

30. May 2024

Corpus Christi
“Jesus' love and sacrifice”

Heb 9:11-15

But now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, not made by human hands, that is, not of this created order; and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement, may restore their bodily purity. How much more will the blood of Christ, who offered himself, blameless as he was, to God through the eternal Spirit, purify our conscience from dead actions so that we can worship the living God. This makes him the mediator of a new covenant, so that, now that a death has occurred to redeem the sins committed under an earlier covenant, those who have been called to an eternal inheritance may receive the promise.

“The blood of the Lord, shed for us”. These words are very familiar to us, but they invite us again and again to reflect on their deeper meaning. Above all, we must discover more and more the attitude in which the Lord gave His life, and how He now gives us access to the fruit of His work of redemption.

The Lord offered Himself as a sacrifice!

Today, more and more we avoid talking about guilt and sin, and so we tend to fall into a more superficial view of life. There is no doubt that God's mercy is greater than our guilt, and that “*mercy can afford to laugh at judgement*” (Jas 2:13). What greater proof of this than the Cross of the Lord, from which He bends down to us sinners?

God responds to the enormity of man's guilt with the immensity of His love! And it is precisely there that we can also recognise how great our guilt is, and how horrible is the face of sin.

It is a mistake to compare sins and not to recognise their seriousness on the pretext that there are even greater sins. On the contrary, we must see sin and our guilt in contrast to the holiness of God, in whom there is no shadow of sin, who was tested in all things as we are, but committed no sin (cf. Heb 4:15). Only then will we see the true aspect of sin, and be able to see how it destroys the image of God in us.

If we understand this, it will also become clearer to us the high price at which God bought us: the blood of His own Son, who became our ransom (cf. 1 Pet 1:18-19). How great is God's love, which led Him to choose this way to redeem His creature and make him a true child of His own!

From this perspective, we can understand ever more deeply the statements about the Precious Blood of Our Lord, which cleanses us from sin. Its value comes not only from the infinite dignity of the Son of God, who shed it, but also from the great love of the Father, who gave His Son for us (cf. Jn 3:16).

Throughout the Old Testament we find prefigurations of Christ's sacrifice, so that later we could recognise its fulfilment in Jesus. The Sacrificial Lamb in the New Covenant is not an animal; it is God Himself! And this Lamb went up to the altar voluntarily, in conformity with the Will of the Heavenly Father; unlike the animal, which is simply forced to suffer its "fate".

The voluntariness of the sacrifice of the Son of God reminds us again and again of God's love. The Redemption of mankind is not a natural process, which happens according to certain laws, but an act of love consciously performed by the Holy Trinity.

Now, in the Holy Mass this act of love is liturgically actualised, and in it we can receive the fruits of the Redemption at the heavenly banquet. God's love goes so far as to give us Himself as food, as we hear in the Gospel of this Feast, in which Jesus institutes the Eucharist (Mk 14:12-16.22-26)!

The permanent presence of God in the tabernacles of the Catholic churches wants to fill us at every moment. When we are with Him, we can receive God's love as spiritual Communion. Thus, the actualisation of the love of Jesus manifested on the Cross and His sacrifice, is not only realised in a remembrance of the event of that Good Friday; but He is really with us always, to the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20).