



## **SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A) HOMILY**

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In today's Gospel we see roots of the blood feuds that in our day fuel the conflicts in the middle east, in urban gang wars in our cities and in the unending conflicts in our homes. Ancient legal systems had formulas that were applied to specific crimes, laws that prescribed punishments equal to the offenses. A common expression was: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." More often than not the cost of this cycle of retaliation and retribution is the spilling of innocent blood.

As you may know Blood is literally a specialized bodily fluid that delivers necessary substances to the body's cells— such as nutrients and oxygen – and transports waste products away from those same cells. Humans can't live without blood. Without blood the body's organs couldn't get the oxygen and nutrients they need to survive. We couldn't keep warm or cool and live life to the fullest.

This is so critical that we have created blood banks as repositories where we stockpile blood gathered as a result of blood donations, stored and preserved for later use in blood transfusions—particularly in times of mortal danger that threaten our very lives.

In every mass celebrated throughout the world throughout all time wine is transubstantiated into the very blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet fewer and fewer believing and church going Catholics take from the Cup of Salvation at the time of Eucharist even in this Cathedral. It seems like we have lost our way and forgotten why we should take the communion cup. Let us take a moment to revisit our historical roots.

I found this passage in the oldest document, outside of sacred scripture, from the first century of the Christian era - from Pope St. Clement I, dated about 96 A.D. Pope Clement counsels our early Fathers and Mothers:

"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 we must get some comprehension of the gravity of sin, of the awfulness of offending God, because it cost the living God in human form the shedding of His innocent Blood. Domestic violence, incest, emotional abuse in the workplace, personality assassinations in the media, murders and mayhem flood our newscasts but there is barely create a ripple in our collective response. Let us not forget these acts are not only crimes but also Mortal sin, which leads to immortal death which separates us from God forever and ever.

The Precious Blood is not just a symbol, not just a title, not just an option at Communion time. It identifies that quality of the Only-Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, which he wants us to constantly have in mind, namely, that the Son of the Eternal Father freely suffered pain, shed his blood, died a horrible death and rose for us because of is overflowing love for us. But why suffer such pain? Simply put, pain is the proof of love, pain is the price of love.

Jesus instructs us to go beyond the norms of our violent society, to follow a higher law, a law not based on blood feuds but based rather on a more powerful force to govern our human relationships – the Law of Love. We are to be agents of God's

boundless love, a love that brings light out of darkness, order out of chaos, meaning out of absurdity and life out of death.

We must be careful, however, to note that Jesus is not instructing His followers to let evildoers do whatever they please. To do nothing to confront evil is not the response Jesus wants from us. Christians must resist evil when it is encountered. In fact, as believing Christians we are called to break the cycle of violence through acts of non-violence in pursuit of social justice.

God is the only One who can overcome evil and His ways are not our ways unless, of course, we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We cannot confront evil one or his poison of hatred with our own courage but with the courage of Christ. Love undermines hatred; it breaks the cycle of violence and tears down boundaries that wall us up in hatreds in the world.

Jesus preaches Love in action as a powerful force that destabilizes the ways of this world and confounds the worldly. The norms of this world are norms demanding retribution and violent repression through the strict application of raw power, power that in many cases is falsely justified under the force of unjust laws. Unjust laws have falsely justified racism, religious persecution, abortion, stigma and discrimination against People living with disabilities and unjust wars.

Jesus the Christ gives us the strength each and every week to walk his words, to practice his principles and to live his love. We are to do this with him, in him and for him.

By the mystery of water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity. Let us remember the Last Supper when he took the cup. Again, he gave the cup to his disciples, and said:

Take this, all of you, and drink from it:  
this is the cup of my blood,  
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.  
It will be shed for you and for all men  
so that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in memory of me.

Will you on this day choose to say yes to his invitation that echoes forth from the upper room in Jerusalem to this sacred altar tonight to take and drink the Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ? I pray that you will.