

## **Sacred Heart Novena - 31 May to 8 June 2018**

### **HE LOVED WITH A HUMAN HEART**

#### **Day 4: Sunday, 3 June, Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ – A Covenant of Love**

Readings: Ex 24:3-8, Heb 9:11-15; Responsorial Ps: Ps 116; Gospel: Mk 14:12-16, 22-16

Today, Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. We are now on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of our novena, our communal reflection on Jesus who loved with a human heart. Today, we encounter Him who gives us his body as bread and his blood as wine that we may have life in Him. In His love for us, He gives us his whole self, his whole life, that we too may be able to love as he did. Our reflection will be around words that we find in today's readings, words that are associated with today's feast – BODY which is broken and shared, BLOOD which is poured out and shed and COVENANT which is a covenant of love.

#### **BODY - BROKEN and SHARED**

Corpus Christi – the Body of Christ - What do we refer to when we speak of the body of Christ? Out of curiosity, I went to the internet and googled “Body of Christ” and clicked “images.” Many images came on my computer screen. I looked through the many images and tried to make sense of them and ended up with two clusters of images. One cluster, shows the Body of Christ as the HOST, the consecrated bread we receive when we go to communion. In the last supper as recounted to us by the evangelist Mark in today's gospel, Jesus “took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them and said “Take it, this is my body.” One meaning of the Body of Christ is the Bread, blessed, broken and shared in every Eucharistic celebration.

The second cluster of images all point to US as the Body of Christ, we, as a community of believers. The Body of Christ is also, you and me, people who, in many ways, are broken – by our own sins, by the sinfulness of others, by the sinful structures we live in, structures that we ourselves have created. Yet, it is we, the broken body of Christ, who also are the hands, the feet, the mind, the hearts of Jesus in today's world. We are His body, broken and shared.

In today's celebration, we recognise both definitions. We say “Amen” when the priest or the Eucharistic minister gives us the host saying “the Body of Christ.” At the same time, we together recite the Lord's Prayer as one body united with Him and in Him, as His one body, calling on God Our Father.

We, who receive the body of Christ, are the body of Christ, broken and shared.

#### **BLOOD - Poured OUT and SHED**

Blood is all over today's readings! In our first reading from Exodus, we see Moses sprinkling the blood of young bulls on the altar, representing God, and on the people of Israel to seal the covenant between them. In the second reading, the author of the letter to the Hebrews talks about the blood of Christ that is more able to cleanse us than the blood of goats and bulls. Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus raises the cup and says “This is my blood...which will be shed for many.” Blood is the symbol of life. As Jesus gives us his blood to drink, he shares his life with us. As we drink it, we allow the very life of Christ to flow into our veins. With St Paul, we can then say “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.” We,

who receive the blood of Christ, have the life of Christ flowing in us. Again, we note that the wine that became the blood of Christ is wine poured out and shed. The life of Christ that is flowing inside us is not meant to just stay inside us, it is meant to be shared with others. We who receive life from Christ are called to be givers of life as well.

## COVENANT OF LOVE

In the Gospel, Jesus says his blood is the blood of the covenant. The author of the letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. When we hear the word covenant, what comes to our minds? When I hear covenant, I think of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. In this covenant, Israel will be God's people and YHWH will be their God. To fulfil it, Israel has to obey the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses.

In relation to Jesus, when I hear covenant, the image that I see in my mind is that of Jesus on the cross, the biblical image of the Sacred Heart. God calls us to a relationship of love with him, through His Son, Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. This covenant is sealed with the blood of Christ himself. In return, we are asked to fulfil the one commandment that Jesus gave, so beautifully expressed in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John: "*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*" (Jn 13:34) And our love for one another will be our identifying mark: "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (Jn 13:35) Remember our story from yesterday? When he was here on earth, Jesus was the incarnation of God's love. The challenge for us is to keep this part of his memory alive through covenants of love. What images do we see around us? Couples who have been married for many years now and still very much in love with each other; maybe the volunteers of doctors without borders working in areas of war like Syria; maybe the Filipino overseas worker who works as a maid for 3 families in Italy, skyping weekly with her husband and children back home.... What are your images of the covenant of love?

Today is the Feast of Christ who has given his body and blood for us to take and receive. When we say Amen, we say Amen to our covenant of love with Him. We say Amen to loving as he loved. As we prepare ourselves to receive his body and blood later, we also recognise that many times, we have not been faithful to this covenant. But this does not stop Him from giving himself to us and so we come to him in humility.

I invite you now to pray with me the Prayer of Humble Access ...

*We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy so much as to gather the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat of the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ,  
and to drink his blood,  
that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us. Amen.*