

# THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Sunday, June 18, 2006

*Ex 24:3-8; Heb 9:11-15; Mk 14:12-16, 22-26*

Homilist: *S. Mary Mark Schoenstein, OP*

## "The New Covenant"

Today in Mark's gospel we read: "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 you.'" It is in Luke's gospel that Jesus says "This cup is the NEW covenant in my blood." Jesus' friends well understood the concept of covenant, their commitment to the God of their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and God's covenant with them through the history of the Israelite people ... the ancient covenant that was sealed symbolically in the blood of slain animals. But now Jesus says; "This is the covenant in MY blood. ... this cup is the NEW covenant." The symbolic sacrifice of the old covenant is now replaced by the real sacrifice in Christ's blood as the words of the beautiful Sequence for the feast proclaims:

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.

Tad Guzie, as long ago as the early 70's, wrote in relation to this mystery. "The mind has no place to put brand new symbols. Our minds are fabrics into which threads are woven one next to another. New meanings, new religious insights can be worked into the fabric, but only if there is a fabric there and a thread to which the insights can be tied." Here, as in so many places in the Eucharist, the Jewish origins of our celebration and ritual are carried to a much deeper and richer level. The sacrificial offering of the animal and it's blood in the old covenant represented a commitment unto death. In our present-day liturgy we sing:

"Our blessing cup is a communion with the blood of Christ,  
and the bread we break, it is a sharing in the body of the Lord."

This new and eternal covenant Jesus gives us is the invitation into not only his life, but his death as well. His words: "Do this in memory of me" are not simply a call to the repetition of the ritual meal as a memorial, as beautiful as that may be, but rather the command to give over our bodies and pour out our blood (our lives) in love for others as Jesus did.

Our Responsorial Psalm verse reads: "How shall I make a return to the Lord...?" Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict gives us the answer in one of the strongest statements in his recent encyclical where he says: "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented." The mystery is that our simple sacrifice of self, of the whole of our lives, joined with Jesus' in the Eucharist becomes part of the redemption of our world. How awesome!