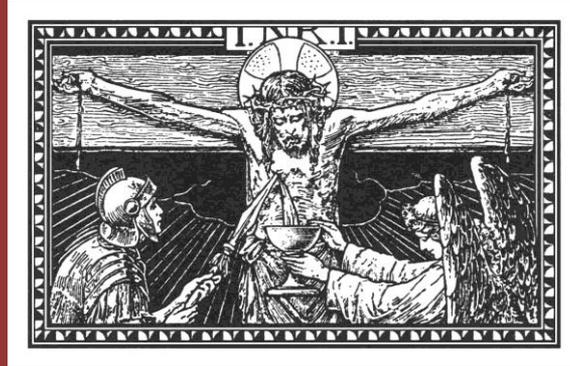


JULY IS THE MONTH DEDICATED TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, SHED AS THE PRICE OF OUR SALVATION

SANGUIS CHRISTI, INEBRIA ME! BLOOD OF CHRIST, INEBRIATE ME!
(from the Anima Christi)

(In the Liturgical Calendar of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite July 1st remains the *Feast of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. This Feast still exists in the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite, but now, regrettably, only in the form of a Votive Mass.)



PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS

It is this Blood which merits all good things for us

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. I Peter 1:18-19

Glory be to Jesus,
Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the Life-Blood
From His sacred veins!

Grace and life eternal
In that Blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind!

Blest through endless ages
Be the precious Stream
Which from endless torments
Did the world redeem!

Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the Blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

Lift we, then, our voices,
Swell the mighty flood,
Louder still and louder
Praise the Precious Blood!

"Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy Blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth."

Holy Mother Church has a profound love for the Most Precious Blood of her Divine Spouse, since It is the Price of our salvation!

- Without the shedding of the Blood of the Lamb of God, we could not be redeemed.
- Without His cleansing and vivifying Blood coursing through the Church, there would be no Mystical Body of Christ.
- Without His glorious Blood, the Sacraments would have no effect.
- Without His redeeming Blood, Mary would never have been conceived without sin, and there would be no saints whatsoever.

The Most Precious Blood of Christ is an aspect of His Sacred Humanity. It is therefore hypostatically united to His Deity, and so can receive our worship, adoration, and love. When we pray to the Precious Blood we are praying to the Person of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, present in His Blood.

Prayer in Honour of the Precious Blood

O Precious Blood of Jesus, infinite Price of our redemption and both the drink and laver of our souls, You continually plead the cause of all people before the throne of Infinite Mercy. From the depths of my heart I adore You. Jesus, insofar as I am able I want to make reparation for the insults and outrages which You receive from human beings, especially from those who blaspheme You and deny Your presence.

Who would not venerate the Blood of infinite value?! Who does not feel inflamed with love for the Jesus Who shed It?! What would have become of me had I not been redeemed by this Divine Blood? Who has drained It all from the veins of my Savior? Surely this was the work of Love! O Infinite Love, which has given us this saving Balm! O Balm beyond all price, welling up from the foundation of Infinite Love! Grant that every heart and every tongue may render You praise and thanks, now and forever! Amen.

The Seven Blood-sheddings Of Christ

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

1. THE CIRCUMCISION (Sunday)

Calls me to a life of union with God. "Abide in Me and I in you!" Jesus receives His Name in a Baptism of Blood. He shares in our human life that I may share in His Divine Life.

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." (Luke 2:21)

2. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN (Monday)

Shows sin as the destroyer of our life of union with God. Jesus sweated Blood because He foresaw me rejecting Him for sin. "My many sins crushed His Bleeding Heart."

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of Blood falling down upon the ground." (Lk 22:44)

3. THE SCOURGING (Tuesday)

Warns me against being separated from union with God, forever in Hell. As my Saviour He suffers scourges "instead of me who deserves them" to save me from the scourges of sins, both in this world and in Hell.

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." (John 19:1)

4. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS (Wednesday)

Counsels mental prayer as the first means of preserving my life of union with God. Spiky thorns almost scalped His Head. As they crowned Him Fool and bent the knee before Him in mock prayer and worship, what mental suffering our Lord endured.

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head." (John 19:2)

5. THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS (Thursday)

Emphasizes patience in carrying my cross through life, as the second means of keeping my life of union with God. His Cross crushed Him to the ground. Old Wounds were widened. New Wounds were opened in His Hands and Knees. To carry my cross patiently in union with His, is my best penance for past sin and the best protection against future sin.

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha." (John 19:17)

6. THE CRUCIFIXION (Friday)

Urges: never give up the ideal of a life united with God. Jesus now clings to His Eternal Ideal. When I am tempted to give up my old ideals of prayer, sacrifice and purity, I must plead with Him to raise these dead ideals to life.

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them." (John 19:18)

7. THE PIERCING OF THE HEART (Saturday)

Inspires me to final perseverance in my life of union with God. His Love for me persevered until His Heart was emptied unto the last Drop. "Take courage," He says, "I have overcome the world." I reply, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

"By the Merits of Thy Precious Blood, shed seven times, keep me ever united to Thee; save me at death from the agonizing memory of a wasted life."

"But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out Blood and water." (John 19:34).

Petitions in Honour of the Precious Blood of Jesus

Precious Blood of Jesus, shed in the circumcision, make me pure of mind, heart and body.

Precious Blood, oozing from every pore of Jesus in the Agony, enable me to love God's holy will above all.

Precious Blood, flowing from the scourging at the pillar, inspire me with a sorrow for my sins, and a tolerance for suffering.

Precious Blood, falling in profusion from the crown of thorns, grant me a ready acceptance of humiliations.

Precious Blood, shed profusely in the crucifixion of our Lord, make me die entirely to self-love.

Precious Blood, shed to the very last drop by the opening of Christ's Sacred Heart, give me that generous love which sacrifices all for God.

Precious Blood, sacred Price of my Redemption, apply to me your infinite merits.

Precious Blood, I adore You from the depths of my heart; I invoke You ardently, for You are my salvation, and by You I hope to obtain the joys of heaven. Amen.

Seven Offerings of the Precious Blood.

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for the propagation and exaltation of my dear Mother the Holy Church, for the safety and prosperity of her visible Head, the Holy Roman Pontiff, for the cardinals, bishops and pastors of souls and for all the ministers of the sanctuary.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Your Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for the peace and concord of nations, for the conversion of the enemies of our holy Faith, and for the happiness of all Christian people.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for the repentance of unbelievers, the extirpation of all heresies and the conversion of sinners.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for all my relations, friends and enemies, for the poor, the sick, and those in tribulation, and for all those for whom You will that I should pray, or know that I ought to pray.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for all those who shall this day pass to another life that You may preserve them from the pains of Hell and admit them the more readily to the possession of Your Glory.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for all those who are lovers of this Treasure of His Blood, and for all those who join with me in adoring and honouring It, and for all those who try to spread devotion to It.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer, for all my wants, spiritual and temporal, for the holy souls in Purgatory and particularly for those who in their lifetime were most devoted to this Price of our Redemption and to the sorrows and pains of our dear Mother, Mary most holy.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Blessed and exalted be the Blood of Jesus, now and always, and through all eternity! Amen.

Litany of the Most Precious Blood

Lord, have mercy on us, Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, Have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, Have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, Have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, One God, Have mercy on us.

Blood of Christ, only-begotten Son of the eternal Father, save us.

Blood of Christ, Incarnate Word of God, save us.

Blood of Christ, of the New and Eternal Testament, save us.

Blood of Christ, falling upon the earth in Agony, save us.

Blood of Christ, shed profusely in the Scourging, save us.

Blood of Christ, flowing forth in the Crowning with Thorns, save us.

Blood of Christ, poured out on the Cross, save us.

Blood of Christ, Price of our salvation, save us.

Blood of Christ, without which there is no forgiveness, save us.

Blood of Christ, Eucharistic drink and refreshment of souls, save us.

Blood of Christ, stream of mercy, save us.

Blood of Christ, victor over demons, save us.

Blood of Christ, courage of Martyrs, save us.

Blood of Christ, strength of Confessors, save us.

Blood of Christ, bringing forth Virgins, save us.

Blood of Christ, help of those in peril, save us.

Blood of Christ, relief of the burdened, save us.

Blood of Christ, solace in sorrow, save us.

Blood of Christ, hope of the penitent, save us.

Blood of Christ, consolation of the dying, save us.

Blood of Christ, peace and tenderness of hearts, save us.

Blood of Christ, pledge of eternal life, save us.

Blood of Christ, freeing souls from purgatory, save us.

Blood of Christ, most worthy of all glory and honour, save us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

V. Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy Blood.
R. And made us, for our God, a kingdom.

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God, Thou hast appointed Thine only-begotten Son the Redeemer of the world and willed to be appeased by his Blood. Grant, we beg of Thee, that we may worthily adore this Price of our salvation and through its power be safeguarded from the evils of the present life so that we may rejoice in its fruits forever in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pope Saint John XXIII did much to promote devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Christ. He released an Apostolic Letter on the devotion, called Sanguis Christi (see below, page 20), approving the Litany in Honour of the Blood of Jesus shown above.

Cup of Blessing, Cup of Salvation

"I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord." Psalm 116:13

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins." Mt 26:27-28

"For my Flesh is food indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed." John 6:56

As this was a hard saying for Jesus' hearers, so it is difficult today for many of our separated brethren. Yet Sacred Scripture tells us that Jesus truly gives us His Sacred Body and Precious Blood in the Eucharist:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the Blood of Christ?
The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the Body of Christ?" I Corinthians 10:16

This need not trouble our separated brethren. When we partake of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we are not eating dead flesh or blood, since Christ is risen and alive forevermore (Rev 1:10). We are actually receiving the whole Person of our Risen Lord: His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity! How wonderful it is to sacramentally partake of the ever-living, glorified Blood of our Risen Saviour under the appearance of bread and wine. Praise you, Lord Jesus, for this tremendous Gift!

"To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His Blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!" Revelation 1:5-6

Appeal for Pardon

Accept, O Lord, this appeal for pardon wrung from our afflicted and repentant souls, and in true sorrow for our sins and the sins of our relatives and friends.

We ask Pardon, O Divine Heart! for public scandals and evil living, for all who try to stir up disorder, for all who corrupt Thy little ones, for those who spend their youth and fortune in sensuous living, for crimes in families, the sins of parents and children.

We ask Pardon, O Divine Heart! for those who traffic in public crime, for those who lead and lure souls to eternal damnation by riches and corrupt literature, for those who excite evil passions by immodest fashions, corrupt plays and degenerate art.

We ask Pardon, O Divine Heart! for all attacks against our Holy Father the Pope, for all organized disobedience against Holy Mother the Church, for all weak and straying souls, for sinners who resist grace, for all abuse of the Sacraments or any outrage against the Holy Eucharist. Amen.

Conversion or Return to Faith

O God, all hearts are in Thy Hands. Thou canst bend, as it pleases Thee, the most stubborn, and soften the most obdurate. I beseech Thee by the Holy Name, the Precious Blood, the Merits, Wounds and Divine Heart of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son, to grant the conversion we ask. Amen.
(mention request)

The Feast of the Precious Blood

By Fr Andrew Wadsworth

From the Alleluia Verse of this Mass: *Si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei majus est.* (If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.) [1John 5, 9]

I have always been struck by the inscription over the door of Westminster Cathedral: *Domini Jesu Rex et Redemptor per Sanguinem Tuum Salva Nos* (Lord Jesus, King and Redeemer, save us by your blood). The cathedral is dedicated to the Most Precious Blood and in the revised calendar of this diocese, today is the feast of the Dedication of our Cathedral. In preparing my thoughts for this homily, I realised that strangely I had rarely heard a homily about the Precious Blood, so I am delighted to have the opportunity to do so today. This said, the devotion is one of the oldest in the Church. I suppose we might say that Our Lady and St Joseph were the first to adore the Most Precious Blood of their infant Son on the day of His circumcision as the first drops of His Precious Blood were shed for our salvation. At the Last Supper, Our Lord ascribes to His blood the same life-giving power that belongs to His flesh. The Apostles, St. Peter, St. John and above all St. Paul, regard It as synonymous with Our Lord's Passion and Death, that is, the source of redemption. The Precious Blood is

therefore a part of the Sacred Humanity of Christ and hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

In the fifteenth century, some theologians, with a view of determining whether the blood shed by our Saviour during His Passion remained united to the Eternal Word or not, raised the point as to whether the Precious Blood is an essential part or only a concomitant of the Sacred Humanity. If an essential part, they argued, it could never be detached from the Eternal Word; if a concomitant only, it could. The Dominicans held the first view, and the Franciscans the second. Pope Pius II, in whose presence the debate took place, rendered no doctrinal decision on the point at issue. The Council of Trent called the body and blood of Jesus "*partes Christi Domini*", so it seems that the trend of theological thought has been in favour of the Dominican teaching.

Conscious of where we are this evening, it is a happy fact that Father Frederick Faber treats this very matter, in his wonderful study, *The Precious Blood*. He writes: "*It is not merely a concomitant of the flesh, an inseparable accident of the body. The blood itself, as blood, was assumed directly by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity*". So we understand that the blood shed during the Passion on the first Good Friday was therefore reunited to the body of Christ at the Resurrection, with the possible exception of a few particles which instantly lost their union to the Word and became holy relics to be venerated but not adored. Some such particles may have adhered and still adhere to the instruments of the Passion, e.g. the nails from the Cross, the scourging pillar, the Scala Sancta conserved in Rome. Several places such as Bruges and Mantua claim, on the strength of ancient tradition, to possess relics of the Precious Blood, but it is often difficult to tell whether the traditions are reliable. What we can say, without any fear of contradiction, is that viewed as a part of the Sacred Humanity hypostatically united to the Word, the Precious Blood deserves worship or adoration. In this, we can liken It to the Sacred Heart or the Precious Wounds from which It flowed. We may also single It out for special honour, as did St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church who so eloquently praised Its redeeming virtue and also saw in it the source of inspiration for a Christian spirit of self-sacrifice. Christ shed His blood in laying down His life for others, His selfless generosity is fundamental to His saving act. Father Faber observes that the lives of the saints are replete with devotion to the Precious Blood.

Our own St. Catherine of Siena was a great adorer of the Precious Blood, so much so that her last words were "*Sangue...Sangue...Sangue!*". The prayer she composed to the Precious Blood and which she was known to pray frequently on behalf of sinners was recognised to be effective in bringing about conversion. St. Gaspar del Bufalo, the renowned nineteenth century apostle of the Precious

Blood and founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood used to say that he wished he had a thousand tongues to preach about the power of the Precious Blood for the salvation of all. Perhaps prophetically for own times, St. Gaspar said, *"The chastisements of God are not yet at an end; still more sorrowful times are ahead; and divine justice will be placated by the devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ."*

At the turn of the twentieth century, Our Lord appeared to Sr. Mary Martha Chambon of the Monastery of the Visitation in Chambery. He gave her a double mission to adore and invoke the Sacred Wounds unceasingly and to revive this devotion in the hearts of the faithful. In these private revelations, Our Lord said to her: *"The soul who during life has honoured and studied the Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and has offered them to the Eternal Father for the souls in Purgatory, will be accompanied at the moment of death by the Holy Virgin and the angels; and Our Lord on the Cross all brilliant with glory will receive her and crown her."*

Across the centuries, the Church has given shape and sanction to this devotion by approving societies such as the Missionaries of the Precious Blood; enriching confraternities like that of *St. Nicholas in Carcere*, in Rome, and indeed here at the London Oratory; attaching indulgences to prayers and scapulars in honour of the Precious Blood; and establishing commemorative feasts of the Precious Blood. This feast, first celebrated in Spain in the 16th century, was later introduced to Italy by St Gaspar del Bufalo and extended to the whole Church by Blessed Pius IX in 1849. For many dioceses, there were two days to which the Office of the Precious Blood was assigned, the office being in both cases the same. The reason was that the office was at first granted only to the Fathers of the Most Precious Blood. Later, as one of the offices of the Fridays of Lent, it was assigned to the Friday after the fourth Sunday in Lent. When Pope Pius IX went into exile at Gaeta in 1849, he had as his companion Fr Giovanni Merlini, third superior general of the Fathers of the Most Precious Blood. After they had arrived at Gaeta, Don Merlini suggested that His Holiness make a vow to extend the feast of the Precious Blood to the entire Church, if he would again obtain possession of the Papal dominions. The Pope took the matter under consideration, but a few days later sent his domestic prelate, Mgr Giuseppe Stella to Don Merlini with this message: *"The pope does not deem it expedient to bind himself by a vow; instead His Holiness is pleased to extend the feast immediately to all Christendom."* This took place on June 30th 1849, the day the French army conquered Rome and the republicans capitulated. As June 30th that year had been a Saturday before the first Sunday of July, Pope Pius IX decreed on August 10th, 1849, that henceforth every first Sunday of July should be dedicated to the *"Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ."* This feast was instituted by him in thanksgiving for the victory of the

Papal and French army over the revolutionary forces which had driven him from Rome. Pope Pius XI raised this feast to the rank of Double of the First Class to mark the nineteenth hundredth anniversary of Our Lord's death. Pope Pius XII assigned the feast to July 1st in the Roman Calendar of 1954 thus beginning the month dedicated to the Precious Blood. Blessed John XXIII underlined the intrinsic importance of this devotion and its feast in his Apostolic Letter of June 30th 1960: "*On Promoting Devotion to the Most Precious Blood*". In that text, he stated, "*The world can still set itself right and always will be able to, because the voice and Blood of Christ cry out for pity and mercy... Devotion to the Precious Blood is the devotion of our time...It is a devotion for all souls, for the whole world. The infinite love of the Saviour is announced in His Name, it is symbolized in His heart, and it is made eloquent in His Blood.*"

These historical details which link the evolution of the devotion and its feast to the power of the papacy are regrettably not without significance for its later development. In the liturgical changes following the Second Vatican Council, the feast was suppressed, the suggestion being that it was somehow incorporated into the *Feast of Sanctissimi Corporis et Sanguinis Christi, Corpus Christi* under another name. This would seem to be a regrettable confusion and exercise in minimalism as the emphasis of that venerable liturgical feast is essentially Eucharistic, whereas this feast is more soteriological in its focus. It also expresses the generosity of redemption and reminds us that just as the Israelites of old found protection by placing the blood of the Paschal Lamb on their lintels, we too are rescued by the Precious Blood of which it was a type. In our own time, we need to see a wider return to this powerful devotion which is so eloquent in expressing all that we understand to be the salvation Christ has won for us. Principally, it reminds us that the Blood of Christ is precious because it is Christ's own great ransom paid for the redemption of mankind. As there was to be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood, the Incarnate Word not only offered His life for the salvation of the world, but he offered to give up His life by a bloody death, and to hang bloodless upon the Cross for the salvation of mankind. There, upon the Cross, He atoned for every form of human sin. "*God was indeed Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.*" He shed His Precious Blood for all - for Jew and Gentile, for heathen and Christian, for the infidel and all unbelievers. The feast of the Precious Blood is also a call to repentance and reparation. It was shed that sinners might be forgiven, that they might live and not die; that they might live unto Him "*in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins*". I have no doubt personally that this devotion is potentially the greatest source of consolation and blessing. I leave the last word with St Catherine, in quoting her famous prayer:

*Precious Blood, Ocean of Divine Mercy, flow upon us!
Precious Blood, Most Pure offering, procure for us every grace!*

*Precious Blood, Hope and refuge of sinners, atone for us!
Precious Blood, Delight of the Holy Souls, draw us! Amen.*

Preached by Fr Andrew Wadsworth at a Missa Cantata celebrated by The Very Revd. Ignatius Harrison, Cong Orat. for the Society of St Catherine of Siena in the Little Oratory of the London Oratory on the Feast of the Most Precious Blood, July 1st, 2008.

The Precious Blood of Christ

Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is the Lamb of God not only because He sacrificed Himself, He is the Lamb of God because He continues sacrificing Himself in an unbloody way in every Mass He offers. And while His sacrifice is completed, ours must go on.

Having said that, the second primary foundation for the imitation of Christ is the Precious Blood of Jesus. The moment we say that Christ is the Lamb of God and explain that the Lamb of God was slain for our redemption, having further recognized and this is crucial - we further recognize that Christ, though Man, would not have died naturally because, unlike us, He was not a sinner. His death had to be inflicted outside of Himself. In a word, the Lamb of God - watch the verb - had to be slain in order to die. Moreover, Christ being the sinless Lamb of God, having no sin on His soul which would have deserved death, his mortal Body, mortal because He wanted it to be mortal, could only die by the Blood separating from that Body. Christ's Body was deprived of its Soul when the Blood left the Body. All of this, therefore, is locked up in realizing that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who by shedding His Blood redeemed the world.

Our reflections in this conference will be three. First, to see the context which the Church over the centuries has used as the foundation for her devotion to the Precious Blood of Christ. Then, the understanding of the role of the Precious Blood in the life and sanctification of priests. And finally, what the Precious Blood should be in our own lives, and what devotion to the Blood of Christ ought to be in everyone who claims to be a true follower of the Lamb of God.

The revealed foundation for the Church's belief in the Precious Blood and the reason for her fostering devotion to the Precious Blood among the faithful occurs in the first chapter of the first letter of St. Peter, verses 18-19. Says Peter:

"You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things as silver or gold but with the Precious Blood of Christ as the Lamb without blemish and without spot."

Unquote Peter.

There are certain words and phrases in the revealed statement that we have just read that we should begin to unravel in order to understand something of the depth of meaning behind those two simple words, Precious Blood. Peter

begins by reminding the faithful to remember the hardest thing in this life for us is to remain mindful of the truths of faith. Because what we believe on God's revealed Word is twice removed from the common experience that we have in this world. What we believe is first of all not immediately perceptible to the senses. Moreover, what we believe is not even penetrable to the naked reason. The word, remember, is an imperative: keep in mind. Arouse your faith in what and how you were redeemed. And it is the how we were redeemed that is the foundation stone of the mystery of the Precious Blood. God took on a human nature so that in that human nature He could die. In order to die, the soul had to separate from the body. But for the Body to have the soul separate, the body itself had to be deprived of His Blood. Theologically speaking and physiologically speaking, the All-Holy Son of God who became Man to redeem us could only have died by being drained of His Blood. Christ, listen, could not have died of some disease. Christ could not have died because of some mortal illness. All illness, disease, the natural debilitating of the body is the result of sin. Let me emphasize this. All our illness, our disease, our sickness, our wasting away of our body for all of us this is our faith - is the result of our sinful nature. Not so with Christ. That draining of the human body of His Blood was the one way that Christ, Sinless Son of God and Son of Mary that He was, the one way that He could die.

Peter goes on: "we were redeemed, we were ransomed." What is Peter talking about? What is Peter saying when he says that we were redeemed? Literally it means "bought back". Having sinned before God, we incurred a heavy debt. The debt was death. But all of the deaths (plural) of all of the human beings since the beginning of time, we believe, would not have been adequate - again, it is our faith - would not have been adequate to ransom, to make up for, the infinite gravity of the sin not only of our first parents but by now the accumulated - what a low figure of speech - mountain of sin. Because an infinite being was in His Being offended by His creatures, only an Infinite Being could provide adequate ransom to redeem.

Peter goes on: "We were therefore not redeemed by anything corruptible". And you would think that Peter would find two better words than gold and silver. Because of all material things that are corruptible, two of the most incorruptible are gold and silver. But not even the most precious things that the world can provide, no other ransom, would have been adequate. But we have been redeemed, bought back, ransomed, by the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God. Try not to forget the title. Precious Blood is the revealed title, part of God's inspired biblical teaching in the first letter of the first Vicar of Christ.

I'm not quite finished yet with part one. Why does Peter identify the Blood of the Lamb of God as "Precious?" Well, it is surely Precious because it is the Blood

of no human being. It is the Blood of the living God who took on human nature, capable of shedding His Blood. Why was the Blood of Christ Precious? Because it is the Blood of God who took on human nature in order to be able to suffer and to bleed and, let us add, in order to bleed to death. Why Precious? Because it is the Blood of the living God.

We now ask ourselves, what in the spirituality of Father Gerald was his understanding of the role of the Precious Blood in the life of a priest? Remember, Father Gerald's spirituality is a priestly spirituality. I would like to read at some length, the text goes back to July, the traditional month of the Precious Blood, the year 1950. It is twenty years before his death. Father wrote a short essay on the Precious Blood and the Priest. I would like to quote some pertinent passages.

"The Precious Blood of Jesus obviously belongs to all men inasmuch as for all men without exception It was poured out on Calvary. Nevertheless, it will be profitable for us priests to reflect on our special relationship with the redeeming Blood of Christ. First, we share with all sinners, aware of what the Blood of Christ has purchased for us, in a debt of gratitude which God's continued patience with us in the forgiveness of our daily transgressions, only serves to increase. Secondly, We share, insofar as we have accepted the graces of personal holiness, in the gratitude of our Blessed Mother and of all the saints, for all holiness comes from the Blood of Jesus. Third, we share uniquely in Mary's privilege of bringing the Precious Blood to man. Her Immaculate heart is the fountainhead. But for the continued presence of the Blood of Jesus on our altars, God deigns to use us, His priests, so that, effectively, we share in Mary's privilege of giving the Blood of Jesus to the world. Finally, we priests administer the fruits of the Precious Blood every time we administer the Holy Sacraments and, most especially, in every sacramental absolution." Unquote Father Gerald.

As I have been saying and will repeat more than once, it is not just my forty years in the priesthood, it is my lifetime relationship with by now hundreds of priests, most of whom, thank God, have remained faithful to their priestly vocations - but not all.

If there is one mystery of the faith that every priest should meditate on every day, it is: to what extent is his priestly life a reflection of the Christ who ordained him. Over the years of teaching priests, I have told them, "Whatever else you forget, do not forget the word - priest, in every language of history, in every religion ancient and living, the word, priest, means the one who sacrifices."

And in Christianity, the essence of the priesthood means self-sacrifice. That's why God became Man, so that He might have a human Body with living, human Blood, and have a human will so that, by shedding His own Blood voluntarily He might be the Victim, and by shedding that Blood voluntarily He might be the Priest.

When priests are ordained, we are told by the ordaining prelate, to be what we are called, to live up to what we offer, to become like the one Who ordains us, the High Priest Jesus Christ. A priest is ordained, not - dear Lord - not for himself but for others. He should spend himself. Like my dear friend, Father Pusatari in Rome, one of Rome's exorcists, told me: a priest should allow people to devour him, eat him up. In a word, to drain his blood. That is Part two of our reflections.

Part three. Devotion to the Precious Blood is not a spiritual option, it is a spiritual obligation, and that not only for priests, but for every follower of Christ. I really believe, and I hesitate even saying this, but I really believe that one of the symptoms of modern society (and I would even include, sadly, modern Catholic society) one of the symptoms of a growing, gnawing secularism is the lessening and the weakening of devotion to the Precious Blood. Devotion, as we know, is a composite of three elements: It is first- veneration, it is secondly- invocation, and it is thirdly- imitation. In other words, devotion to the Precious Blood of Christ, the Lamb of God who was slain, is first of all to be veneration on our part, which is a composite of knowledge, love and adoration. We are to study to come to a deeper understanding of what those two - I am afraid for many people - casual words, Precious Blood, really mean.

I found this passage in the oldest document, outside of sacred scripture, from the first century of the Christian era - to be exact, from Pope St. Clement I, dated about 96 A.D. Says Pope Clement:

"Let us fix our gaze on the Blood of Christ and realize how truly precious It is, seeing that it was poured out for our salvation and brought the grace of conversion to the whole world."

To understand the meaning of the Precious Blood we must (otherwise the mystery will be lost on us), we must get some comprehension of the gravity of sin, of the awfulness of offending God, because it required the Blood of the Son of God to forgive that sin. We are living in an age in which to sin has become fashionable. But we believe that we are here for only a very short time. We further believe that Christ when He told us the way that leads to damnation is

broad and many there are who walk that way, that the way that leads to eternal life is narrow and there are few who walk that way. I am watching every syllable I am saying. The Church has never pronounced infallibly on the number lost and the number saved, but she has canonized St. John of the Cross and made him a Doctor of the Church. Says John of the Cross: "I believe that the majority of the human race will be lost."

This veneration of the Precious Blood, which is the first element in our devotion to the Precious Blood means that we have a deep sensitivity to the awfulness of sin. Sin must be terrible. It must be awful. It must be the most dreadful thing in the universe. Why? Because it cost the living God in human form the shedding of His Blood.

Devotion to the Precious Blood means - beyond veneration which means understanding, grasping and loving, loving Jesus Christ in the shedding of His Blood - it further means that we invoke Christ under the attribute of His Precious Blood. I really wonder, I do. Suppose I picked a thousand Catholics at random, I mean, believing, Churchgoing Catholics and would ask them: What litanies has the Church approved for the universal recitation by the faithful? I honestly doubt if very many out of a thousand would know that one of those litanies is the *Litany of the Precious Blood*. I thought I would read a few invocations;

"Blood of Christ, Only-Begotten Son of the eternal Father."

What are we saying? Are we saying that that Blood was the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father? Frankly, yes. Because we know that term, Precious Blood, is not just a symbol, not just a title. It identifies that quality of the Only-Begotten Son of the Eternal Father which Christ wants us to constantly have in mind, namely, that the Only-Begotten Son of the Eternal Father suffered. Suffered for us.

"Blood of Christ falling upon the earth in the Agony."

In the Middle Ages when the faith was stronger than in modern times, even the errors, shall I say, were more respectable? There were those who speculated (talk about a believing age!) those who speculated that maybe, just maybe, when Christ shed His Blood either in the Agony in the Garden or on Calvary, that once the Blood left the Body It was just ordinary blood. In the age of faith, believers speculated about, what was that blood separated from the Body? And the Church infallibly defined: Every drop of Christ's Blood in the Agony in the Garden, every drop He shed on Calvary, every drop was united hypostatically with the Second Person of the Trinity. Every drop of that Blood was adorable.

"Blood of Christ, Price of our salvation."

The more I lecture, the more I teach, the more people I deal with, the more I have come to identify two words: love and pain. If one person claims to love someone else, the one who claims to love, infallibly - if there is genuine love - is not only resigned to enduring pain -- pain is the proof of love, pain is the price of love. That's why God became Man: that He might be able to endure pain, especially the pain of draining His Blood out of love for us. May I recommend to all of you to promote the recitation of the litany of the Precious Blood?

Finally, devotion means imitation. In other words, if Christ showed His love for us by the shedding of His Blood, we are to show our love for Him - I mean everything I am saying - we are to show our love for Him by the shedding of *our* blood. That is what the Church means when she has us say that when Christ offers Himself daily on the altar in the Sacrifice of the Mass, we are told to identify that as our sacrifice - His and ours. He, the Head of the Mystical Body, can no longer suffer, but thank God, we can!

This shedding of blood, I have not tired of repeating since my ordination, that we are living in the most heroic age of martyrs in the history of Christianity. I mean it. Countless millions of Christians who believe in the Precious Blood are proving their love for Him by their sufferings. Many by now in our century have shed and are shedding their blood physically. What a privilege! What a privilege if we were called to shed our blood physically in the Name of, and out of love for Christ!

And I don't hesitate recommending praying for the gift of martyrdom. But even if it is not God's Will that we shed our blood for Christ, to manifest our love for Him physically, let's make sure, absolutely sure, that we let no opportunity go by without shedding our blood spiritually. And that, my friends, no matter what our state of life, no matter what our vocation may be, if we are Christians, we are meant to shed our blood!

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, You became Man in order by your Passion and Death and the draining of your Blood on the Cross, might prove to us how much You, our God, love us. Protect us, dear Jesus, from ever running away from the sight of blood. Strengthen our weak human wills so that we will not only not run away from the cross, but welcome every opportunity to shed our blood in spirit in union with your Precious Blood, so that, dying to ourselves in time we might live with You in Eternity. Amen

In the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

December 26, 1987

APOSTOLIC LETTER "SANGUIS CHRISTI"

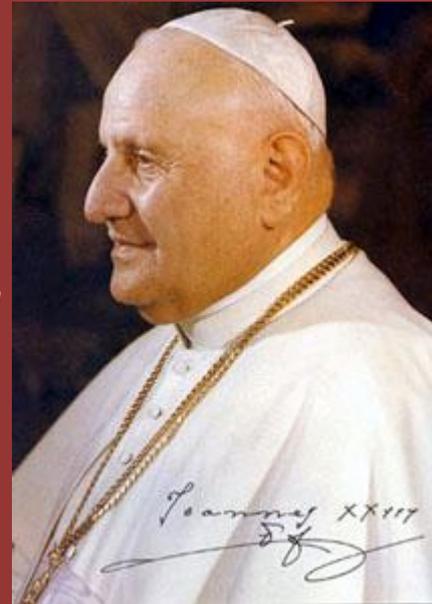
Pope Saint John XXIII did much to promote devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Christ. He released an Apostolic Letter on the devotion, called Sanguis Christi, approving the Litany in Honour of the Blood of Jesus shown below.

Pope Saint John XXIII - Sanguis Christi - On Promoting Devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ - 30 June 1960

To his Venerable Brother Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable brethren: greetings and apostolic blessings.

From the very outset of our pontificate, in speaking of daily devotions we have repeatedly urged the faithful (often in eager tones that frankly hinted our future design) to cherish warmly that marvellous manifestation of divine mercy toward individuals and Holy Church and the whole world redeemed and saved by Jesus Christ: we mean devotion to his Most Precious Blood.



From infancy this devotion was instilled in us within our own household. Fondly we still recall how our parents used to recite the Litany of the Most Precious Blood every day during July.

The Apostle's wholesome advice comes to mind: "Keep watch, then, over yourselves, and over God's Church, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops; you are to be the shepherds of that flock which he won for himself at the price of his own blood."¹ Now among the cares of our pastoral office, venerable brethren, we are convinced that, second only to vigilance over sound doctrine, preference belongs to the proper surveillance and development of piety, in both its liturgical and private expressions. With that in mind, we judge it most timely to call our beloved children's attention to the unbreakable bond which must exist between the devotions to the Most Holy Name and Most Sacred Heart of Jesus — already so widespread among Christians — and devotion to the incarnate Word's Most Precious Blood, "shed for many, to the remission of sins."²

It is supremely important that the Church's liturgy fully conform to Catholic belief ("the law for prayer is the law for faith"³), and that only those devotional forms be sanctioned which well up from the unsullied springs of true faith. But

the same logic calls for complete accord among different devotions. Those deemed more basic and more conducive to holiness must not be at odds with or cut off from one another. And the more individualistic and secondary ones must give way in popularity and practice to those devotions which more effectively actuate the fullness of salvation wrought by the "one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and gave himself as a ransom for them all." 4 Through living in an atmosphere thus charged with true faith and solid piety the faithful can be confident that they are "thinking with the Church" and holding fast in the loving fellowship of prayer to Christ Jesus, the high priest of that sublime religion which he founded and which owes to him its name, its strength, its dignity.

The Church's wonderful advances in liturgical piety match the progress of faith itself in penetrating divine truth. Within this development it is most heart-warming to observe how often in recent centuries this Holy See has openly approved and furthered the three devotions just mentioned. From the Middle Ages, it is true, many pious persons practiced these devotions, which then spread to various dioceses and religious orders and congregations. Nevertheless it remained for the Chair of Peter to pronounce them orthodox and approve them for the Church as a whole.

Suffice it to recall the spiritual favours that our predecessors from the sixteenth century on have attached to practicing devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which in the previous century Saint Bernardine of Siena untiringly spread throughout Italy. Approval was given first to the Office and Mass of the Most Holy Name and later to the Litany.⁵ No less striking are the benefits the popes have attached to practising devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose rise and spread owe so much to the revelations of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.⁶ So highly have all the popes regarded this devotion that again and again in their official acts they have expounded its nature, defended its validity, promoted its practice. Their crowning achievement on this devotion are three splendid encyclicals.⁷

Likewise the devotion to the Most Precious Blood, which owes its marvellous diffusion to the 19th-century Roman priest, Saint Gaspar del Bufalo, has rightly merited the approval and backing of this Apostolic See. We may recall that by order of Benedict XIV the Mass and Office in honour of the divine Saviour's adorable Blood were composed. And to fulfil a vow made at Gaeta Pius IX extended the feast to the whole Church.⁸ Finally, as a commemoration of the nineteenth centenary of our redemption, Pius XI of happy memory raised this feast to the rank of first-class double, so that the greater liturgical splendour would highlight the devotion and bring to men more abundant fruits of the redeeming Blood.

Following our predecessors' example we have taken further steps to promote the devotion to the Precious Blood of the unblemished Lamb, Jesus Christ. We have approved the Litany of the Precious Blood drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and through special indulgences have encouraged its public and private recitation throughout the Catholic world. Amid today's most serious and pressing spiritual needs, may this latest exercise of that "care for all the churches"):9 proper to our sovereign office awaken in Christian hearts a firm conviction about the supreme abiding effectiveness of these three devotions.

As we now approach the feast and month devoted to honouring Christ's Blood — the price of our redemption, the pledge of salvation and life eternal — may Christians meditate on it more fervently, may they savour its fruits more frequently in sacramental communion. Let their meditations on the boundless power of the Blood be bathed in the light of sound biblical teaching and the doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. How truly precious is this Blood is voiced in the song which the Church sings with the Angelic Doctor (sentiments wisely seconded by our predecessor Clement VI):10

Blood that but one drop of has the world to win
All the world forgiveness of its world of sin. 11

Unlimited is the effectiveness of the God-Man's Blood — just as unlimited as the love that impelled him to pour it out for us, first at his circumcision eight days after birth, and more profusely later on in his agony in the garden, 12 in his scourging and crowning with thorns, in his climb to Calvary and crucifixion, and finally from out that great wide wound in his side which symbolizes the divine Blood cascading down into all the Church's sacraments. Such surpassing love suggests, nay demands, that everyone reborn in the torrents of that Blood adore it with grateful love.

The Blood of the new and eternal covenant especially deserves this worship of latria when it is elevated during the sacrifice of the Mass. But such worship achieves its normal fulfilment in sacramental communion with the same Blood, indissolubly united with Christ's Eucharistic Body. In intimate association with the celebrant the faithful can then truly make his sentiments at communion their own: "I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. . . The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul for everlasting life. Amen." Thus as often as they come worthily to this holy table they will receive more abundant fruits of the redemption and resurrection and eternal life won for all men by the Blood Christ shed "through the Holy Spirit."13 Nourished by his Body and Blood, sharing the divine strength that has sustained

count less martyrs, they will stand up to the slings and arrows of each day's fortunes — even if need be to martyrdom itself for the sake of Christian virtue and the kingdom of God. Theirs will be the experience of that burning love which made Saint John Chrysostom cry out:

Let us, then, come back from that table like lions breathing out fire, thus becoming terrifying to the Devil, and remaining mindful of our Head and of the love he has shown for us. . . This Blood, when worthily received, drives away demons and puts them at a distance from us, and even summons to us angels and the Lord of angels. . . This Blood, poured out in abundance, has washed the whole world clean. . . This is the price of the world; by it Christ purchased the Church... This thought will check in us unruly passions. How long, in truth, shall we be attached to present things? How long shall we remain asleep? How long shall we not take thought for our own salvation? Let us remember what privileges God has bestowed on us, let us give thanks, let us glorify him, not only by faith, but also by our very works. 14

If only Christians would reflect more frequently on the fatherly warning of the first pope: "Look anxiously, then, to the ordering of your lives while your stay on earth lasts.

You know well enough that your ransom was not paid in earthly currency, silver or gold; it was paid in the precious blood of Christ; no lamb was ever so pure, so spotless a victim."¹⁵ If only they would lend a more eager ear to the apostle of the Gentiles: "A great price was paid to ransom you; glorify God by making your bodies the shrines of his presence."¹⁶ Their upright lives would then be the shining example they ought to be; Christ's Church would far more effectively fulfil its mission to men. God wants all men to be saved,¹⁷ for he has willed that they should all be ransomed by the Blood of his only-begotten Son; he calls them all to be members of the one Mystical Body whose head is Christ. If only men would be more responsive to these promptings of his grace, how much the bonds of brotherly love among individuals and peoples and nations would be strengthened. Life in society would be so much more peaceable, so much worthier of God and the human nature created in his image and likeness.¹⁸

This is the sublime vocation that Saint Paul urged Jewish converts to fix their minds on when tempted to nostalgia for what was only a weak figure and prelude of the new covenant: "The scene of your approach now is mount Sion, is the heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God; here are gathered thousands upon thousands of angels, here is the assembly of those first-born sons whose names are written in heaven, here is God sitting in judgment on all men, here are the spirits of just men, now made perfect; here is Jesus, the spokesman of the new covenant, and the sprinkling of his blood, which has better things to say than

We have full confidence, venerable brethren, that these fatherly exhortations of ours, once brought to the attention of your priests and people in whatever way you deem best, will be put into practice not just willingly but enthusiastically. As a sign of heavenly graces and our affection we impart our most heartfelt apostolic blessing to each of you and to all your flocks, and particularly to those who respond with devout generosity to the promptings of this letter.

Given at Saint Peter's in Rome, the eve of the feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ's Most Precious Blood, June 30, 1960, the second year of our pontificate.

ENDNOTES

1. Acts 20:28.
2. Matthew 26:28.
3. Encyclical "On the Sacred Liturgy," America Press edition (New York: 1954), No. 46.
4. I Timothy 2:5-6.
5. Acta Sanctae Sedis 18 (1886) :509.
6. Cf. Office for the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, 2nd nocturne, lesson 5.
7. "On the Consecration of mankind to the Sacred Heart of Jesus," The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII (New York: 1903), 454—461; "The Reparation Due to the Sacred Heart," The Catholic Mind 26 (1928): 221-235; "On Devotion to the Sacred Heart," The Pope Speaks 3 (1956): 115-149.
8. Decree "Redempti Sumus," Aug. 10, 1849, Decreta Authentica S.R.C. (Rome: 1898), II, No. 2978.
9. II Corinthians 11:28.
10. Bull "The Only Begotten Son of God," Jan. 25, 1343, The Sources of Catholic Dogma (St. Louis: 1957), No. 550.
11. Hymn "Adoro te devote." Translation from Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Oxford: 1930), No. 89.
12. Luke 22:43.
13. Hebrews 9:14.
14. "Homily 46," Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist (Fathers of the Church, New York: 1957), 469, 471-472.
15. 1 Peter 1:17-19.
16. I Corinthians 6:20.

17. Cf. I Timothy 2:4.

18. Cf. Genesis 1:26.

19. Hebrews 12:22-24.

The following is taken from Dom Prosper Guéranger's entry in *The Liturgical Year* for July 1, in Volume XII of the 1983 Marian House edition of the English translation by the Benedictines of Stanbrook.

"John the Baptist has pointed out the Lamb, Peter has firmly established his throne, Paul has prepared the bride; their joint work, admirable in its unity, at once suggests the reason for their feasts occurring almost simultaneously in the cycle. The alliance being now secured, all three fall into shade; whilst the bride herself, raised up by them to such lofty heights, appears alone before us, holding in her hands the sacred cup of the nuptial-feast."

"This gives the key of today's solemnity, revealing how its appearance in the heavens of the holy liturgy at this particular season is replete with mystery. The Church, it is true, has already made known to the sons of the new covenant, in a much more solemn matter, the price of the Blood that redeemed them, its nutritive strength, and the adoring homage is its due. On Good Friday, earth and heaven beheld all sin drowned in the saving stream, whose eternal flood-gates at last gave way beneath the combined effort of man's violence and of the love of the divine Heart. The festival of Corpus Christi witnessed our prostrate worship before the altars whereon is perpetuated the Sacrifice of Calvary, and where the outpouring of the precious Blood affords drink to the humblest little ones, as well as to the mightiest potentates of earth, lowly bowed in adoration before it."

"How is it, then, that holy Church is now inviting all Christians to hail, in a particular manner, the stream of life ever gushing from the sacred fount? What else can this mean, but that the preceding solemnities have by no means exhausted the mystery? The peace which this Blood has made to reign in the high places as well as in the low; the impetus of its wave bearing back the sons of Adam from the yawning gulf, purified, renewed, and dazzling white in the radiance of their heavenly apparel; the sacred Table outspread before them on the waters' brink, and the chalice brimful of inebriation - all this preparation and display would be objectless, all these splendours would be incomprehensible, if man were not brought to see therein the wooings of a love that could never endure its advances to be outdone by the pretensions of any other. Therefore, the Blood of Jesus is set before our eyes at this moment as the Blood of the Testament; the pledge of the alliance proposed to us by God [Exodus 24: 8; Hebrews 9: 20]' the dower stipulated by eternal Wisdom for this divine union to which He is inviting all men, and its consummation in our soul which is being urged forward with such vehemence by the Holy Ghost."

"'Having therefore, brethren, a confidence in entering into the Holies by the Blood of Christ,' says the apostle, 'a new and living way which He hath

dedicated for through the veil - that is to say, His flesh - let us draw near with a pure heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He is faithful that hath promised. Let us consider one another to provoke unto charity and to good works [Hebrews 10: 19-24]. And may the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great Pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Blood of the everlasting Testament, fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will: doing in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom is glory forever and ever. Amen! [Hebrews 13: 20, 21]."

"Nor must we omit to mention here, that this feast is a monument of one of the most brilliant victories of holy Church in our own age. [Blessed Pope] Pius IX had been driven out from Rome in [November] 1848 by the triumphant revolution; but the following year, just about this season, his power was re-established. Under the aegis of the apostles on June 28 and the two following days, the eldest daughter of the Church [a former nickname for France], faithful to her past glories, swept the ramparts of the eternal city; and on July 2, Mary's festival [the feast of the Visitation on the traditional calendar], the victory was completed. Not long after this, a twofold decree notified to the city and the world the Pontiff's gratitude and the way in which he intended to perpetuate, in the sacred liturgy, the memory of these events."

"On August 10, from Gaeta itself [a town between Rome and Naples], the place of his exile in the evil day, [Blessed Pope] Pius IX, before returning to reassume the governments of his States, addressing himself to the invisible head of the Church, confided her in a special manner to His divine care, by the institution of this day's festival; reminding Him that it was for His Church that He had vouchsafed to shed all His precious Blood. Then, when the Pontiff re-entered his capital [on 12 April 1850, when he was finally assured that the French would not interfere in his affairs], turning to Mary, just as [Pope St.] Pius V and [Pope] Pius VIII had done under other circumstances, the Vicar of Christ solemnly attributed the honour of the recent victory to her who is ever the help of Christians; for on the feast of her Visitation it had been gained; and he now decreed that this said feast of July 2 should be raised from the rite of double major to that of second class through the whole world [under the pre-1962 system of classifying feasts and holy days]. This was a prelude to the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which the immortal Pontiff had already projected, whereby the crushing of the serpent's head would be completed."

Precious Blood of Jesus, inebriate me!
Sanguis Christi, inebria me!