

Body and Blood of Christ
and First Communion
June 3, 2018
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Reflection

Today I'm going to speak to the children sitting in the front row. The rest of you can listen if you like.

It's a very special day for you. You're going to receive First Communion. It's an important step in your journey with God. Each time you receive communion, you begin to be more and more like Jesus; less and less attached to sin; more and more what God wants you to be. It's also the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. Every year, we think about the fact that the Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus.

I wonder if you've ever seen your own blood? Maybe you fell off your bicycle and scraped your knee. When I was little, I stepped on a board that had a nail sticking through it. It went right through my sneaker into my foot. You might have cut your finger using a knife. Or maybe you pricked your finger giving a rose to your mom, because the thorns are sharp. We remember these things because they hurt, and it's scary. We know that we need our blood to keep us alive. Sometimes people have an accident. They're bleeding so much that they might run out. People give blood to help others live. They give it for people whom they don't even know.

In today's Gospel, Jesus turned wine into his own blood. Here's what it says. "Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.

Ex 24:3-8
Ps 116
Heb 9:11-15
Mk 14:12-16, 22-26

He said to them, 'This is my Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'" How did he turn the wine into his blood? It's a mystery, which means that we cannot fully understand it. And it didn't just happen at the Last Supper, but at every Mass ever since. It will happen [tonight/today]. It's hard to understand, but we know that it's true because he said so: "This is my Blood of the covenant." It's hard for the smartest person in the Church to understand - even the Pope. That's because our minds are this big, but God is infinite. It's a mystery! We can know some things about God, but not everything. And the fact that he's more than we can understand...that means we can worship him as something greater. We can know some things about God, but not everything. So we need faith: that gift from God that lets us believe what we cannot see. Faith is even stronger than understanding. With understanding, we might know something like math. If I say "2+2=" you say "4!" But "faith gives us all the wisdom of God, which is the Son of God (St. John of the Cross, AoMC, 2.29.6)." We received our faith in baptism, but it needs to grow. So we profess our faith each week; the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed. Our understanding and faith grow a little bit each time we say it. Our faith also grows when we receive communion; when we receive his body and blood, like the disciples did at the Last Supper. And with our faith grows hope; with faith and hope grows love.

Jesus wants us to love others: he wants us to love God, our neighbour, and ourselves. We're able to love others because he loved us first. But sometimes it can be hard and scary to love others. Maybe they hurt us yesterday, or we're worried they will hurt us again tomorrow. But it's like when you fell off your bicycle. It was scary, but you knew that the scab on your knee would get better. So you got back on your bicycle and tried again. We forgive people and ask them to forgive us.

We're able to forgive others because God forgives us. Jesus went on the cross and died for us. This way we could receive God's forgiveness and then forgive others. I told you about stepping on that nail. Look over at Jesus on his cross. He had nails through both his feet, through both his hands. You might have cut your finger with a knife, but they put a spear right into his side. You might have pricked your finger with a thorn, but they put a crown of thorns on his head. It was scary for him but he loves us. So his bleeding wasn't from an accident. He gave his blood, he gave his life, by choice, to help us live the way God wants us to live, so that we could have eternal life in heaven. He lived a long time ago, so we never met him. But Jesus is God and he knows us. He knows all the good things that we've done, and the ones we failed to do. He knows us even better than we know ourselves, and so he loves us even more than we love ourselves. He sees us, not just as we are today, but as we will be - after a lifetime changed by the body and blood that he gives us.