
SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 6, 2021 B

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving and nourishing God, we gather together to contemplate the great gift of the Holy Eucharist. Open our eyes to the holy presence of Jesus in our eucharistic celebrations, and now open our minds and hearts to the message you wish to convey to us in the Scriptures we are about to share. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: (Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.) *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: The theme of covenant can be found in all three readings. The Exodus reading gives us a dramatic account of the ratification of the Sinai covenant between God and Israel. The second reading speaks about Jesus as the High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant. In the Gospel, we listen to Mark's account of the institution of the Eucharist which took place during the Passover meal. Through his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus established a new covenant with all of humankind. A new rite—the Eucharist—was instituted, which would be a perpetual reminder of the intimate bond that now exists between God and his people. In the Eucharist, Jesus shares his life with us.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the First Reading, the Psalm, and the Second Reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Exodus 24:3-8

When people negotiate an agreement with one another, there are a variety of ways in which the agreement is sealed or ratified. In some cases, a person's word is sufficient. In other cases, the agreement is finalized with a handshake. Today, most serious agreements are sealed with the signing of legal documents in the presence of witnesses and a notary public.

We have a dramatic account of how Moses, representing his people, *sealed their Sinai covenant* with God. First, Moses recounts to the Israelites "*all the words and ordinances of the Lord.*" And the people with one voice respond: "*We will do everything that the Lord has told us.*" Then Moses *writes down* the words he has just spoken to the people and repeats them aloud. Once again the people say: "*All that the Lord has said we will hear and do.*" The writing down and repeated reading of the agreement emphasize the seriousness of the covenant that the people are entering into. With the terms having been clearly *stated and accepted*, the covenant is formally sealed with a blood ritual. Half of the animal's blood is poured upon the altar, which symbolizes God, and half is sprinkled on the people. God and people become "blood relatives." They share life and pledge fidelity to each other. Using blood in the sealing of the covenant is an affirmation of the people's acceptance to "take my life if I break this covenant."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 116

This psalm is chosen for its eucharistic overtones of thanksgiving and its image of taking up a cup. In its original context, it was a prayer of thanksgiving for deliverance from a life-threatening situation.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 9:11-15

Like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, Jesus, now our great High Priest, enters not an earthly sanctuary but a heavenly sanctuary to perform the rite of purification. Unlike the earthly priest who goes

into the sanctuary again and again to make repeated atonement, Christ enters, once and for all, in a definitive act of reconciliation. In addition, the blood offered is not the blood of an animal, but the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Fr. Terence Keegan writes:

The feast of Unleavened Bread lasted a full week, beginning with the day of preparation for Passover. All the preparations for the Passover meal, including the sacrifice of the lambs, had to be completed by sundown, the end of the Jewish day. That evening the Passover meal would be eaten. It was eaten every year as a remembrance of Israel's liberation from Egypt. This final Passover meal, eaten by Jesus and the Twelve, becomes a symbol of our liberation from every kind of bondage. Jesus is here sharing with his disciples the full meaning of what he will accomplish on the cross.

In the Semitic understanding, the term "body" meant much more than the flesh as distinct from the blood. It meant the entire being, physical as well as mental. It referred to the whole person. What Jesus means by the words "this is my body" (Mark 14:22) is that his entire person is being given to nourish those who follow him.

The significance of the "blood," however, is somewhat different. "Blood" is the bearer of life. Jesus will pour out his life on the cross so that all mankind can share that life. At the Last Supper, therefore, Jesus nourishes his followers with his entire being and enters into a New Covenant with them by allowing them to drink his very life. Jesus' final comment is primarily an assurance to the disciples that the banquet to which he had invited them would continue beyond the climactic events of the next day.

Though Mark's text states that Jesus died for "many," It does not mean that some are excluded, but was a term used to designate the "collectivity" of those who benefit from the service of the one and is equivalent to "all." The Church's teaching is that Jesus died for *all* people.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
2. What does the Eucharist mean to you? Why do you keep coming?
3. What helps you to be more engaged in the Mass and what hinders you?
4. What can be said to people who find the Mass boring?
5. How might your parish – or you – go about reaching out to Catholics who no longer come to the Eucharist?
6. Name 1 thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed/ act on.

JOURNALING

Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, in today's gospel you commission us to spread your message. Show me ways I can do that in my environment. Give me the courage to overcome any hesitation or fear I may have about sharing my faith with others.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: This week, try to be more conscious of how you are or can be Eucharist (a life giver) for others.

CONCLUDING WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION, THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we need to pray? Pray for a deeper appreciation of the great gift the Eucharist is for you. Pray for Catholics who no longer come to Mass, then say together the following prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER (TOGETHER)

SOUL OF CHRIST

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, heal me.
Blood of Christ, drench me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
In your wounds, shelter me.
From turning away, keep me.
From the evil one, protect me.
At the hour of my death, call me.
Into your presence, lead me,
to praise you with all your saints
For ever and ever.
Amen.

St. Ignatius of Loyola