He goes before us, bloodied in the scourging, with the invitation to turn our sufferings into an expression of fruitful love.

Reading

From the *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* by St. Ambrose, bishop.

Jesus is sent to Herod and sent back to Pilate. Although neither declares Jesus to be guilty, they give in to the cruelty of others. It is true that Pilate washes his hands, but that does not remove his crimes, because he should not have bowed before jealousy and fear, selling out the blood of an innocent man.

The soldiers then clothe Jesus with a scarlet cloak and a crimson tunic. One denotes the victories of the martyrs, and the other, the banners of his royal power. It is thus because his blood had to take upon itself, for us, the blood shed in the entire world, and his passion had to bring forth his reign for us.

He was scourged so that we would not be scourged; the Lord, man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, who suffers for us, has taken away the scourges from us, who at one time fled from God. He was so steadfast in his suffering that he offered his hands to the chains of fugitive slaves, and his body to their whips.

Let us offer our prayer to Jesus, suffering under the strokes of the whips, as we say: *Teach us the value of suffering.*

- O Jesus, who took upon yourself the suffering of the whole world, we pray:
Teach us the value of suffering.
- You do not want us to detach our gaze or our mind from when you have freely done for us, we pray:
Teach us the value of suffering.
- That we may be able to change our sufferings into love, we pray:
Teach us the value of suffering.

O God, grant that we follow the example of your Son and accept the sufferings of life, and that we know how to transform them into expressions of salvation for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD IN THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

The religious leaders ask Pilate to condemn Jesus to death on the cross. The crowning with thorns becomes the central scene of this episode and one of the most expressive in all revelation. Jesus is mocked, but he is truly king. He is mocked because his kingship is different from that of the world.

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 19:2-5)

And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

Reflection

John the evangelist places Jesus' crowning with thorns and his mocking as "king" at the center of the process so that he really does appear to be "king."

Pilate declares again that he has not found any reason to condemn Jesus and shows him to the people: *Behold the man!* This expression about Jesus, beaten and then clothed with the crown and with the crimson tunic, could indicate contempt for the poor victim. But it can also have another meaning. Normally a new king is presented to his subjects in royal attire, his name is announced, and the people acclaim him.

The supreme guide of our thoughts and actions is not so much the Gospel, but the person whom the Gospel proclaims. Christ, divine king, is present in us, and establishes the true relationship with him as his subjects. He, the sun of our souls, adorns us with his innocence and brightness. His royalty becomes for us a stimulus to imitate his example and to follow him wherever he leads.

Reading

From the *Homilies on the Gospel of John* by St. Augustine

(Homily 116)

Pilate went forth again, and said to them: "Behold, I bring him forth, that you may know that I find no fault in him." Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And he said to them, "Behold the man!" Hence it is apparent that the soldiers did these things not without Pilate's knowledge, whether it was that he ordered them or only permitted them, namely, for the reason we have stated above, that his enemies might even more willingly drink in the sight of such derisive treatment and cease to thirst further for his blood.

Jesus goes forth to them wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, not resplendent in royal power, but laden with reproach; and the words are addressed to them, "Behold the man!" That is to say, even if you hate your king, spare him now when you see him sunk so low; he has been scourged, crowned with thorns, clothed with the garments of derision, jeered at with the bitterest insults, struck with the open hand; his ignominy is at the boiling point, let your ill-will sink to zero. But there is no such cooling on the part of the latter, but rather a further increase of heat and vehemence.

Prayer Litany

With the power of the blood of Christ we ask God, the almighty Father, for the salvation of all people. Let us say together: *Hear us, O Lord.*

- That the blood of Jesus purify our conscience from the works of death so that we may serve the living God, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That the mystery of Christ, who sacrificed himself for humankind, may draw all people to his heart, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That the vision of the cross of Christ may arouse a genuine desire for penitence in sinners, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.

Almighty God, we give you thanks because you have judged us worthy to share in the mystery of the blood of your Son. Help us to know how to respond always to the expressions of your merciful love. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD ON THE JOURNEY TO CALVARY

Jesus is condemned to death, although his innocence is like a continuing refrain in the entire course of the trial. Now, treated unjustly, he begins the journey to Calvary carrying his cross.

From the Gospel according to Luke

(Lk 23:24-27)

So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished. As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.

Reflection

Jesus journeys toward his Father without coercion, in freedom and obedience, as his predictions are being fulfilled.

An infinite love brings him to the cross, the way he reveals to us the depths of his heart.

He goes out to Calvary under the weight of the cross. He falls, he bleeds, and is forced to rise. It seems that all the people there have forgotten the great miracles he performed and the word he proclaimed.

His blood continues to soak the ground. Those drops, those marvelous pearls, enrich the streets of Jerusalem, but few take notice. They are trampled upon in an inexplicable blindness.

Jesus continues on his way until he reaches the place of further torture.

The plan of salvation is about to be fulfilled in the total gift of his love, while he is surrounded by nothing but hatred and violence.

Reading

From the *Error of the Pagan Religions* by St. Firmicus Maternus

God, about to free his people from the tyranny of the Egyptians, commands that during the night a ram be slain and that the doorposts be painted with his blood. He orders that during the evening meal this ram be consumed by a certain number of persons, and he gives the name "Passover" to this sacrifice. For this reason, when the prophet predicts the passion of our divine Lord by command of the Holy Spirit, he says: *like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice, he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living* (Is 53:7-8).

The sacred blood of this Lamb is poured out for the salvation of humankind, because the Son of God redeems his holy ones with the shedding of his Precious Blood, so that the blood of Christ frees whoever is first consecrated by the majesty of an immortal blood.

In faith we pray to Christ, who by his holy cross has redeemed the world. Let us say: *Show us, Lord, your mercy.*

- Do not look at our sins, but cancel our faults:
Show us, Lord, your mercy.
- Support, O gentle Father, the suffering members of your Church by the blood of Christ, who completed his suffering on the cross:
Show us, Lord, your mercy.
- Assist your sons and daughters, merciful Lord, at the moment of death, that they be found faithful and may leave this world in your grace:
Show us, Lord, your mercy.

O Lord who love us, you have freed us with your blood and have made us a kingdom and priests for our God. Grant that we may be ever more deeply aware of the riches of your sacrifice that are renewed each day in the Mass and respond generously to your grace. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD IN THE CRUCIFIXION

The evangelists report the crucifixion and death of Jesus very simply. They do not dwell on the physical details of his suffering, although they do not exclude them either. Jesus dies according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, in absolute obedience to the plan of the Father.

From the Gospel according to Luke

(Lk 23:33-37, 44-46)

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah] of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ... It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

Reflection

With deep faith in his loving Father, who brings the dead to life again, Jesus ends his earthly existence in obedience to the will of God. He drank the chalice of suffering to the dregs.

With the freely given gift of faith, the pagan centurion sees the close connection of Jesus' pardon of his enemies, his fidelity to God when tempted, and his mercy for a repentant criminal.

The mercy and power of God is fulfilled in the death of an individual deprived of all power, Jesus of Nazareth.

By his righteous conduct, Jesus shows himself to be the Son of God.

Reading

From *The Mystical Vine* by St. Bonaventure (Ch. 23)

The most profuse of these bloodsheddings is to be found in the piercing by the nails. Who could doubt but that our innocent Jesus must have poured out a tremendous amount of his sacred blood, when his hands and feet were pierced? In those streams of blood our rose became empurpled. Here we find the most ardent charity and suffered of the deepest dye. Ponder awhile the ardor of this rose of charity in the red of its suffering. Who ever endured such hard and painful things? And remember here that it is God himself who is the sufferer. He whose habit was to remove completely, or at least to alleviate, the violence of their pains in his servants, refused to allow any alleviation at all in his own case.

Examine and see how red this rose of sanguinary passion becomes in order to express its burning charity. Charity and passion vie with one another: the one for more ardor, the other for a deeper red. But it is through the ardor of charity that the passion acquires its redness in a wonderful way, since apart from love there would be no suffering. And it is the redness of the passion that manifests so great and incomparable an ardor of charity.

Prayer Litany

In the mysterious designs of divine wisdom, the Lord Jesus was handed over to death for our sins and rose for our sanctification. Let us adore our Savior and pray to him with humble confidence: *Save your people, Lord.*

– You who promised streams of living water to those who believe in you, pour out your Spirit on all humanity:
Save your people, Lord.

– Blessed are you, O Jesus Savior of the world, who did not refuse to undergo the passion and the cross for us, and who has redeemed us by your Precious Blood:
Save your people, Lord.

– Look with kindness upon the sick and suffering, who have united themselves with your cross, and let them experience the comfort of your presence:
Save your people, Lord.

God, almighty Father, who have given us your only Son as the price of our salvation, grant that, living in communion with his sufferings, we may one day participate in the glory of his resurrection. He is God and lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen

JESUS SHEDS HIS BLOOD THROUGH HIS PIERCED SIDE

After Jesus' death, a Roman soldier pierces his side. This event allows us to reflect on the ocean of divine love, whose clearest sign is the gift of blood.

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 19:31-37)

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."

Reflection

The significance of this event is made clear by the two passages from Scripture that the evangelist cites. The blood attests to the reality of the sacrifice of the Lamb, offered for the salvation of the world. The water, symbol of the Holy Spirit, indicates its spiritual fruitfulness.

This leads us to understand why many Fathers of the Church have seen water as a symbol of baptism, and

the blood as a symbol of the Eucharist, and in these two sacraments the sign of the Church, the new Eve, who is born from the side of the new Adam, asleep on the cross. Through the Holy Spirit the little flock of disciples is formed as a new people, and in the blood of Christ God establishes the eternal covenant with all humanity.

The last drops of blood, thus, come from the heart that is the symbol of love. In the blood of Jesus, poured out without measure, humankind can see the infinite love of God. It is the strength of love that must convert us.

Reading

From *Homilies on the Gospel of John* by St. Augustine

(Homily 120, 2)

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.

The evangelist used his words carefully. He did not say that Jesus' side was pierced or wounded, but rather that it was opened. This suggests that the gate of life was being thrown open, and through it flowed the sacraments of the Church. Without them one cannot enter that life which is the true life. The blood was shed for the remission of sins; the water fills the health-giving cup and supplies both the bath of baptism and water for drinking.

This mystery was prefigured by the door that Noah ordered to be built in the side of the ark (Cf. Gn 6:16), through which the living things would enter to avoid death in the flood. This is a figure of the Church.

Let us offer our prayer to the Son of God, who has brought together all the peoples of the earth. Let us say together:
We give you thanks, Lord.

- On the cross you made blood and water flow from your side to wash our sins in that river of grace:
We give you thanks, Lord.
- You have given us peace at the price of your blood; help us to keep the evil of discord far from us:
We give you thanks, Lord.
- You have given us every blessing and have let us be born in a time of salvation:
We give you thanks, Lord.

Merciful Father, you have redeemed the world with the blood of your Son. May your Church offer herself to you as a living and holy sacrifice, and always experience the fullness of your love. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, STRENGTH OF BELIEVERS

Jesus, the victim offered to the Father, restores to humankind the confidence that it had lost. His sacrifice is permanent and of universal value.

From the First Letter of St. John

(1 Jn 2:1-2)

My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Reflection

The life that comes from the blood of Christ possesses the characteristics of the resurrection. It is just this strength that allows the Christian to nurture his hope in reaching that life.

The blood of Christ, then, also provides the necessary means. The more that a person is convinced of their own insufficiency and weakness, the more they firmly hope in God. The blood of Jesus presents a powerful virtue: by its means we are justified, redeemed, acquired by God. That is to say, through the blood of Christ a person is in a new condition: that of being a child of God. Thus, the person is certain to receive all the help needed to attain life. It is from the blood of Christ that one draws the strength capable of sanctifying and of overcoming every power contrary to God: *They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb* (Rv 12:11).

The triumph of Christ makes possible the triumph of his followers. Those who conquer Satan are not only the martyrs, but all who will give their life for the faith in the great tribulation. The transforming and renewing power of the death of Christ flows, with all its effects, in the lives of all who have accepted redemption.

Reading

From the *Commentaries on John* by Origen (Book 6)

He is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe, who blotted out the written bond that was against us by his own blood, and took it out of the way, so that not even a trace, not even of our blotted-out sins, might still be found, and nailed it to his cross; who having put off from himself the principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by his cross (Cf. Col 2:14-15).

And we are taught to rejoice when we suffer afflictions in the world, knowing the ground of our rejoicing to be this, that the world has been conquered and has manifestly been subjected to its conqueror. Hence all the nations, released from their former rulers, serve him, because he saved the poor from the tyrant by his own passion, and the needy who had no helper. This Savior, then, having humbled the calumniator by humbling himself, abides with the visible sun before his illustrious church, metaphorically called the “moon,” from generation to generation.

Prayer Litany

Filled with confidence in the power of the Divine Blood, let us say together: *You are our hope.*

- Blood of Christ, power to conquer the powers of evil:
You are our hope.
- Blood of Christ, source of resurrection and of life:
You are our hope.
- Blood of Christ, assurance that you hold us united to Christ and make us grow as a sign of the new creation:
You are our hope.

O God, your Word gives us the energy of hope. Grant that, in the light of the blood of Christ, we may always grow in seeking redemption, and that our work on earth may bear abundant fruit for a definitive victory over evil and to live our lives in love. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND BAPTISM

In the blood of Jesus, shed so generously, we have received divine life. This was given us on the day of our baptism.

From the letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom 6:3-11)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

At the price of his blood, Christ has redeemed and freed humanity from evil to present it to God.

In the rite of baptism, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is accomplished spiritually. The person descends into the baptismal basin, is covered by

the waters, and emerges to a new life. In that act they experience death to sin and burial and rising as Christ did. As a result, the Christian lives in union with the risen Christ, a union that will reach its fulfillment in heaven.

Baptism creates an identification of Christians with the glorified Christ and allows them to be able truly to live the life of Christ. Baptism is the means by which Christians grow together in Christ, who died and is risen.

Therefore, the faith one receives at baptism is the fruit of the blood of Christ. One accepts with confidence the gift of salvation, begins to be a part of the Church, and enters into the history of the redeeming work of Christ.

Reading

From the *Homilies on the Gospel of John* by St. Augustine
(Homily 50)

The door-posts of the Jews were sealed with the blood of the slaughtered animal: with the blood of Christ our foreheads are sealed. And that sealing—for it had a real significance—was said to keep away the destroyer from the houses that were sealed. Christ's seal drives away the destroyer from us, if we receive the Savior into our hearts. But why have I said this? Because many have their door-posts sealed while there is no intimate abiding within: they find it easy to have Christ's seal on the forehead, and yet at heart refuse admission to His word. Therefore, brothers and sisters, I have said, and I repeat it: Christ's seal drives from us the destroyer, if only we have Christ dwelling in our hearts.

Let us turn to the Divine Blood in prayer and say:
Come down and save us.

- O divine blood, you continually inebriate our souls:
Come down and save us.
- O blood, you show us the sources of grace, of mercy,
and of the inexhaustible love of God:
Come down and save us.
- O divine blood, glory of the Church, of the Christian
family, you are the spiritual glory that shines on
souls to their sanctification and salvation:
Come down and save us.

O God, who sent Jesus into the world so that by
shedding his blood, he would show to all your infinite
mercy, grant that we understand the nobility and
greatness of this blood that you have given us through
baptism. We ask this through the same Christ our
Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND CONFIRMATION

When he returned to heaven, Jesus did not leave his
disciples alone; he remains present in the gift of the Holy
Spirit and in the experience of his love.

From the Gospel according to John (Jn 14:15-17; Acts 2:1-4)

*If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I
will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to
be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world
cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You
know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you..
(This promise of Jesus is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost):
When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together
in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound
like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house
where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared
among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them
were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other
languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

Reflection

The all-powerful love of God has caused us to be
born again to a new life through baptism. Now we live
with the knowledge that God, the Creator of all things,
is our Father.

In confirmation, through the presence of the Holy
Spirit, this divine life is directed in a special way toward
Christian witness.

It is the Spirit promised by Jesus before his death, at the beginning of the drama of the passion. Spirit and blood are in a close relationship. It is precisely the Spirit who makes the action of the blood of Jesus present and effective.

The Holy Spirit, whom we have received on the day of our confirmation, develops in us the divine life that has its origins in the death of the Redeemer. Jesus came to earth and died so that we could produce the fruits of eternal life. The Spirit is the principal author of this life.

Reading

From the *Commentary on Revelation* by Saint Primasius

(Book 1, ch. 4)

In the Old Testament, after the sacrifice of the lamb when fifty days had passed, the law of fear was given, written by the finger of God on the tablets of stone. Now that *Christ our Passover is immolated* (1 Cor 5:7), he who, according to John, is *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world* (Jn 1:29), sends the Holy Spirit he promised from heaven. We know that the Spirit is often called the *finger of God* in the pages of Scripture (Ex 8:15). Through him the ancient hardness of the heart of stone is removed, and that charity is given by which fear is immediately driven out, so that the law, which before had been difficult for the weak, may be fulfilled.

Prayer Litany

Brothers and sisters, we direct our prayer to the Holy Spirit and say: *Give us an understanding of Jesus crucified.*

- Holy Spirit, you reveal the mystery of the cross:
Give us an understanding of Jesus crucified.
- Spirit promised by Jesus, you descended on us on the day of our confirmation:
Give us an understanding of Jesus crucified.
- Holy Spirit, you give us knowledge of divine truths, communicated in the Divine Blood:
Give us an understanding of Jesus crucified.
- Holy Spirit, you reveal the greatness of our souls, sealed by the blood of Jesus:
Give us an understanding of Jesus crucified.

Almighty and eternal God, who have given us a new birth in water and the Holy Spirit, and have pardoned all our sins, send us your Spirit and his gifts from heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE EUCHARIST

To the Church, the people of God gathered by his redeeming sacrifice, Jesus gives the Eucharist, the supreme sign of his love.

From the First Letter to the Corinthians of St. Paul
(1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-26)

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? ... 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.

Reflection

The words of Jesus, *this is my body, which is for you*, spoken over the broken bread, signify: It is I myself; with this bread I give myself.

This self-giving of Jesus is made much more explicit by the words over the chalice: *This is my blood...poured out for many*. Jesus, shedding his own blood, gives the gift of his own life.

The death of Jesus is the expiation of sins and is a sacrifice capable of embracing multitudes.

The disciples become participants in the self-giving of Jesus in the very moment in which they receive the broken bread and the wine, transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Now they are also drawn into the coming of the reign of God.

Reading

From the *Writings* of Sister Maria Antonietta Prevedello

You need an acute power of vision to comprehend the splendor of the Mystery reserved for you, if you wish to taste your portion of the banquet.

It is not enough to be filled with the body and blood of Christ; from this divine encounter one must learn of the generative power of salvation and of holiness for all the souls that he wants to redeem.

The altar of the living Victim is brilliant with fire, it is full of blood. The fire will consume your dross, the blood will restore your life.

Pause for a moment. Do you know whom you touch? You live in the Mystery for the Mystery, not for yourself. Do not ask for anything more. Adore and love. Entreat and offer.

The chalice is in the hands of the priest, but it is also in your hands. All can draw water in abundance at the sources of the Savior. The blood has a thousand voices: voices of invitation, of truth, of peace, of light, of love. Let each soul hear his voice and keep it.

Let us pray to the Lord that he may always give us the living bread from heaven, Christ our Savior. Let us say:
Hear us, O Lord.

- For the Church of God: that the sacrifice of Christ made present in the Eucharist fill her with grace, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- For all those who suffer: that they find comfort in our solidarity with them and above all in the bread from heaven, let us pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- For all of us gathered here: that communion with the bread that gives life will take from our hearts all egoism and bring us to accomplish the truth in charity, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

O God our Father, who give food to every living thing and who fed your people with manna in the desert, do not deprive your Church of the Eucharistic food, which makes her one body in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**“THE ONE WHO DRINKS MY
BLOOD HAS ETERNAL LIFE”**

In this discourse Jesus speaks more directly of the Eucharist. One must not forget, however, that word and sacrament are never separated.

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 6:53-57)

So Jesus said to them, “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.”

Reflection

Good circulation of the blood is a sign of health and of life. In the Old Testament one reads that life is in the blood. Because life belongs to God, so one must never drink the blood of animals so as not to arrogate that life to oneself.

When Jesus affirms that his blood is true drink, his words are unacceptable, and he is abandoned by his listeners.

In the last supper Jesus, by means of the consecrated bread and wine, gives his body to eat and his blood to drink. In the Eucharistic mystery the blood of Calvary is offered to us as the blood of life, the life of Christ who becomes our life.

It is therefore not enough that the blood of Christ was shed on the cross, that I was bathed in it in baptism, that its purifying power covers me in penance. It is necessary that I drink the blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

Reading

From the *Introduction to the Gospel according to John* by Antonio Rosmini (198-200)

Truly Jesus said to the apostles, after having instituted the Eucharistic sacrament, that he would drink a new wine together with them, once he entered into his reign. He calls it “new wine,” because his body would be glorious; he says that he would drink it with them, to indicate to them their participation in his Eucharistic life.

This blood, destined by God for the purification of the soul, is the blood of the Son of man who is also the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In the form of wine, He gave men and women living and life-giving blood, the true purification of souls, blood of the new and eternal covenant.

Therefore, the Eucharistic existence of Christ who lives in the form of bread and wine, operates beyond this life, and gives the soul a mysterious life in Christ that never can grow less, because he is eternal by his nature. The Eucharistic body has a supernatural existence, which comes uniquely from heaven, and because of this is living and life-giving. No one can destroy it.

Prayer Litany

Brothers and sisters, we are all invited to the supper of the Lord. Let us pray that God will give all who come to the Eucharistic mystery a living faith. Let us say: *Hear us, O Lord.*

– For the Church of God, that she be purified by the blood of Christ and may shine with charity and zeal, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

– For priests, who preside at the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church, that in their position they may know how to educate the Christian community in faith, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

O Lord, let us be aware of our need for your presence within us. May the communion with your body and blood cause us live in this world with your life, which will be shown in its fullness in the glorious resurrection. You are God and live and reign forever. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND CONFESSION

The risen Lord keeps the promises he had made: victory over fear, joy, peace, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and pardon of sins.

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 20:19-23)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Reflection

Human life is interwoven with struggle. The experience of sin continually drags people down. Divine strength is needed bring them back to the right path. One who has experienced sin must again experience God, through the blood of Christ, whose merits are applied in the sacrament of confession.

This is not an isolated act, but expresses a change in one's mindset, and it is linked to the death of Jesus, the culmination of the redemptive action of the Son of God. A life of total sacrifice prepared for his death, and his death is followed by the resurrection.

In the light of the doctrine of the Divine Blood, the sinner must take note of the need to turn to God. A person becomes a new creation by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is symbolized by Jesus breathing over the apostles.

Here the Christian sacrament of penance finds its origin.

Reading

From the *Commentaries on the Letter to the Romans* by Origen
(4, 11)

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God (Rm 5:8-9). Having said before that at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Rm 5:6), now I wish to show the greatness of the love of God toward men and women, because if that love was so great toward unbelievers and sinners that he gave his only Son for their salvation, how much more generous and broad is that love toward those who have converted and changed their lives, and, as he himself says, those redeemed by his blood?

With this God shows that our faith does not justify us without the blood of Christ, nor does the blood of Christ justify us without our faith. Of the two, however, it is the blood that justifies us much more. The blood of Christ saves us much more than our faith and our works of righteousness.

Brothers and sisters, encouraged by the confidence given us by the blood of Christ, let us say: *Purify us from sin.*

- O blood of Christ, whose fruits are applied in the sacrament of confession:
Purify us from sin.
- O blood of Christ, who enlighten and support souls in the way of truth:
Purify us from sin.
- O blood of Christ, who have shown us the mercy and love of God:
Purify us from sin.
- O blood of Christ, who have enabled us to rise to God:
Purify us from sin.

May the God of peace himself sanctify us fully; and may our whole being, spirit, soul, and body, be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Our God is the God of life and of joy. His glory is a human being fully alive. Yet in life we encounter suffering and death. It is an experience that is upsetting. The believer, when suffering pain, derives strength from prayer that is intense and confident.

From the letter of James

(Jas 5:13-16)

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Reflection

When sickness strikes us, it takes us from our work and makes us sense the fragility of existence. We are called to live this reality in faith.

The Lord invites us to unite our sufferings to his, to collaborate with him in the work of salvation. Often God does not free us from our illness, but gives us a greater gift: he gives meaning to our suffering and opens our hearts to hope.

The sick Christian wants to be united profoundly to Christ, to him whom the sick person asks to receive in the

Eucharist. This sacrament of the body of the Lord offered in sacrifice and the blood offered for us, makes present in the life of the believer the value of the sacrifice of the Son of God and cultivates the seed of life immortal.

Through Communion, the sick person is also united to the Christian community.

If the sickness becomes worse, the sick person embraces and celebrates the sacrament of anointing. It is the sign that Jesus, who is familiar with suffering, is near, to help and preserve trust in God the Father and in the hope of resurrection.

Reading

From the *Expositions on the Psalms* by St. Augustine

(exposition on Psalm 100)

Sometimes a man is stricken in his own house, on his bed...Christ is your health: think therefore of Christ. Receive the cup of his saving health, *who heals all your infirmities*; if you choose, you shall gain this health.... For your life has been redeemed from corruption: rest secure now: the contract of good faith has been entered upon; no man deceives, no man circumvents, no man oppresses your Redeemer. he has made an exchange, he has already paid the price, he has poured forth His blood. The only Son of God, I say, has shed his blood for us: O soul, raise yourself, you are of so great price.... *He will redeem your life from corruption*. He has demonstrated by his example what he has promised us as a prize. He died for our sins and rose for our justification. The members should hope for what has already been shown in the head. Perhaps the one who has elevated the head to heaven will not care for the members? He will, therefore, *rescue your life from corruption*.

Prayer Litany

Let us pray to Jesus crucified and ask him to apply the liberating power of his blood on us. Let us say: *Hear us, O Lord*.

- Lord Jesus, who loved us till the end, you were handed over to death to give us back life, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- Lord Jesus, who said: “The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,” we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- Lord Jesus, you invite us to the banquet of heaven where there will be no more pain, nor weeping, nor sadness, nor separation, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.

O God, we ask you that the glory of the Precious Blood of your Son may always be manifest. Let this blood, light on our earthly pilgrimage, be our strength on the journey from earth to heaven. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND HOLY ORDERS

Paul recalls his missionary past in the church at Ephesus, marked by faithfulness to the Lord and by his dedication to the Gospel. He counsels the presbyters to exercise pastoral care and oversight.

From the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 20:17–19,28)

From Miletus [Paul] sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. 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.

Reflection

With the coming of Christ into the world, the old priesthood ceased, and a new priesthood began, with the Son of God as its head. Jesus is the high priest, perfect in every way, through whom perfect worship can be given to the heavenly Father. He offers himself as a sacrifice of expiation for all the sins of humanity and intercedes for us.

In the last supper, Jesus formally exercises his priesthood, accomplishing, under the sacramental sign, the sacrifice that he would offer to the Father on the cross. With the command he gave the apostles: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19), he wills that his gesture be

continued in the Church on her pilgrimage. It was thus necessary that he transmit priestly power to the apostles, and that they would transmit it to others, until the end of the world.

In this way, the sacrifice of the cross can be carried out again forever.

In conferring the fullness of the priesthood on some chosen persons, Jesus continues his mission as teacher, priest, and pastor, binding the Church to himself and making holy those who believe in him.

Reading

From *The Ecclesiastical Offices* by St. Isidore

(Book 1, 18)

Christ instituted the sacrifice which Christians offer to God when he entrusted to the apostles his body and blood, as we read in the Gospel: *Jesus took the bread and the chalice, blessed them, and gave them* to the apostles. It was Melchizedek, king of Salem, who first offered this sacrament symbolically as a type of the body and blood of Christ, and he himself was first to express the mystery of such a great sacrifice in allegory, demonstrating his likeness to the Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ, the eternal priest.

Christians were commanded to celebrate this sacrifice, abandoning and ending the Jewish sacrifices, whose celebration was commanded during the slavery of the ancient people. What is done by us is that which the Lord himself does for us. He offers himself not in the morning but in the evening, after supper. Christ had to accomplish this toward the evening of the day, because that hour of sacrifice would represent the evening of the world.

Brothers and sisters, let us together invoke the blood of Jesus as we say: *Save us.*

- Blood which runs mystically on the altars:
Save us.
- Blood, light and comfort of hearts:
Save us.
- Blood, which becomes our strength by the hands of the priest:
Save us.
- Blood, which makes the ministry of every apostle fruitful:
Save us.

O Lord, give us your blood, your light, and your purification. Grant that our spirit, more than ever encompassed by the great mystery of the cross, be encouraged and sustained in its path to you. You are God and live and reign forever.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND MATRIMONY

The plan of life for the baptized includes a series of reciprocal obligations between spouses. Jesus Christ the Lord is the model and source of love.

From the letter of Paul to the Ephesians (Eph 5:21-30)

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body.

Reflection

Christian marriage reflects the union of Christ and the Church: as Christ loved the Church and gave his blood for her, making her holy, so the husband must love his wife and be loved by her in return. This love is a sanctifying force for the married couple; they carry out a work of salvation together.

The Christian family is the little church which poured out of the side of Christ and was given life by his blood. The Christian family, the little church, must fulfill the salvation brought by the cross, and it is based on sacrifice and love.

The love between spouses should reflect and be modeled on the love of Christ. With the sacrament of matrimony, this love is taken up into the divine love and is sustained and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ.

Reading

From the *Letters of St. Leo the Great*

(Letter 59)

Hence whoever does not confess the human body in Christ, must know that he is unworthy of the mystery of the Incarnation, and has no share in that sacred union of which the Apostle speaks, saying, “For we are his members, of his flesh and of his bones. For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and there shall be two in one flesh.” And explaining what was meant by this, he added, “This mystery is great, but I speak in respect to Christ and the Church.”

Therefore, from the very beginning of the human race, Christ is announced to all men as coming in the flesh. In which, as was said, “there shall be two in one flesh,” there are undoubtedly two, God and man, Christ and the Church, which issued from the Bridegroom’s flesh, when it received the mystery of redemption and regeneration, water and blood flowing from the side of the Crucified. For the very condition of a new creature which at baptism puts off, not the covering of true flesh, but the taint of the old condemnation, is this, that a man is made the body of Christ, because Christ also is the body of a man.

Prayer Litany

Let us direct our prayer to the Crucified and say:
Hear us, O Lord.

- For all Christian families, that they may better come to know the love of the Crucified, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That the divine blood become the source of unity in all families, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That all spouses be witnesses of the nuptial love of Christ and the Church, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.

O God, grant the gifts of your Spirit to all spouses so that they may be faithful in love and may live as witnesses to you, source of life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE BOND OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH

The apostle Paul reaffirms a common position: the bread and wine of the Eucharist are identified with Christ, and the sharing of these foods produces a shared union, so called because it has two poles, Christ and other believers.

From the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 10:16-18)

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.

Reflections

The Eucharist, the mystery of the body and blood of Christ, is the center of the Church, the bond of unity for all believers. The one faith creates a unity of minds in the truth; the one bread creates a unity of hearts in charity.

Those who approach the altar must be reconciled with their brothers and sisters; those who eat at the table of the Lord must share their goods with the needy, because Christ is present in our brothers and sisters and cannot be divided. Division is the work of the devil.

We bring the burden of our countless divisions to Christ: the division hidden within us, the division in households, the division in neighborhoods and towns, and the division among peoples. Christ brings all reality together, because Christ is love, and love unites.

Christian witness is fundamentally based on the sign of universal unity, one of the greatest fruits of the cross. From there is unleashed that new power capable of giving a new face to the world.

Reading

From the *Three Books to Monimus* by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe

This spiritual edifice of the body of Christ, which is built of love, never prays more appropriately than when that same body of Christ, the Church, offers the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the bread and of the chalice.

For this reason, we ask that all its members remain intimately connected and preserve the unity of the body through the same grace by which the Church became the body of Christ.

We ask that this be accomplished in us by the gift of that Spirit who is the unique Spirit of the Father and of the Son, because the Trinity, by its nature a holy unity, equality, and love, one and only and true God, sanctifies those whom it adopts. Truly in that unique substance of the Trinity there is unity in its origin, equality in its generation, and communion in the love of unity and of equality.

Let us raise our prayer to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who condescended to unite all the peoples of the world in himself, calling them to his holy Church. Let us say together: *Hear us, O Lord.*

- That the communion of the Eucharist, sign of fellowship in Christ, may sanctify the Church in the bond of love, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- That we may walk in a manner worth of our Christian vocation and offer to the world the witness of Gospel unity, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- That we always be compliant to the action of the Holy Spirit, author of unity in love, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

O Father, who in the unique sacrifice of your Son have acquired for yourself a people of adoption, grant and keep always in your Church the gifts of unity and of peace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, SIGN OF UNITY

The apostle Paul emphasizes Jesus' role of making peace and creating unity. Through his death he has abolished every barrier to create one new humanity.

From the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians (Eph 1:13, 17-20)

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Reflection

Human beings have always sought to be united. Their very nature calls them to feel like brothers and stimulates them to form one great family.

God offers the Church to all as a sign and instrument of unity. It is a sign because it proclaims the message of love of its Founder. It is the living testimony of that unity in love that Christ asks of the Father before he faces the supreme sacrifice. Reconciliation, brought to completion in the death of Christ, has made peace and union with God.

Thus, in the blood of Christ, our peace, the order of a new humanity is born. The citizenship of God transcends the boundaries of city and region and extends the bond

of fellowship all the way to the angels. Christians, as members of the divine family, become the dearly beloved children of God and have the right to the rich heritage that their Father lavishes on them.

The social nucleus of the family of God is seen as a structure: the apostles and prophets are the foundation, and Christ is the cornerstone.

Reading

From the *Against Fabian* of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe
(Book 8, 19-20)

The gift of love allows us to be what the sacrament celebrates in mystery. Regarding this, the apostle Paul says: *Because there is one bread we, although many, are one body* (1 Cor 10:17).

In remembering his death, our Savior wanted us to ask for that which he asked for us: *Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one* (Jn 17:11).

We ask this for ourselves, therefore, when we offer the body and blood of Christ. This was the prayer that the Savior recited for his faithful ones, showing that we, in the moment of sacrifice, must above all ask the one who, in establishing the pattern of our sacrifices, deigned to ask this as our high priest. But that which we ask, that is, to be one in the Father and in the Son, we receive through the unity of spiritual grace. The holy Church, while it prays in the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ that the Holy Spirit be sent to her, is obviously asking for the gift of love, with which it can preserve the unity of the Spirit with the bond of peace.

Prayer Litany

Brothers and sisters, we entreat God's unfaltering goodness, asking that he preserve us always in unity. Let us say together: *You are our peace, Lord.*

- Send your Holy Spirit on us, that we may be visibly united in one body:

You are our peace, Lord.

- You have redeemed us by the regenerating bath of baptism and the blood of the cross; give to all of us unity in our hearts:

You are our peace, Lord.

- You who are the author of our freedom and our salvation, grant that those whom you have redeemed with the shedding of your blood may live for you as a sign of unity in the world:

You are our peace, Lord.

O Lord, protect your holy Church throughout the whole world, gathered by the passion and glorious blood of your Son, and grant her a sure defense against all the perils of the world. May she always be an instrument of your peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST PURIFIES OUR CONSCIENCE

The author of the letter to the Hebrews offers a contrast between the old and new temples, to emphasize the definitive efficacy of the sacrifice of Jesus.

From the letter to the Hebrews

(Heb 9:11, 12-14)

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come... 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!

Reflection

The blood of Christ can act within our consciences to purify and free them from sin, that is, from that source of pollution that frustrates all hope, making a person a slave, and thus unable to move forward.

Already in the Old Testament, sacrifices of purification were offered for the priests, the people, and the temple. These sacrifices find their complete fulfillment in Christ. As high priest, he establishes the single grand sacrifice of his body and blood, infinitely valuable, and entrusts it to the new people of God. The power present in this sacrifice takes away sins and makes holy, and it is the foundation of peace and new communion with God and other persons.

The sacrifice is fulfilled in the shedding of blood.

Thus, guilt is wiped away from human existence: *They have washed their garments, making them white with the blood of the Lamb* (Rev 7:14), because truly the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin (1 Jn 1:7; cf. Rev 1:5).

Reading

From the writings of St. Gaspar del Bufalo

(Cf. *Standing at the Cross*, pp. 18–19)

To adore the inestimable price of our redemption is the most moving theme that I can propose to you! From that price, the treasures of wisdom and sanctification have come to us; from that price, liberation from the pains of hell. Through that price and by the love of Jesus one can, by the power of the divine blood, possess the holy glory of heaven!...

Thanks to the application of this inestimable price by which we are redeemed, let the sinful soul find the sacred and religious motivation with which to hope for mercy and forgiveness. Let the penitent find in it an exhortation to virtue and holiness; and finally, let the just person find the burning zeal to save souls for the Lord...

Reminding people of such an important devotion stirs them to rise from the fatal sleep of spiritual death that oppresses them...

Now I understand why in the Old Testament the Lord was pleased with the blood of the victims, since it prefigured the blood of the Lamb shed completely in the fullness of time on the altar of the Cross. *If the blood of goats and young bulls sanctifies the defiled, how much more will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences* (Heb 9:13)?

May the devotion to the Divine blood draw our souls near to the Divine Heart of Jesus.

With faith in the power of the blood of Christ, let us together pray and say: *Hear us, O Lord.*

– For the holy Church of God, that she be purified by the blood of Christ and always shine ever more with charity and zeal, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

– That the blood of Christ awaken in all the need for repentance and salvation, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

– For those who suffer, that they know how to unite their suffering to the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

O God, you have redeemed all humanity in the Precious Blood of your only-begotten Son; preserve your work of mercy in us so that, continually recalling the mystery of our salvation, we can obtain its fruits. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, EXPIATION AND PROPITIATION

In the Old Testament, the high priest would sprinkle the blood of the victims on the propitiatory, that is the gold covering of the ark of the covenant, to reestablish the covenant relationship broken by sins. Today, God offers pardon for sins and reconciliation through faith in Jesus crucified.

From the Letter of Paul to the Romans

(Rom 3:23-26)

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.

Reflection

When we think how Christ has atoned for our sins and has made God once again favorable to us, we recover a sense of hope that offers the joy of collaborating with Christ in the expiation of sin. Everything converges toward the goal of being united again with God.

In the liturgies of expiation of the Old Testament, the rituals of blood had an exceptional importance, because it is the blood that atones. In the New Testament, the

one atoning sacrifice of Christ replaces those. Thus, the concept of the atoning power of blood, a fundamental element of every atoning sacrifice, finds its full and definitive significance in the death of Christ. His blood has really accomplished what the ancient rituals could only signify.

The Letter to the Hebrews presents the high priest who enters the Holy of Holies with the atoning blood, a figure foreshadowing Christ who, with his own blood, enters heaven to obtain the redemption of humanity, giving back to the sinner the possibility and hope of gaining access to God.

Reading

Commentary on the *Letter to the Romans* of St. Primasius of Hadrumentum

God put [Jesus] forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood (Rom 3:25). He emphasizes that God gives gratuitously, so that no one may lose hope nor take pride in one's own merits, because the atonement and remission of sins are given through the blood of Christ. This was symbolized by the blood of victims offered in the Old Testament for the sins of the people. For this reason, it says that he manifested his justice, because he kept patience with us while awaiting our repentance. He thus accomplishes the mercy of remission of sin, while the sinless one suffers, since God does all things with justice.

The devil has rightly lost the debtor, because he has unjustly killed the innocent one.

So, God has willed to reveal the justice that is born of faith, that is Christ, in our present time. He alone was

found to be just along with what he justified, because he did not know sin and therefore condemned sins.

Prayer Litany

Stirred by our faith in Jesus, who is atonement and redemption for us, let us say: *We thank you, Lord.*

- Because you were offered to the Father for us, a victim of atonement for our sins:
We thank you, Lord.
- Because with your blood you restore our trust in God:
We thank you, Lord.
- Because you give us sensitivity to the needs of our brothers and sisters:
We thank you, Lord.

O Jesus, through your blood you entered the sanctuary of God and became for us the new and living way to reach heaven. Restore our hope in that future which you willed to inaugurate by means of your death and resurrection. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST REVEALS GOD'S LOVE

God is love, and he judges better than our heart, that is, than our conscience. He knows us well and knows that we love him. He is a judge who is filled with love, and each person matters to him.

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 3:14-18)

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Reflection

At the most profound core of existence, God is love. Jesus revealed that love when he came to earth. The Father sent him to us as the sacrificial victim to save us from sin. In this God is revealed as love. Human history is wonderfully interwoven with the history of God's love for us, a merciful and fatherly love.

The exalted Jesus, put on the cross, is introduced again to the glory of the Father. To be saved, one must gaze on Christ exalted on the cross, that is, believe that he is the only Son. Then one can receive purification

though the water flowing from his pierced side, through marveling at and entering the great realm of divine love.

We must be persuaded of how great God's love for us is, so that hopelessness does not prevent us from being raised to God. The great sign of the cross was needed to remove any possibility that we would not believe in the love of God. God has acted in our lives to make us grow closer to him with the power of love.

Reading

From the *Letters* of St. Catherine of Siena

(Letters 4, 13 & 55)

One cannot see true love if the soul does not contemplate the boundless goodness of God, who fainted on the wood of the most holy cross, where only love held him bound.

We cannot doubt this love if we gaze at the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb, because Christ, exposed, suffering, and afflicted by thirst on the cross, shows us that the eternal Father loves us beyond understanding. Indeed, while we had become enemies through the sins we committed, he gave us his only begotten Son, who gave his life for us, running like a lover to the shameful death of the cross, for our salvation.

Do you see, therefore, the blood that removes every doubt we could have?

When our memory is filled with the blood of Christ crucified, the intellect immediately contemplates that memory where it encounters the blood, and there sees the fire of divine charity, boundless love, soaked with blood, poured out and given to us.

The soul drowns in this blood that drowns and kills every stubborn will that often rebels against its Creator. It casts from

itself all egotistical love and clothes itself with the eternal will of God, the will that it tasted and found in the blood.

Prayer Litany

God has showed us his great love by sending his only begotten Son, so that we would have life through him. For this reason, let us say with confidence: *Hear us, O Lord.*

- That we may come to recognize the signs of God’s love on our journey, let us pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That we may know to look on the Crucified One, only source of life, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That the love of God poured out in us may always strengthen our Christian hope, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.

Almighty and eternal God, your immense goodness surpasses the merits and requests of those who pray to you. Pour out your mercy on us, so that we may be ever more aware of the gift of your presence in our midst. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST IMPELS US TO LOVE

God the Father sent his only-begotten Son into the world as a sacrificial victim to save us from sin. In so doing, God revealed himself as the Love that urges us continually to love him in return and to lavish our love on our brothers and sisters.

From the First Letter of John

(Jn 4:7–10)

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Reflection

The language of the apostle John emphasizes that God is the source of the love that Christians must demonstrate.

Love sets apart the person who “knows God” from the one who does not know God. It is the death of Christ in atonement for sins that becomes the example of this commitment that Christians are to follow. The love of God can be known only through Jesus, who came for the salvation of the world.

This love must prevail over all emotions and is expressed in one’s choosing to conform totally and generously to the will of the Most High. The redemption won by Jesus is the fruit of his submission to the Father’s

plan. The Christian who loves becomes the ever-stronger sign of a God who had not abandoned us, but who watches over us and continues to do so with loving care.

The divine blood shows how one can truly be in the heart of the Almighty. It is the source of activity for every Christian, the revelation of the presence of God in human history.

Reading

From the *Expositions on the Psalms* of St. Augustine (Ps 90)

We desire and we love. The one whom we desire is coming.

He gave us such a great pledge: the bride does not fear being abandoned by the bridegroom. The bridegroom will not renege on his pledge. What is the pledge that he has given? He has shed his blood. What pledge has he given? He has given the Holy Spirit. It is certain, therefore, that he loves.

That we would love him to our utmost! *No one has a greater love than to give one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15:3), but how can we give our love for him? *As Christ has given his love for us, so we also must give our life for our friends* (1 Jn 3:16). Whoever gives their life for a brother or sister, gives it for Christ. In the same way, when one feeds a sister or brother, one feeds Christ: *Whatever you have done to one of these littlest ones, you have done to me* (Mt 25:40).

Let us love him and imitate him! You are engrossed in earthly things, because what you love is on earth. If you are carried up to heaven, there will your heart be.

Prayer Litany

The love of Christ has united us. Let us pray, saying:
Where there is charity and love, God is there.

– Let us love the living God present in our midst, and in God's name let us love one another with sincere hearts:

Where there is charity and love, God is there.

– Let there be no division among us, but in love let us abide as a sign of the divine goodness that has been poured out upon us:

Where there is charity and love, God is there.

– May the peace and communion of Christ always reign in the Church, his community in the world:

Where there is charity and love, God is there.

O God, you have prepared unseen benefits for those who love you: instill in us a profound love, that loving you above all things and loving our neighbor out of love for you, we may attain the blessings beyond all understanding you have promised. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE RESURRECTION

The root of death is sin. Those who believe in Christ are dead to sin and live with him, and they have also risen from the dead. This is the power of baptism. They are also removed from the power of sin to live with the risen Jesus, in a new relationship with God.

From the Letter of Paul to the Romans (Rom 6:3–5, 10–11)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his... The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

The resurrection of Christ is necessary and inseparable from the entire Christian mystery. It is the logical complement of the cross, and thus of the entirety of redemption.

This was announced by the apostles as the beginning and source of our resurrection from sin. This beginning comes in baptism and is renewed every time we are raised up from falling through faith in the restorative power of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus, the beginning and type of our resurrection, requires that we rouse ourselves from a lukewarm and mediocre life to a more Christian life, more committed and aware, more fervent and spiritual. We enter into Jesus crucified in baptism, and now we can live a new life, awaiting the fullness of life that was inaugurated by his resurrection.

Reading

From *The Four Virtues of Charity* of St. Quodvultdeus.

(10, 1–4, 5–7)

Let the soul that has been seized by the force of this charity rise and flee from Egypt, that is, from the desire of this world, and direct itself to the Red Sea, that is, to the baptism of Christ. It is red because it has been reddened by the blood of Christ. The enemies follow: sins along with the devil, their author. Whom do you fear? They rage even to the water. You will advance, they also will advance behind you. The water turns back on them for their ruin, but it will benefit you for your salvation. It will inundate them, but will wash you; it will condemn them, but will liberate you.

Later you will draw honey from the rock that will slake your thirst. *The rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4). You will taste and see *that the Lord is sweet* (Ps 34:9). And if the force of charity that *all hope for* (1 Cor 13:7) rises in you, then you must pass through the desert: that is, that you make use of this world as if you are not using it, because you know that you are a pilgrim on this way, if you desire to enter the promised land. This is the land of which the prophet sings and says: *I believe that I will see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living* (Ps 27:13).

Just as the apostles were gathered with Mary, we also are gathered and united in prayer. The risen Jesus is in our midst and presents our requests to the Father. Let us say with faith: *Keep us in your love.*

- For the Church: that with the power of the Holy Spirit she may know how to accept her portion of suffering to witness to Christ and to work with Christ for the salvation of all, we pray:

Keep us in your love.

- We are the assembly of those who believe in you: help us to proclaim you, Lord, with our words and with our lives, we pray:

Keep us in your love.

- For each one of us: that renewed by the paschal mystery, we may always grow more in the knowledge and love of Christ, we pray:

Keep us in your love.

Father, hear the prayer of Christ your Son: keep us, who believe in him, in your love, and grant that we accomplish the task that you have given us in this world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE ASCENSION

Jesus is about to complete his exodus to the Father. At the end of the liturgy of his life, he blesses his disciples who are to leave their attitude of glorious adoration to begin traveling the streets of the world to spread the Gospel. The journey of Jesus finishes in the heart of the one he called his Father.

From the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 1:9–11)

And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Reflection

The ascension of the Lord to the Father is the prelude to the long ascension of regenerated humanity. It is the feast of the new reign where Jesus exercises his lordship and to which we journey during our whole earthly pilgrimage.

The ascension is the acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ on the part of the Father. The triumphant humanity of Christ enters heaven. His blood ascends with him and shines before the throne of God as a trophy of victory, not only as the prize due him, but because the gates are opened to us. The cry of love of the divine

blood continues to echo in the heavens, imploring the mercy of the Father.

Ascending once and for all to glory, Jesus acquired for himself and for all of us the right and the dignity of inhabitants of the heavenly dwelling. He has taken possession of heaven, and this is a guarantee that we, if we wish, can arrive there by the path he has opened. The ascension becomes a prefiguring of the Parousia, because the end of Jesus' time on earth anticipates the end of the Church at the end of time.

Reading

From the *Commentaries on John* of Origen (Book 6, 56)

And when he comes, loaded with victory and with trophies, with his body which has risen from the dead — for what other meaning can we see in the words, “I am not yet ascended to my Father,” and “I go to my Father,” — then there are certain powers which say, *Who is this that comes from Edom, from Bozrah in garments stained crimson, this beautiful one?* (Is 63:1) Then those who escort him say to those that are upon the heavenly gates, *Lift up your gates, you rulers, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in.* But they ask again, seeing his right hand red with blood and his whole person covered with the marks of His valor: *Why are your robes red, and your garments like theirs who tread the wine press?* (Is 63:2). And to this he answers, *I have trodden the press alone* (Is 63:3). He thus needed to wash *his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes* (Gn 49:11) For when he had taken up our infirmities and born our illnesses, he bore the sin of the whole world.

Prayer Litany

The Father has placed all things in the hands of the Lord Jesus, risen and ascended to heaven. He intercedes for us. With faith let us say: *Lead us to you, Lord.*

– For the Church: that with the power of the Spirit she may be a credible witness to the glory we await, we pray:

Lead us to you, Lord.

– That hope for a new world may commit us to prepare it day by day with fruitful love toward our brothers and sisters, we pray:

Lead us to you, Lord.

– For our deceased sisters and brothers, that all may participate in the glory of Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Father, we pray:

Lead us to you, Lord.

O Lord, until you return, we want to remain here and attend you like faithful servants and prudent virgins. We want to keep our lamps lit with faith and charity, and to offer our sacrifice of praise to you each day. Grant this, you who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND PENTECOST

On Pentecost, the promised Spirit of the risen one descended on the gathered community, making of it a messianic people. They were given the power to announce the word of God to persons of diverse languages. The missionary Church is born.

From the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 2:1–4)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Reflection

From the beginning, the new family of God would gather to celebrate the praises of the Lord with the Eucharist. They discovered their reason for being and the goal of their assemblies in offering the sacrifice of the new covenant.

In this sacrifice, the Passover is renewed. It is given to us by the risen Christ so that we are born again to new life. In it we live Pentecost again, and the Holy Spirit was given to us to make it possible to continue his activity in the world. From this sacrifice our lives acquire all their strength to become a living holocaust and to transform us into victims and priests with Jesus, eternal priest and victim.

The Holy Spirit, coming down upon us, applies the merits of the blood of Christ to us. In the Holy Spirit the Holy Trinity takes possession of and dwells in our souls, and the blood of Jesus establishes our movement toward God. The whole supernatural order of grace has its foundation in the Spirit and in the blood of Jesus: only in the love of that blood and in the gift of that Spirit will we be able to raise ourselves to God.

Reading

From *On the Holy Easter* of St. John Chrysostom

(Homily 2)

When the spotless victim suffers for us, death that came from humanity when it was first formed, is now dissolved, and the firstborn that is in all of us is saved. The spotless blood becomes a saving sign, and God, gazing on it, saves those who are anointed by faith.

This victim is completely holy, handed over to death and destruction by the ignorance of the godless, but taken up by God's plan as a holy sacrifice offered to the Father by his own will. Christ *presented himself* to the Father for the Church *as an offering and sacrifice with a sweet fragrance* (Eph 5:2).

With the blood shed for us we receive the Holy Spirit, because the blood and the Spirit are united, so that through the blood that is of our nature we can receive the Holy Spirit that is not of our nature, and by means of the Spirit we deny death admittance into our lives.

Let us together tune to the Spirit of God and say:
Come, Holy Spirit.

- Holy Spirit, send us a ray of your holy light:
Come, Holy Spirit.
- Perfect counselor, sweet guest of the soul, gentlest solace:
Come, Holy Spirit.
- Blessed light, dwell in the inmost hearts of your faithful:
Come, Holy Spirit.
- Give your faithful who trust in you alone your holy gifts:
Come, Holy Spirit,

O God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the outpouring of your Holy Spirit, so that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**THE MEDIATION OF MARY
THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST**

Christian faith professes one God and recognizes Jesus as the only mediator. He is the perfect human being whose destiny is that of all women and men, for whom he gave himself as a pledge of liberation.

From the Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council

(Par. 60)

There is but one Mediator, as we know from the words of the apostle, “for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all” (1 Tm 2:5–6). The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. For all the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.

Reflection

Jesus is the source of all graces. Mary is the channel who conveys them. She distributes the Precious Blood which comes down/ descends from Calvary on humanity and which flows with delight, making us fruitful with its blessings.

Mary’s function was not simply to provide flesh for the Redeemer, flesh destined to be sacrificed on Golgotha,

but also to care for and nurture the victim and to bring him to the altar at his hour.

All benefits within us are the fruit of the prayers and mediation of the heavenly Virgin. She brings to humanity the drops of that divine blood to which is linked every action worthy of merit. In the Eucharistic sacrifice Mary unites herself to the divine victim who offers himself to the eternal Father, in view of the needs of all men and women. She brings the power of her tender mediation to comfort her children.

Reading

From the *Homilies* of Paul the Deacon of Varnefrido

(Homily 2 on the Assumption)

Let us therefore exult and be glad in her, because in heaven Mary is the faithful advocate for us all. While her Son is the mediator between God and humanity, she, on the other hand, is the mediator between her Son and humanity. And as is fitting for the Mother of mercy, she is all mercy for us; she knows how to share human weaknesses, because she knows well of what we are made. Precisely for this reason she never ceases to intercede for us in the presence of her Son.

Thus, my beloved, we rejoice wholeheartedly in our powerful, loving, and faithful advocate. Let us venerate her with fitting deference, with fitting praises together with those bands of holy angels. Let us plead before her together with all who inhabit the world.

Even when our infirmities are great, we do not despair of her mercy.

Blessed be God in his vast mercy. He who lives in the heavens has given us an advocate so powerful, so merciful, and so familiar with his majesty.

Prayer Litany

Filled with love and confidence in Mary, let us pray together and say: *Our mother, intercede for us.*

- That we may always strive for holiness, we pray:
Our mother, intercede for us.
- That the merits of Jesus crucified be applied daily to our soul, we pray:
Our mother, intercede for us.
- That we may pray to you every moment in our lives, we pray:
Our mother, intercede for us.

O Father, supported by the maternal intercession of Mary, we offer you the sacrifice of reconciliation and praise, that it may obtain pardon of our sins and transform our lives into an a perpetual act of thanksgiving. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MARY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REDEEMING WORK OF HER SON

The apostle John reports the presence of Mary at the foot of the cross. There she is proclaimed the spiritual mother, the new Eve, for believers, who are represented by the beloved disciple.

From the Gospel of John

(Jn 19:25–27)

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Reflection

Mary is closely linked with the work of salvation accomplished by her Son. The blood of Christ deeply moved her: it was she who gave him that blood. It was human blood, but from the moment that Jesus made it his, it became the blood of God.

The presence of Mary at the foot of the cross says something more than a mother's participation in the sufferings of her Son: she is accomplishing the final act of offering and giving her final assent to an entire life in harmony with the saving plan of God.

Only the sufferings and death of Christ have saved us. But God freely willed that the redeemed would in their time place a drop of their own sufferings in the chalice of the sufferings of Christ. Above all the redeemed, Mary

has united herself to the sufferings of Christ with the sufferings of a most tender and sensitive mother. In the supreme offering of Christ dying on the cross, his Mother gave her entire self, because the flesh and blood of Christ is the flesh and blood of Mary.

In this supreme surrender, Mary extends her maternity to all the redeemed.

Reading

From the Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council.

(Nos. 61–62)

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.

This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and anxieties, until they are led into the happiness of their true home.

God willed that the sorrowful Mother be present near her son, raised up on the cross. United in prayer, let us say together: *Hear us, O Lord.*

- For the Holy Church, that associated with Mary in the passion of Christ, she may share in the glory of the resurrection, let us pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- That we keep ourselves united to Jesus in the way of the cross, let us pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- That we may learn from Mary to fulfill the will of God, uniting ourselves to her with a child's love, we pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

- That Mary may intercede for the salvation of all people in Christ, let us pray:

Hear us, O Lord.

Almighty God, in your hidden plan for the salvation of humanity will to unite the Virgin Mary to the redemption accomplished by her Son, grant that we may receive its fruits in abundance. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

On November 21, 1964, during the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI solemnly proclaimed Mary as “Mother of the Church.”

From the “Discourse on the Closing of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council” of Paul VI

The loving contemplation of the marvels that God has worked in his holy Mother must be framed in the vision of the Church. An awareness of the true Catholic doctrine on Mary will always constitute a key to the precise understanding of the mystery of Christ in the Church...

To the glory of the Virgin and for our consolation, we proclaim Mary Most Holy to be “Mother of the Church,” that is of the entire people of God.

As the divine motherhood is the basis of the special relation with Christ and with his presence in the economy of salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus, so this constitutes the principal basis for the relationship of Mary with the Church, as she is Mother of him who, from the first instant of his Incarnation in the virginal womb, united his mystical body, the Church, to himself as Head. Mary, therefore, as Mother of Christ, is also Mother of the faithful and of all pastors, that is, of the Church.

Reflection

The title of Mother of the Church is a summary of her great love. She is the mother who gave the Church the

Redeemer, so that he could be for all people the light of truth and an instrument of salvation, being born in the heart with faith and grace until reaching the spiritual dimensions bound with the plan of God. Mary gave us Jesus in a burst of love for God and for women and men whom she tenderly embraces in her maternal heart.

She has seen our souls in the light of the Divine Blood. Her love for humanity welled up within her through the Holy Spirit, who prompted Jesus to shed his Blood and who filled and still fills the heart of the Mother with indescribable tenderness toward the object of the divine sacrifice. Just as the blood of Jesus was the link that binds the eternal Father with us, even so it links his Mother to us as well.

During her life, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Mary understood profoundly that we are the fruit of the divine blood, and we are destined by grace to become adopted children of the Father and heirs of his glory. The eternity of the Virgin is filled with her affectionate care, so that souls never lose the mantle of the Precious Blood, or if they do lose it, that they acquire it again. Conversions always bear the sign of the discreet but effective intervention of the Mother of the Lord.

After Christ and in virtue of Christ, Mary is at the summit of salvation.

Prayer Litany

Let us turn to Mary in prayer and say: *Hear us, Mother of the Church.*

- That our lives always bear a lively witness to the Gospel, we ask you:
Hear us, Mother of the Church.
- That we may know how to imitate your apostolic zeal for the salvation of souls, we ask you:
Hear us, Mother of the Church.
- That the blood of Christ transform our lives, we ask you:
Hear us, Mother of the Church.

Almighty God, in your hidden plan for our salvation you will to unite the Virgin Mary to the redemption accomplished by your only-begotten Son; grant that we be able to enjoy her intercession before Jesus, so that we may adore and serve you faithfully. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GLORY OF THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, describes his grand vision of the glory of Jesus, the Lamb that was slain.

From the Book of Revelation of St. John (Rev 5:6. 9–11. 12–14)

Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered...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."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels...singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor 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 honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Reflection

The Lamb appears with the signs of his redemptive sacrifice; he is standing, to indicate Christ risen and glorified, but as if slaughtered, an allusion to his passion.

The song that was sung is new, because the time of

salvation is new. This song celebrates the love of Jesus the Lamb who sacrificed himself on the cross for the redemption of humanity.

In heaven Jesus continues to offer his body and blood, because he possesses an eternal priesthood and can offer eternal salvation to those who through him are drawn near to God. He is always anxious to intercede for us. Even in heaven he remains the victim who atones for the sins of the world.

St. John, in describing the heavenly homeland, says metaphorically that it will need neither sun nor moon, because the splendor of God illuminates it and its lamp is the Lamb. The Precious Blood, ablaze in the spotless Lamb, is thus the source of joy and of an indescribable delight of love for the blessed, as it is the source of glory for the divine Redeemer, merited by his passion and death.

Reading

From the *Commentary on Revelation* by St. Primasius

(Book 2, ch. 5)

I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders (Rev 5:6). There is the throne, there are the living creatures and the elders, or the Church. In fact, in the midst of the Church is that which is described afterward: *A Lamb standing, as if it had been slaughtered* (Rev 5:6). Every time Christ slain is preached in the Church, it seems as if this same Lamb is slaughtered for the sin of the world. The living creatures and the elders are the Church, when they say: "You have ransomed us by your blood" (Cf. Rev 5:9). It is for the Church to proclaim this.

Through grace the heavenly host of angels can celebrate these things in a fitting manner, with a

proclamation of praise united to that of the living things
and elders, rejoicing in such a great gift of our redemption.

Canticle to the Blood of Christ

From the *Writings* of St. Maria De Mattias

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.

Prayer Litany

Let us bring our prayer to the Lord and say:
Hear us, O Lord.

- That we continue to understand better the work
accomplished by Jesus crucified, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That we may know how to witness to the suffering
life of Christ with our own sufferings, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.
- That we be able to one day enjoy the glory of heaven,
gift of the divine Redeemer, we pray:
Hear us, O Lord.

O God, grant us your children redeemed by the blood
of Jesus to love intensely on this earth and later to share
in your glory in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Precious Blood PRAYERS

SEVEN OFFERINGS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for the glory of your name, for the coming of your kingdom, and for the salvation of all people.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
- L. Praise and thanksgiving be evermore to Jesus.
- R. Who with his Blood has saved us.

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for the spread of the Church, for Pope N., for bishops, priests, and religious, and for the sanctification of all the people of God.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for the conversion of sinners, for the loving acceptance of your word, and for the union of all Christians.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for our civil authorities, for the strengthening of public morals, and for peace and justice among all nations.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for the sanctification of our work and our suffering, for the poor, the sick and the afflicted, and for all who rely on our prayers.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for our own special needs, both spiritual and temporal, for those of our relatives, friends and benefactors, and also for those of our enemies.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen..

Eternal Father, we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross and offered daily on the altar, for those who are to die this day, for the souls in purgatory, and for our final union with Christ in glory.

- L. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

- L. Glory to the Blood of Jesus.
- R. Now and forever. Amen.

LITANY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven,

Have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God, the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, One God,

Blood of Christ, only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father,

Save us.

Blood of Christ, Incarnate Word of God,

Blood of Christ, of the New and Eternal Testament,

Blood of Christ, falling upon the earth in the Agony,

Blood of Christ, shed profusely in the Scourging,

Blood of Christ, flowing forth in the Crowning with Thorns,

Blood of Christ, poured out on the Cross,

Blood of Christ, price of our salvation,

Blood of Christ, without which there is no forgiveness,

Blood of Christ, Eucharistic drink and refreshment of souls,

Blood of Christ, stream of mercy,

Blood of Christ, victor over demons,

Blood of Christ, courage of martyrs,

Blood of Christ, strength of confessors,

Blood of Christ, bringing forth virgins,

Blood of Christ, help of those in peril,

Blood of Christ, relief of the burdened,

Blood of Christ, solace in sorrow,

Blood of Christ, hope of the penitent,

Blood of Christ, consolation of the dying,

Blood of Christ, peace and tenderness of hearts,

Blood of Christ, pledge of eternal life,

Blood of Christ, freeing souls from purgatory,

Blood of Christ, most worthy of all glory and honor,

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

Have mercy on us.

L. You have redeemed us, O Lord, in your Blood.

R. *And made us, for our God, a kingdom.*

Let us pray:

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 this present life, so that we may rejoice in its fruits forever in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPLET OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

This devotion consists of seven mysteries in which we meditate on the seven principal sheddings of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus. The *Our Father* is said five times after each mystery, except the last, when it is said three times, in all, the *Our Father* is said thirty-three times in honor of the thirty-three years of Our Lord's life on earth.

L. O God, come to my assistance.
R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

L. Glory be to the Father ...
R. As it was in the beginning ...

First Mystery: The Circumcision of Jesus

"When the eighth day arrived for his circumcision, the name Jesus was given the child." (Lk 2:21) (The biblical readings given here are to be considered examples which can be substituted by others.)

Pray 5 Our Fathers ...
Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...
Then the invocation:

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.
R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Second Mystery: The Agony in the Garden

"In his anguish he prayed with all the greater intensity, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Lk 22:44)

Pray 5 Our Fathers ...
Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...

Then the invocation:
L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.
R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Third Mystery: The Scourging at the Pillar

"At that, he released Barabbas to them. Jesus, however, he first had scourged." (Mt 27:26)

Pray 5 Our Fathers ...
Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...
Then the invocation:

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.
R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Fourth Mystery: The Crowning with Thorns

"They stripped off his clothes and wrapped him in a scarlet military cloak. Weaving a crown out of thorns they fixed it on his head." (Mt 27:28-29)

Pray 5 Our Fathers ...
Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...
Then the invocation:

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.
R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Fifth Mystery: The Carrying of the Cross

"In the end, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called the Place of the Skull." (Jn 19:16-17)

Pray 5 Our Fathers ...
Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...
Then the invocation:

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.
R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Sixth Mystery: The Crucifixion on Calvary

"When they came to Skull Place, as it was called, they crucified him there ... Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.'" (Lk 23:33-34)

Pray 3 Our Fathers ...

Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...

Then the invocation:

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.

R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Seventh Mystery: The Piercing of the Sacred Side

"One of the soldiers thrust a lance into his side and immediately blood and water flowed out." (Jn 19:34)

Pray 3 Our Fathers

Pray 1 Glory be to the Father ...

L. We beseech you, therefore, help your servants.

R. Whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood.

Let us pray:

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 this present life, so that we may rejoice in its fruits forever in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORNING OFFERING

Jesus, in union with your most Precious Blood, poured out on the Cross and offered daily on the altar, I offer you today my prayers, works, joys, sorrows and sufferings for the praise of your Holy Name and all the desires of your Sacred Heart; in reparation for sin, for the conversion of sinners, the union of all Christians, and our final union with You in heaven.

MORNING PRAYER IN HONOR OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

We are all washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb,
Our sins forgiven, our hearts strengthened, our lives
given purpose.

Grant to me this day, O saving God, the power of the
Precious Blood

So that I might see the violence and disharmony around
and within me.

Move me to bring your lifegiving love, your
reconciling power

To those who do not know you and cannot hear your
voice in the events of their lives.

May this day be one of praise and honor

To the saving Blood of Jesus.

Amen.

ETERNAL FATHER

Eternal Father, I offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus
Christ, in atonement for my sins, in supplication for the
holy souls in purgatory, and for the needs of holy Church.



MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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