

The word for this Sunday is **blood**. The place of suffering for reaching God and for enabling others to reach God is the theme.

Pope John Paul II's, Apostolic Letter, Rosarium Virginia Mariae does not include any of today's readings. The Rosary Mystery of Light is the Institution of the Eucharist.

My focus today is the priesthood of the laity. After Mass, Saturday, May 31, I met someone helping young women discern whether they are called to "the religious life," i.e. nuns or sisters. My wife and I suggest two things: (1) one makes one's own happiness. The primary responsibility for being happy is oneself. No one is in a perfect situation, whether single, married, or congregational. (2) Discernment is about finding a niche in life. For most, devoting one's life to the full purpose of a bishop or head of a religious order as a way to the Church and God is not suited to finding a proper niche. Even though without special vows, everyone needs to respect and obey the local ordinary in all lawful commands, some require more freedom than others.

One of the reasons for the collapse of religious orders may be finding niches. To illustrate, religious who continue to dress like religious continue to prosper and survive. Religious who dress as if they are trying to find a niche are not surviving as groups. The issue is not how the body is dressed, but how the heart is dressed. Heart and niche go together.

A great deal of maturity is required for people to coordinate their activities as a religious group. Often that maturity is recognized through the possession of a four-year college degree. I think that the primary benefit from a college education is the ability to focus the mind and to use vocabulary in an organized, directed manner. I successfully taught that in college. That ability to focus is a sign of maturity, practically mandatory for the religious life in the United States.

Exodus 24:3-8

verse 6¹ Moses took half of the **blood** and put it in large bowls;

verse 8 Then he took the **blood** and *sprinkled* it on the people, saying,
 "This is the **blood** of the covenant ...

¹ All indented verses are taken from National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18

The Responsorial is

verse 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

verse 16 I am your servant, the son of your *handmaid*;

Handmaid, in the Latin,² *ancillae*, i.e. not the wife. At the Annunciation, Mary refers to herself as the *handmaid* of the Lord, not the wife.

verse 17 To you will I offer sacrifice of *thanksgiving*

For *thanksgiving*, the Latin uses *laudis* or *praise*.

The idea is an ability to hang on the Cross full of praise and thanksgiving. Boring, but true is much of the sacrifice required to seek God's purposes in all things.

Hebrews 9:11-15

Hebrews is a speech that would have taken about forty-five minutes to deliver. The audience had probably lost its original fervor due to some sort of persecution. Hebrews is designed to rekindle the original spark of divine love.

First Hebrews argues that Jesus suffered like people. The argument in this section of Hebrews (7:1—10:25) is that the suffering of Jesus is the sacrifice that enables others to approach God. This is the priestly sacrifice. The concluding argument (11:1—12:24) is that the Faithful persevere by faith through suffering to glory.³

One scholar heightens the importance of this scripture, proclaiming, "Christ's sacrifice is the definitive source of the atonement that was foreshadowed by the Law's provision for an annual atoning sacrifice."⁴ The **blood** of Jesus provides a *sprinkling* not only for the

² The Latin, Saint Jerome, and the Vulgate refer to *Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita Iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera* (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

³ Craig R. Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), pages 106, 112, 22-123.

body, once *sprinkled* by Moses with **blood** and later with the ashes of a heifer, but the **blood** of Jesus also provides a balm for the soul, for conscience (Heb 10:22).⁵

Somehow this epistle does have a salutary effect upon me as I suffer intensively through destructive and disruptive “singing” at daily Mass. I am not a gifted singer and am quite capable of contributing more to the destruction and disruption. Literally, enduring the daily Mass suffering does enable me, at least, to mediate with the Father and, somehow, to act as a mediator for others also to reach the Father. The idea is to have a mellow as well as an angry arsenal of reactions available for getting along or not with others. What happens highly focused at daily Mass also happens in a more diffused way throughout the rest of my living.

verse 12 he entered once and for all into the *sanctuary*,
not with the **blood** of goats and calves
but with his own **blood**, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

Jesus entered the *sanctuary* (see Heb 6:19-20), as high priest, for others to follow. Sacrifice enabled Jesus and us to enter that sanctuary.

verse 13 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 ...

verse 15 For this reason he is mediator of a *new covenant*

in the Latin, *novi testamenti* or New Testament

since a death has taken place for deliverance
from transgressions under the *first covenant*

in the Latin, *priore testamento* rather than *veto testamento* or Old Testament.

Jesus as *mediator* is like Moses, like Melchizedek,⁶ and like the Faithful in their priesthood of the laity. Moses mediates not only the original covenant (**Exodus** 19—24),

⁴ Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 115.

⁵ Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity”, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 116.

but also its renewal (Exodus 32—34; Deut 5:2; 27; 31:9-13, Josh 8:30-35; 24).⁷ Through grace, the Faithful themselves are both mediators with the Father and a means for reaching the Father. This is a matter of **blood** or sustenance of life. Such mediation gives meaning and purpose to human suffering.

John 6:51

No comment.

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Mark 11:18 attributes the plot to destroy Jesus emanating immediately from his cleansing the temple. Recent scholars find this verse difficult, portraying Jesus as attacking the sacrificial system. That way, indeed, the verse does not make sense. Jesus sacrificed at the temple as part of the Pascal Feast, the Last Supper. Jesus was not opposed to the sacrificial system.⁸

From the perspective that Jesus criticized the financial and trading arrangements in the temple, the attribution does make sense. Jesus did complain of being arrested like a bandit: “Day by day I was with you in the temple, teaching” (Mark 14:49). The point is that complaining, as done above with the daily singing, can have a place.⁹

Jesus had a problem with the implementation of the system, not the system. A scholar concludes, “We must, therefore, dismiss any version of the view that he was attacking the sacrificial system.” What he was attacking was “the authority and riches of the chief priests and scribes.”¹⁰

⁶ Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 115.

⁷ Kathryn L. Roberts, “God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), 635.

⁸ P.M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997), page 306-332.

⁹ P.M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997), pages 306-332. The quotation is on page 322

¹⁰ P.M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997), pages 306-332. The quotation is on page 332.

The chief priests and scribes were not about to shed their own **blood** as part of any sacrifice. Jesus objected. The Christ life is about shedding ones own **blood**.

verse 14 ...`The *Teacher* says, "Where is my *guest room*

For *teacher* the Latin uses *Magister* rather than *rabbi*. *Guest room* is *refectio*, which may account for why dining rooms in houses of religion are sometimes called *refectories*.

verse 24 He said to them,
 "This is my **blood** of the *covenant*,
 which will be shed for *many*.

The more reliable Greek manuscripts use *covenant* rather than *new covenant*.¹¹ The Greek for *many* is *all*, with the sense of inclusion, rather than exclusion. The **blood** of Jesus is shed for *all* and the *all* are *many* is the meaning.¹²

verse 25 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."

There is no Semitic equivalent for the Greek *not* used here. The grammarian makes some interesting observations.¹³

Outside the book of Revelation, where it occurs sixteen times, this construction is almost limited to quotations from the LXX and the words of Jesus (57 out of 61 occurrences in the gospels), so that Semitic influence might have been suspected, where it not that it has no Semitic equivalent, so that the LXX renders the simple Hebrew *lo'* indiscriminately by οὐ or by οὐ μὴ.

¹¹ Charles H. Talbert, *Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001), page 20.

¹² Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 156.

¹³ Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., *Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994, pages 149-150.

Nor can the frequency of the construction in the NT be explained from popular Greek usage, for in the papyri οὐ μὴ is rare, and is always very emphatic. Hence Moulton (p. 192) suggests that its use is due to the feeling of the writers that it is peculiarly suited, as being especially decisive, to sacred utterances.

In the majority of the NT uses, therefore, οὐ μὴ may be said to express "prophetic" emphasis. In the other uses it expresses, as in Greek in general, an "emotional" emphasis, and it is to be noted that it is never used by the Evangelists (or by Luke in Acts) in their own narrative but only in quoting the spoken word (Matt . 16,22; 26, 35 = Mk 4, 31; Jo 13,8; 20, 25, and perhaps Lk 1,15; Jo 11,56). So too there is the usual emphasis in the four places where Paul has οὐ μὴ , and the same applies to the epistles in general (whose style is naturally closer to the vivid one of speech).

verse 26 Then, after singing a hymn,
 they went out to the *Mount of Olives*.

The Mount of Olives, a place of trouble, explained in the following verses, unused by the Lectionary.¹⁴ Suffering is part of reaching God and mediating with God. In that suffering the Faithful can choose to be happy or not. If one can be happy finding a niche in a vowed life, whether in community or as a hermit, then one might have a special calling, or vocation to the religious life.

Why do it? Why support the Church with a vowed special calling or vocation to the religious life? The reason is that, otherwise, the good news, the Gospel, does not transmit from generation to generation. Only through the institutional church does the gospel spread and is the message heard.

To conclude, these readings are about the sustenance of life, **blood**. The focus is on religious discernment, first with a recognition that no one lives in a perfect situation, suffering comes to all, happiness is something one takes for oneself, not something given. Second with a recognition that there are different niches for different people. For some the religious life would be a restriction, for others a liberation. A vocation to that life should be felt as a liberation.

¹⁴ Stephen L. Cook, "The Metamorphosis of a Shepherd: The Tradition History of Zechariah 11:17 + 13:7-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 3 (July 1993) 463.

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Exodus is about purification through **blood**, i.e. suffering. The psalm is about drinking the cup of salvation, namely a certain amount of suffering; about the ability to sing praise to God in difficult earthly circumstances. Hebrews shows that just as the **blood** of Jesus covers the conscience of the Faithful, so does the suffering of the Faithful cover the conscience of others, enabling them to reach the Father. Finally, Mark is about taking on the religious life, whether or not in vowed community, for others rather than for self. Faith is about confidence that God has eternal rewards for the Faithful.

The following is offered for those who might like to follow the Latin, as I anticipate that the Poor Clare nuns will sing it.

The Solemnity of
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

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This sequence may be sung in its entirety, or in the shorter form beginning with the verse ****Ecce panis (Lo! the angel's food is given)*.

	Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem, Lauda ducem et pastorem In hymnis et canticis.	Laud, O Zion, your salvation, Laud with hymns of exultation, Christ, your king and shepherd true:
aude:	Quantum potes, tantum Quia maior omni laude, Nec laudare suffices.	Bring him all the praise you know, He is more than you bestow. Never can you reach his due.
	Laudis thema specialis, Panis vivus et vitalis Hodie proponitur.	Special theme for glad thanksgiving Is the quick'ning and the living Bread today before you set:
cenae,	Quem in sacra mensa Turba fratrum duodenae Datum non ambigitur.	From his hands of old partaken, As we know, by faith unshaken, Where the Twelve at supper met.
	Sit laus plena, sit sonora, Sit iucunda, sit decora Mentis iubilatio.	Full and clear ring out your chanting, Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting, From your heart let praises burst:
recolitur	Dies enim sollemnis agitur, In qua mensae prima Huius institutio.	For today the feast is holden, When the institution olden Of that supper was rehearsed.
legis	In hac mensa novi Regis, Novum Pascha novae Phase vetus terminat.	Here the new law's new oblation, by the new King's revelation, Ends the form of ancient rite:
	Vetustatem novitas, Umbram fugat veritas, Noctem lux eliminate.	Now the new the old effaces, Truth away the shadow chases, Light dispels the gloom of night.

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	Quod in cena Christus gessit, Faciendum hoc expressit In sui memoriam.	What he did at supper seated, Christ ordained to be repeated, His memorial ne'er to cease:
	Docti sacris institutis, Panem, vinum in salutis Consecramus hostiam.	And his rule for guidance taking, Bread and wine we hallow, making Thus our sacrifice of peace.
panis,	Dogma datur Christianis, Quod in carnem transit Et vinum in sanguinem .	This the truth each Christian learns, Bread into his flesh he turns, To his precious blood the wine:
vides,	Quod non capis, quod non Animosa firmat fides, Praeter rerum ordinem.	Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives, But a dauntless faith believes, Resting on a pow'r divine.
rebus,	Sub diversis speciebus, Signis tantum, et non Latent res eximiae.	Here beneath these signs are hidden Priceless things to sense forbidden; Signs, nothings are all we see:
potus:	Caro cibus, sanguis Manet tamen Christus Sub utraque specie.	Blood is poured and flesh is broken, Yet in either wondrous token Christ entire we know to be.
divisus:	A sumente non concisus, Non confractus, non Integer accipitur.	Whoso of this food partakes, Does not rend the Lord nor breaks; Christ is whole to all that taste:
	Sumunt boni, sumunt mali: Sorte tamen inaequali, Vitae vel interitus.	Thousands are, as one, receivers, One, as thousands of believers, Eats of him who cannot waste.
	Mors est mails, vita bonis: Vide paris sumptionis Quam sit dispar exitus.	Bad and good the feast are sharing, Of what divers dooms preparing, Endless death, or endless life.

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		Life to these, to those damnation, See how like participation Is with unlike issues rife.
Fracto demum sacramento, Ne vacilles, sed memento Tantum esse sub fragmento,	Quantum toto tegitur. Null rei fit scissor: Signis tantum fit fractura, Qua nec status nec statura Signati minuitur.	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.
***	Ecce panis angelorum, Factus cibus viatorum: Vere panis filiorum, Non mittendus canibus. In figures praesignatur, Cum Isaac immolator, Agnus Paschae deputatur, Datur manna patribus. Bone Pastor, panis vere, Iesu, nostri miserere: Tu nos pasce, nos tuere, Tu nos bona fac videre In terra viventium. Tu, quo cuncta scis et vales,	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.