

**The Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ**  
**June 7, 2015**  
**Church of St. Leo the Great, Oakland. CA**  
**Rev. Timothy K. Johnson**

***Reading*** [1EX 24:3-8](#)

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When Moses came to the people  
and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD,  
they all answered with one voice,  
"We will do everything that the LORD has told us."  
Moses then wrote down all the words of the LORD and,  
rising early the next day,  
he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar  
and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.  
Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites  
to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls  
as peace offerings to the LORD,  
Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls;  
the other half he splashed on the altar.  
Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people,  
who answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do."  
Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying,  
"This is the blood of the covenant  
that the LORD has made with you  
in accordance with all these words of his."

***Responsorial Psalm*** [PS 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18](#)

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**R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.**  
How shall I make a return to the LORD  
for all the good he has done for me?  
The cup of salvation I will take up,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.  
**R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord..**  
Precious in the eyes of the LORD  
is the death of his faithful ones.  
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;  
you have loosed my bonds.  
**R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.**  
To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.  
My vows to the LORD I will pay  
in the presence of all his people.  
**R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.**

**Reading 2HEB 9:11-15**

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Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came as high priest  
of the good things that have come to be,  
passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle  
not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation,  
he entered once for all into the sanctuary,  
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  
and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes  
can sanctify those who are defiled  
so that their flesh is cleansed,  
how much more will the blood of Christ,  
who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God,  
cleanse our consciences from dead works  
to worship the living God.

For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant:  
since a death has taken place for deliverance  
from transgressions under the first covenant,  
those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

*Sequence — Lauda Sion*

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Laud, O Zion, your salvation,  
Laud with hymns of exultation,  
Christ, your king and shepherd true:

Bring him all the praise you know,  
He is more than you bestow.  
Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for glad thanksgiving  
Is the quick'ning and the living  
Bread today before you set:

From his hands of old partaken,  
As we know, by faith unshaken,  
Where the Twelve at supper met.

Full and clear ring out your chanting,  
Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting,  
From your heart let praises burst:

For today the feast is holden,  
When the institution olden  
Of that supper was rehearsed.

Here the new law's new oblation,  
By the new king's revelation,  
Ends the form of ancient rite:

Now the new the old effaces,  
Truth away the shadow chases,  
Light dispels the gloom of night.

What he did at supper seated,  
Christ ordained to be repeated,  
His memorial ne'er to cease:

And his rule for guidance taking,  
Bread and wine we hallow, making  
Thus our sacrifice of peace.

This the truth each Christian learns,  
Bread into his flesh he turns,  
To his precious blood the wine:

Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives,  
But a dauntless faith believes,  
Resting on a pow'r divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden  
Priceless things to sense forbidden;  
Signs, not things are all we see:

Blood is poured and flesh is broken,  
Yet in either wondrous token  
Christ entire we know to be.

Whoso of this food partakes,  
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;  
Christ is whole to all that taste:

Thousands are, as one, receivers,  
One, as thousands of believers,  
Eats of him who cannot waste.

Bad and good the feast are sharing,  
Of what divers dooms preparing,  
Endless death, or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation,  
See how like participation  
Is with unlike issues rife.

When the sacrament is broken,  
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,  
That each sever'd outward token  
doth the very whole contain.

Nought the precious gift divides,  
Breaking but the sign betides  
Jesus still the same abides,  
still unbroken does remain.

*The shorter form of the sequence begins here.*

Lo! the angel's food is given  
To the pilgrim who has striven;  
see the children's bread from heaven,  
which on dogs may not be spent.

Truth the ancient types fulfilling,  
Isaac bound, a victim willing,  
Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,  
manna to the fathers sent.

Very bread, good shepherd, tend us,  
Jesu, of your love befriend us,  
You refresh us, you defend us,  
Your eternal goodness send us

In the land of life to see.

You who all things can and know,  
Who on earth such food bestow,  
Grant us with your saints, though lowest,  
Where the heav'nly feast you show,  
Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia.

**Alleluia*JN 6:51***

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**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the living bread that came down from heaven,  
says the Lord;  
whoever eats this bread will live forever.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel*MK 14:12-16, 22-26***

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On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,  
when they sacrificed the Passover lamb,  
Jesus' disciples said to him,  
"Where do you want us to go  
and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"  
He sent two of his disciples and said to them,  
"Go into the city and a man will meet you,  
carrying a jar of water.  
Follow him.  
Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house,  
'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room  
where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'"  
Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready.  
Make the preparations for us there."  
The disciples then went off, entered the city,  
and found it just as he had told them;  
and they prepared the Passover.  
While they were eating,  
he took bread, said the blessing,  
broke it, gave it to them, and said,  
"Take it; this is my body."  
Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them,  
and they all drank from it.  
He said to them,  
"This is my blood of the covenant,  
which will be shed for many.  
Amen, I say to you,  
I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine  
until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."  
Then, after singing a hymn,  
they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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## Homily

There are in life many things we take so for granted that we don't even give them a second thought, like the sun rising or gravity or rain, when we have it. The same is true of our faith in Jesus Christ; and last weekend and this one are intended to address two important "taken – for – granted" beliefs.

Last week we reflected on the Trinity and praised God for the wonder of revealing to us something of the complexity of our God, known to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The sign of the cross and the conclusion of our prayers, said so often as to become a catch phrase, once reflected on is given new life and importance by our thinking about it.

Today, we are given an opportunity to do the same concerning the Body and Blood of Christ, which we normally receive at each celebration of the Eucharist which we attend. Regular repetition of anything becomes a habit, and habits easily slip into something taken – for – granted. To stop and smell the roses of a habit is to gain a renewed appreciation.

Regularly in our preaching and prayer, we talk about and think of this community and the Church world wide and the Church past, present and to come as being the most holy Body and Blood of Christ. This is true and correct. But the reason we are Christ present in the world is our communion in Christ's Body and Blood in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is the host and the chalice and the true presence of Christ in this Eucharist that bind us as one and send us forth united with Christ, present in us, as Christ's body of disciples.

The Gospel that we just heard takes us back to the earliest days of our community. It reflects an oral prayer and probably the first written words of the new testament which were used by the early community of believers in their first gatherings to give God thanks, the early Eucharistic prayer gatherings. Familiar to us all as the heart of our Eucharist, in those first days these words were radically fresh and stunningly profound. They showed a depth of conviction and inter-connections with the heart of the Jewish scriptures and thought which our other two readings reflect.

The reading from Exodus tells of the blood which sealed God's covenant with Israel. That covenant made Israel a nation, a unity, set them apart by their history and Law, and was renewed annually at the Passover Feast. So too, Christ's body and blood at the last supper and poured out on Calvary seal God's covenant with those who believe in Christ, to live out that belief as disciples of the new law and to strive to establish God's reign of love here on earth as it is in heaven.

The author of the second reading from the Letter of the Hebrews reflects on this blood of the covenant, old and new, and teases out the implications. Christ's blood mediates this new

covenant. Shed once for all Christ's blood delivers the whole of his body, all of us, from any transgressions – sins – and thus to receive the promised eternal inheritance.

We easily talk about the Trinity as a mystery because it is so foreign to our experience to contemplate three – persons – in - one being. Body and blood are much more easily understood since that is what makes us human beings. But the Body and Blood of Christ are truly a mystery, as the implications and interconnections of today's reading indicate. Christians have contemplated this mystery since Jesus' Death and Resurrection, and libraries are filled with these reflections.

The Church-community has from early days reserved the Body of Christ in tabernacles in our church building for the needs of the sick and dying. That tangible, real presence of Christ in our churches sanctifies this space even when we as the community of the Body of Christ are not present. Individuals gather here to pray in that true presence of Christ.

So, may our presence here and the focus of this feast aid us to a deeper, more complex appreciation of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ and not as a familiar reality that is taken – for – granted.

As we continue this thanksgiving service, let us praise God for the real presence of Christ in our Eucharistic bread and wine and in us, and let us give God thanks by a renewed attention to the awesome gift of Christ's Body and Blood poured out for us.