

Homily 14th Sunday Yr A: July - Month of Most Precious Blood of Jesus

By Fr. Dwight P. Campbell, S.T.D.

In our 2nd reading today, from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he says: "*You are [living a life] in the spirit only if the Spirit of God dwells in you.*"

How does the Spirit of God dwell in us? By Baptism – when we receive a share of God's own divine life in our souls (called Sanctifying Grace); it is then that the Spirit of God dwells in us as well.

This is called the "Divine Indwelling" – the Spirit of God dwelling in us, making us "temples" of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says elsewhere.

And because the Holy Spirit is one in substance with God the Father and God the Son (three Persons in One God), when the Holy Spirit dwells in us, the entire Trinity dwells in us – we become, in truth, "temples" of the living God.

This was all made possible by Christ's suffering and death.

That's why St. Paul, in that same Epistle to the Romans, says that, "*through baptism into his death, . . . we live in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:4).

And in dying on the Cross, Jesus shed His Blood for us.

Blood is the source of life for the flesh, our body. If our body is drained of blood, we die.

This is how we were redeemed: by Christ shedding His Blood for us.

St. Paul makes this clear in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Eph. 1:7).

Continuing, St. Paul says that "*in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near [to God] by the Blood of Christ*" (Eph. 2:13).

In the Old Covenant, the Jews offered the blood of bulls and goats, which could not take away sin. But Jesus, the True Lamb of God, offered his own blood to redeem us.

St. Peter tells us this also in his First Epistle: “*You were redeemed not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as the Lamb without blemish or stain*” (1 Pet. 18-19).

Last month, the month of June, was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, because in June we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – the Friday after the Feast of Corpus Christi.

In the Church’s tradition, the month of July is dedicated to the Precious Blood of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because in the Church’ traditional calendar, we celebrate, on July 1, the Feast of the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Before the second Vatican Council there were separate feasts for the Body of Christ (*Corpus Christi*) and the Blood of Christ.

In the new order of the Mass (after Vatican II), these feasts are now combined on *Corpus Christi* - which is really now the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

What do we mean by saying that Jesus redeemed us by His Blood?

We mean that Christ, the sinless Lamb of God, became man and allowed sinful men to scourge Him, crown Him with thorns, and crucify Him – all of which caused Him to profusely shed His Precious Blood; literally, to bleed to death, in order to pay the price for our sins and to redeem/buy back for us the share in God’s own divine life that was lost by Adam’s sin.

Many medical doctors are of the opinion that the ultimate cause of Jesus’ death was loss of blood. The description of St. John the Apostle gives witness to this: When His side and Heart were pierced by the lance, both blood and water poured forth – a sign that almost all the blood had drained from His Body.

So, what was the price that Jesus paid for our redemption? The shedding of His Precious Blood.

Jesus attested to this when, at the Last Supper, He took the chalice and said, *“This is the blood of the New Covenant, which will be shed for the forgiveness of sins.”*

We call Christ’s Blood “precious” because it was, truly, the Blood of the Son of God who, out of love for us, assumed a human nature, with a human body that had human blood running through its veins.

That Most Precious Blood was shed for us during His Passion – which began in the Garden of Gethsemane when He literally sweated blood (as St. Luke, the Evangelist who was a physician, tells us); it continued with His scourging of the pillar, which caused a tremendous loss of blood – horrific, as Mel Gibson portrayed so powerfully in his movie *The Passion of the Christ*, and which is shown on the Shroud of Turin, the burial cloth of Jesus, with hundreds of marks on His body, especially on His back; then with the crowning with thorns which pierced Our Lord’s head/scalp, with blood pouring down on His beautiful face; and was consummated on Calvary when He was nailed to the cross.

In fact, as I’ve said, after Jesus died, the centurion pierced His side and Heart with a lance and both blood and water poured out – a sign that Jesus had nothing more to give; He shed His very last drops of blood for us.

The great Saints from the early centuries of the Church tell us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, who stood beneath the Cross as Jesus lay dying, was splattered with His Blood – the blood He had received from her when He was conceived, and during His nine months in His Mother’s womb.

Most importantly, we believe that Christ continues to offer His Blood for us in every Sacrifice of the Mass.

Now in Heaven, in a glorified body, Jesus can no longer shed His blood physically, as He did on Calvary.

But as Father John Hardon says, “in every Mass He sheds His Blood mystically. That is why, when He instituted the Eucharist [at the Last Supper], He

separately consecrated first the bread, *'This is my body'*, and then the wine, *'This is my blood.'* . . .

"[Thus] every Mass signifies the separation of Christ's Body and Blood. . . . On Calvary, Christ merited the graces of our salvation. Through the Mass, He now communicates the graces won for us by the shedding of His Blood on the Cross."

This is why at every Mass the priest consecrates the bread and the wine separately, as Jesus did at the Last Supper, symbolizing that on Calvary His Blood was separated from His Body, which led to His death – and our redemption.

But we realize that when we receive the consecrated host, we receive both the Body and Blood of Jesus. Why? Because It is the glorified Body and Blood of Jesus that we receive – and now, having risen from the dead, glorified, His Blood can no longer be separated from His Body.

Receiving Christ's risen, glorified Body and Blood in the Eucharist is how we CONTINUE to live in the Spirit. Why is this so? B/c the divine life we received at Baptism, like our human, bodily life, needs to be continually FED.

This is why Jesus says (in the Bread of Life discourse in ch. 6 of John's Gospel):

"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you."

And Jesus then says: *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, I will raise him on the Last Day"* – making clear that His risen, glorified Body and Blood in the Eucharist is the Source and Pledge of our future resurrection, on the Last Day, in GLORIFIED BODIES, with GLORIFIED BLOOD running through our veins!

St. Paul testifies to this in our 2nd reading today when He says: *"If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also [on the Last Day, Christ's 2nd Coming in glory], through his Spirit that dwells within you."*

A beautiful practice in the month of July is to pray the Litany of the Precious Blood of Jesus. I'll quote some lines here:

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

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

Blood of Christ, flowing forth in the crowning of thorns, save us.

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

In this Litany, we are reminded why the Blood of Christ is so precious:

Blood of Christ, the price for our salvation, save us.

Blood of Christ, without which there was no forgiveness of sins, save us

A beautiful traditional piece of artwork that symbolizes Jesus nourishing us with His Precious Blood is the image of the mother pelican: When she has no more food to feed her young, she pecks her breast with her long beak and feeds them with her own blood.

I'll end with a few more lines from the Litany of the Precious Blood:

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, pledge of eternal life, save us!