

**SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST “B”  
JUNE 9/10, 2012**

“I gave blood today” proclaims the message imprinted on a red heart-shaped badge given to people who have donated some of their blood to assist those in need this life-sustaining gift to replenish their own diminished blood supply lest they weaken or die. The gift of blood stands front and center in today’s scriptures as we celebrate this feast in honor of Jesus’ gift of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The first reading from Exodus relates how Moses sealed the covenant between the Hebrew people and God. The shedding of blood and the subsequent holocaust, a whole burnt offering of the slaughtered animal in which it was completely destroyed, was a symbol of the total gift of self of those making the sacrifice. In consuming their portion of the holocaust and being sprinkled with some of blood that had been poured on the altar God and the people were joined in a communion of life.

In today’s second reading, the author of the letter to the Hebrews relates that what was prefigured in the former Jewish ritual animal sacrifices now is fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Jesus, is both the priest, the one who makes the offering on behalf of the people; as well as the victim, the one whose life is offered. “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” (Hb. 2:14). What the first covenant, God’s election of Israel as his chosen people prefigured in former sacrificial rites, is now perfected and replaced by the self-willed sacrifice of God through Jesus. This “new and eternal covenant” in the giving by Jesus of his body and the shedding of his blood on the cross “for many” now opens up relationship to God to all people through faith.

In the Gospel we witness Jesus establishing this new covenant and also instituting the means by way of sacramental ritual that this new relationship with God would continue to be made present until the day when, as the risen and exalted Lord of creation, he returns to bring to completion the work of establishing God’s reign on

earth. In all three readings the life of God courses as blood with its life-giving and sustaining power. But with this gift of life also comes a divine command: “Do this in memory of me.”

We who partake of this sacrifice are now are to give of ourselves in a like total self-giving so that we “may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Hb.2:15). As we share in Christ’s Body and Blood, we are continually called to surrender ourselves to be like Christ—a Passover lamb for our world today. For the most part we don’t need to look for opportunities for total self-giving, pouring out our blood; the circumstances of our daily life and each of our vocations generously present them to us. Each day in mostly small and seemingly inconsequential ways we are called to make Jesus’ self-sacrificing words and actions our own: “This is my body given up for you”; “This is the cup of my blood poured out for you.”

In his teaching document on the Holy Eucharist, “The Sacrament of Charity” Pope Benedict XVI, while calling all of us once again to “full, active, conscious, participation” in the celebration of the Eucharist as directed in the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council here at Mass life, also highlights the noble practice of Eucharistic adoration as a way of continued reflection through prayer on the abiding presence of Jesus with us in this sacrament, but also a means of drawing additional strength to live the demands of their daily lives and through them “become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of [God’s] glory” (Eucharistic Prayer IV). For a little over fifteen years our parish has sustained such prolonged adoration. Only God knows what grace has come to individuals and this parish through this commitment. Thanks to all who have committed to spending time in adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus. Today as we celebrate this gift of Jesus to us, I invite all members of our parish to seriously consider signing up for a hour of adoration. Additional adorers are needed. As Pope Benedict states: “Eucharistic adoration is the natural consequence of the Eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church’s supreme act of adoration.”

We receive the gift of life through the body and blood of Jesus. Again, we are called to “Do this in memory of me.”