

Sunday June 6, 2021

Corpus Christi Parishioner Reflection

By: Dan Perron

The readings for this Sunday are focused on blood sacrifices and all point to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, as the author of Hebrews tells us: “Christ is the mediator in the new covenant.” However, in order to understand the new covenant and the gift of the Blessed Sacrament, we must take a step back and examine a few concepts of memetic theory.

Fr. Rene Girard had an insight into the significance of Christ’s sacrifice that was unique and enlightening because it brought out a unified explanation of the old and new covenants. On the Day of the Atonement, the high priest and his attendants brought a kid or a lamb to the temple gate and there all who were gathered would place a pebble in leather pouches laden on the back of the animal. This would continue until the poor animal could barely walk under the weight of its load. Then the high priest would pray over the animal, called the scapegoat, and proclaim: “Behold the lamb who takes away our sins.” Afterwards, the attendants would take switches and, striking the animal, drive the poor beast out of the city into the desert to die. The parallel to Christ our saviour is quite striking. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, before receiving the host we sing or say the “Lamb of God” and then the priest proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, blessed are those who come to the supper of the Lamb.”

This is where we see the beauty and significance of our Catholic Eucharistic Liturgy! These words echo back to the old covenant and how Jesus, in becoming the new scapegoat, transforms all ritual sacrifices forever because He is both high priest and sacrifice. He is the perfect victim because He is God and man. He can give Himself as sacrifice and in doing so, eliminates the need for sin offerings forever for those who trust in and proclaim His name. We, the baptized, benefit for all eternity from this saving act. But it does not stop here...

Jesus leaves us a memorial of His saving actions by asking us to remember Him through the celebration of the Mass. But the generosity of God is boundless—He leaves us the gift of Himself in the Eucharistic elements. Christians come together every Sunday to remember Him but also to receive Him under the guise of bread and wine. This tradition goes back to the apostles. Indeed, early Christians were accused of cannibalism by the Romans and Jews of Rome. For this reason, it was easy for Emperor Nero to find a scapegoat in the early Christians of Rome by blaming them for

the fire he had had set on the city. He continued his pretense through his public spectacles in the coliseum—murdering Christians with fire or wild beasts. However, this deep belief in the real presence of Christ is not shared by all Christians. As early as the 12th century, conflicts arose about the meaning and significance of the Eucharistic elements. Some began to argue publicly that the traditional Catholic position was nonsensical. St. Thomas Aquinas provided a cogent and unsurpassed explanation which we use to explain how Jesus can be truly present and yet taste like bread and wine: transubstantiation. The outer characteristics of bread and wine remain, but, during the words of institution, the very substance of the bread and wine is changed into the real body and blood of Christ. However, our defective senses cannot tell us this profound truth.

But what remains from our ancient tradition of the Apostles is that, to this day, we eat and drink of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ because we know that should we cease to do so, we shall no longer have life within us. Jesus is our life. He is our hope. He is our heart's deepest desire. Only He can fill the deepest recesses of our soul and that is why He left us the gift of Himself. This is our food for this world. In the next, we will feast on the eternal vision of God Himself and will no longer need to remember Him because we will have Him. Indeed, now we gaze into the mystery of the Eucharist, in heaven we shall see it face to face.