

In Their Midst

Session 9. Behold the Blood of the Covenant

The God who rescued Israel gave the people a covenant way of life and drew them toward communion in his presence.

What We Found

Israel's covenant obligations reach beyond private devotion. They order worship, work, truthfulness, property, responsibility, public justice, and treatment of vulnerable people. Grace came first, but grace called for a real response.

The Old Law contains genuine divine instruction while remaining preparatory. Its harder legal provisions have to be read honestly. A social arrangement that the Law regulates is not thereby held up as the goal God is aiming at.

The covenant ceremony joined God's words, Israel's assent, sacrifice, blood, appointed mediation, and a sacred meal. Jesus fulfills this pattern by giving his own blood to establish the new covenant.

Christ's sacrifice is complete and unrepeatable. The Eucharist does not add another sacrifice to Calvary. It sacramentally makes present the one saving sacrifice and gives the Church communion in its fruit.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine, 354-430

St. Augustine teaches that every visible sacrifice is a sacrament, or sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice by which the heart is offered to God. The outward rite is truthful when it expresses inward self-offering and communion with God.

The City of God 10.5.

How this is cited. This is a close summary of St. Augustine's distinction between visible sacrifice and the invisible sacrifice it signifies, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Ask whether Israel's spoken assent and sacrificial worship are matched by a life genuinely offered to the Lord.

St. John Chrysostom, c. 347-407

St. John Chrysostom connects the blood used by Moses to initiate the old covenant with Christ's gift of his own blood at the table of the new covenant. The former pattern used sacrificial victims, while Christ gives himself.

Homilies on Matthew 82.5.

How this is cited. This is an honest summary of the comparison St. John Chrysostom makes while commenting on the Last Supper.

For the group. The fulfillment is not merely a better symbol. Jesus himself is the covenant sacrifice and the giver of the sacred meal.

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274

Summary of his teaching: St. Thomas holds that the priesthood of the Old Law was a figure of the priesthood of Christ, so that Christ was not born of the stock of the figurative priests, and that the Old Law's rites could signify cleansing without effecting it as the sacraments of the New Law do.

Summa Theologiae III, q. 22, a. 1, ad 2; cf. III, q. 62, a. 6.

How this is cited. Summary drawn from two places, not a quotation. The figure-of-Christ claim is in the reply to the second objection of q. 22, a. 1; the point that the Old Law's rites signified without conferring grace is argued separately at q. 62, a. 6.

For the group. Read Exodus 24 as a true covenant sacrifice that also points beyond itself to the saving work only Christ can accomplish.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Read Exodus 24:3-8 slowly on three different days. After each reading, pray, 'Lord, show me one thing you have spoken that I need to do.' Write down the concrete response.
2. Choose one command from Exodus 22:20-27 or 23:1-9 and practice its underlying demand for seven days. Examples include refusing to pass along an unverified accusation, returning something owed promptly, or giving practical help to someone under pressure.
3. Before Sunday Mass, arrive five minutes early and thank Jesus for his once-for-all sacrifice. During the words over the chalice, listen for the covenant language and consciously unite your life to his offering.
4. Make one act of restitution if you have damaged another person's property, reputation, time, or trust. If direct contact would be unsafe or unwise, ask a priest or mature Catholic mentor to help you choose a prudent form of repair.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 24:7

"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

Exodus 24:7

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 1961-1964. The Old Law prepares God's people for Christ and the Gospel.
- CCC 2100. True outward sacrifice expresses an inward offering to God.
- CCC 1365. The Eucharist makes Christ's sacrifice present.
- CCC 1367. The sacrifice of Calvary and the Eucharistic sacrifice are one single sacrifice.

Before next session. Read Exodus 25:1-27:21 before we meet again.