



The Body and Blood of Christ Civi
Excerpts from Genesis 14, Psalm 110, 1 Corinthians 11 & Luke 9

Sacrifice

As priest, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice, and we are called to follow in making sacrifices ourselves.
Fr David King – 19th June 2022

Please take some time with the Psalm before looking at this (Psalm 109 (or 110 in most bibles))

1. A bird's

So, as with last week, I'm not going to give a homily simply on the doctrine of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is very much at the heart of what I want to talk about today, but I want to begin with the scriptures that we are given this weekend. And to lead us into these scriptures, and what they are saying, as ever we need a place to start, and maybe this is a good place to start...

- I remember reading this in the National Geographic a while ago. Once there was a terrible forest fire in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming in the US. And after the fire had wreaked its havoc and died away, a couple of forest rangers trekked up one of the mountains to assess the damage. And in one part of the forest, the damage was huge, the fire had been devastating, but then the rangers saw a bird sitting up, almost like a statue, at the base of a tree.
- They went over and saw that the bird was dead, it had literally been petrified. It had been burnt to a cinder by the heat, but was still fully formed. Its wings were out and one of the rangers poked the bird with a stick and it fell over, and three tiny chicks scurried out from under their dead mother's wings.
- In an instant the Rangers saw what had happened. The mother, totally aware of what was happening, had clearly carried her chicks to the base of a tree, where they had most chance of survival away from the smoke, and had gathered them under her wings, knowing that it was safest for them there.
 - The mother could have flown to safety, of course, and saved herself. But knowing that her chicks were unable to do this, she chose to die, to save them.
- The funny thing was that a couple of days after reading this, I then read about an almost identical thing happening in some earthquake somewhere. I can't even remember where the earthquake was, but a rescue team were trying to recover people who might still be alive in all the rubble. In the ruins of a building they reached this young woman covered with bricks and debris.
- The woman, tragically, was already dead, but she was kind of on her knees, hunched over, with her hands on the floor, 'it was almost looked as if she was in prayer', one of the rescuers said. She had been killed with the house falling on her back and head. The team almost left her to try and look for other people that might be alive, but for some reason they went back and found a 3-month old baby wrapped in a blanket in the space that she had created on the inside of her body. The baby, having been shielded by his mother, survived and was safely pulled from the rubble. There's something in us that knows that when the time comes...sacrifice is the only way.

2. Jesus'

- What have these stories of sacrifice got to do with the readings? Well, they have *everything* to do with the readings. The psalm we have today, Psalm 109 is actually one of the most crucial bits of scripture in the whole bible. This psalm, believe it or not, is the most quoted piece of scripture in the whole of the New Testament. Every book of the New Testament refers at some point to this psalm.
- Why is it so important? Well, David is writing the psalm and The Lord is the main character in the psalm, but as you may have noticed, the Lord is talking to someone else, whom David calls 'my master'. It's so enigmatic, but so crucial this psalm! Who is that person? Well, it's the Messiah, the saviour, the person that the Lord had promised to send, to usher in the reign of God on earth and bring healing and liberation to creation.
- So, what we get in this psalm is the Lord talking to the Messiah! It's utterly phenomenal (don't forget that David is writing this 1000 years before Jesus was born – no one had a clue about Jesus at this point). But it's what the Lord *says* to the Messiah that's the interesting thing. The Lord says that this messiah is a king (lots of verses make reference to this, him holding a sceptre etc.), but the Lord also says that the messiah is a priest "You are a priest for ever, a priest according to Melchizedek of old".
- So, *that's* why this psalm is so crucial, it clearly articulates that the coming Messiah is going to be both king and priest. Why is this important for us today? Well, don't forget that a priest is not someone in robes, but a *true* priest is simply one who offers sacrifice. So the idea is that the Messiah was going to usher in God's reign, and bring peace and blessing to the earth, *by offering sacrifice*. Fast forward to Jesus, and Jesus, the Messiah, was indeed a priest, he did indeed offer a sacrifice...but not the one that anyone was expecting him to make. He made the ultimate sacrifice, and offered his own body. "This is my body, given for you".
- And that gift, that sacrifice of his own body that Jesus made on the cross, was immortalised for us in a meal, it was encapsulated and preserved for us in the celebration of mass and has been handed down to us (as Paul says in the second reading), so we could remember it, and make it present and enter into it. "Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death" says Paul.

3. Ours

- Right, I hope all that makes sense. But as ever the crucial question is where does it leave us? What can we take away from all this? Well, firstly I think there's a little encouragement in there for all of us. This is where we remember Jesus' sacrifice and make it present – how wonderful that we gather every Sunday to do this, this is *exactly* what we should be doing. And there might even be a little challenge in there for those joining online who could actually be here with us – this is a gift that's meant to be *received*, '...given for you' says Jesus. Come back, and receive Jesus in the Eucharist, the greatest of all gifts!
- But also, and perhaps more to the point, the Eucharist, the memorial of Jesus' sacrifice, invites us into it, it invites us to similarly live lives of sacrifice ourselves. We are disciples of Jesus, he calls us to follow him! Now, not all of us will be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice of our lives, as in the stories at the beginning. But often the greatest sacrifices are the every-day ones, that no one will even notice, or thank you for. Looking after and caring for children day in day out, caring for elderly relatives, giving the entirety of your life to teaching young people at school, or devoting yourself to nursing at a hospital, or all the other ways that we give of ourselves to others. This is what it means to live a Eucharistic life. So, maybe that's what today is about, yes it's about rejoicing in Jesus the true priest who offered himself as sacrifice, but it's also hearing the call for our lives to be lives of sacrifice too.

Jesus, thank you for the sacrifice you made of your life for me. Give me all the courage I need to offer sacrifice in my life too.