

Homily
Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – Corpus Christi
June 2, 2024

Who has never sinned? That's about right. We are all fallen, exposed to temptation and susceptible to sin. We try, but we are not perfect. That's why God sent His only Son to become one of us in all ways, but sin. Even Jesus was tempted, but He didn't succumb to sin.

In the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus say, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." (John 8:7b)

There is a version of this story that I cannot confirm that continues, "Just then, a rock hit Jesus on the head and He said, "Mom, you're making me look bad."

If it wasn't for Original Sin, we wouldn't need Jesus to save us. At the moment Adam and Eve sinned, God put His plan into action. We have Salvation History, God's love for us and continued efforts at our redemption.

In the first reading, we hear the people answer in one voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has told us." Moses then erected an altar. Moses then took the blood from the sacrifice and half he splashed on the altar and the other half he sprinkled on the people. This represented the covenant between God and the people.

A covenant is a familial bond, a blood oath, that, if broken, represents what would happen to the offending party – death, our blood outpoured. We can't live without our blood. The blood splashed on the altar represents God and the blood sprinkled on the people binds us to God and God to us. God's promise is the promised land, and the people's commitment is to obey God.

The problem is that the people, us, are fallen creatures thanks to Original Sin, thanks to Adam and Eve. But we are culpable too; it's our choice to obey God or not.

God never failed us, but we, the people, continually failed in our covenantal bond, so God sent His only Son. Why? Because only God is perfect. And Jesus, the incarnate Word, fully human and fully divine, our brother in all ways but sin, is the perfect sacrifice. Holocausts of young bulls wasn't enough. We need the perfect sacrifice.

In our second reading, Paul tells the Hebrews that Christ came as high priest, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle. We no longer need a bloody sacrifice; Jesus did that once for all on the cross. He gave us His Body and Blood in the Upper Room at the Last Supper, offering Himself on our behalf, unblemished to God. He is the New Covenant for the promise of an eternal inheritance.

Christ embraced the Passover meal, taking bread and offering His Body; taking a cup and offering His Blood, the blood of the new and perfect covenant. Perfect because it is divine; perfect because it is the covenant between His fully human nature and His fully divine nature. The new covenant that cannot fail; the new covenant from Him on our behalf.

And we are directed to partake in this covenantal meal, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, if we only heed the greatest commandment, love God and love our neighbor. If we don't, we fail in our covenantal bond. But we have recourse in Jesus; we have the perfect sacrifice Who is unblemished but takes on all our sin, the sin of every person, every one of God's children through Baptism, from the beginning to the end of time. We have recourse in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to seek forgiveness and receive absolution. And we have recourse in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, the remembrance of that Passover meal in the Upper Room, remembered here on this altar and every altar throughout the world. We have recourse in His Body and Blood residing in every tabernacle on every high altar throughout the world.

The sacrifice of that first Passover meal was a covenantal bond where the people promised to obey God's command and God gave the people the promised land. The perfect Passover meal, with Jesus as high priest, is the new and final covenantal bond where we promise to obey God's greatest command and God promises us a place in our eternal home.

What does this mean for us today? In a few moments, we will again witness that great miracle in the Upper Room where our priest, in persona Christi, in the person of Christ, says those miraculous words, "Take it; this is My Body," and, "This is my blood of the covenant." Our gift of bread and wine are transubstantiated into the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Feast of Corpus Christi. If we will only believe, if only we will love God, if only we will love our neighbor. Yes, we will sin. Yes, we have recourse. God is there ready and waiting for us to come to Him. It is our choice. It is your choice. The very God of the universe is commanding us to come forward and receive Him.

No matter how many times we reject God and fall into temptation and sin, God is ready to take us back. No matter how many times we turn away and embrace our weakness, God is here, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Come forward; hear those words, "The Body of Christ," and answer, "Amen."