

TM-COR07
06.03.18

A Commentary on the Eucharist by St. Augustine ¹

You see on God's altar bread and a cup. That is what the evidence of your eyes tells you, but your faith requires you to believe that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ. In these few words we can say perhaps all that faith demands.

Faith, however, seeks understanding; so you may now say to me: "You have told us what we have to believe, but explain it so that we can understand it, because it is quite possible for someone to think along these lines. We know from whom our Lord Jesus Christ took his flesh – it was from the Virgin Mary. As a baby, he was suckled, he was fed, he developed, he came to young man's estate. He was slain on the cross, he was taken down from it, he was buried, he rose again on the third day. On the day of his own choosing, he ascended to heaven, taking his body with him; and it is from heaven that he will come to judge the living and the dead. But now that he is there, seated at the right hand of the father, how can bread be his body? And the cup, or rather what is in the cup, how can that be his blood?

These things, my friends, are called sacraments, because our eyes see in them one thing, our understanding another. Our eyes see the material form; our understanding, its spiritual effect. If, then, you want to know what the body of Christ is, you must listen to what the Apostle tells the faithful: *Now you are the body of Christ, and individually you are members of it.*

If that is so, it is the sacrament of yourselves that is placed on the Lord's altar, and it is the sacrament of yourselves that you receive. You reply "Amen" to what you are, and thereby agree that such you are. You hear the words "The Body of Christ" and you reply "Amen". Be, then, a member of Christ's body, so that your "Amen" may accord with the truth.

Yes, but why all this in bread? Here let us not advance any ideas of our own, but listen to what the apostle says over and over again when speaking of this sacrament: *Because there is one loaf, we, though we are many, form one body.* Let your minds assimilate that and be glad, for there you will find unity, truth, piety, and love. He says, one loaf. And who is this one loaf? *We, though we are many, form one body.* Now bear in mind that bread is not made of a single grain, but of many. Be, then, what you see, and receive what you are.

So much for what the Apostle says about the bread. As for the cup, what we have to believe is quite clear, although the Apostle does not mention it expressly. Just as the unity of the faithful, which holy Scripture describes in the words: *They were of one mind and heart* in God, should be like the kneading together of many grains into one visible loaf, so with the wine. Think how wine is made. Many grapes hang in a cluster, but their juice flows together into an indivisible liquid.

It is thus that Christ our Lord signified us, and his will that we should belong to him, when he hallowed the sacrament of our peace and unity on his altar. Anyone, however, who receives this sacrament of unity and does not keep the bond of peace, does not receive it to his profit, but as a testimony against himself.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 76

OT-JUD03

06.04.18

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St. Ambrose ¹

So, then, Deborah foretold the event of the battle. Barak, as he was bidden, led forth the army: Jael carried off the triumph, for the prophecy of Deborah fought for her, who in a mystery revealed to us the rising of the church from among the Gentiles, for whom should be found a triumph over Sisera, that is, over the powers opposed to her. For us, then, the oracles of the prophets fought, for us those judgments and arms of the prophets won the victory. And for this reason it was not the people of the Jews but Jael who won the victory over the enemy. Unhappy, then, was that people which could not follow up by the virtue of faith the enemy, whom it had put to flight. And so by their fault salvation came to the Gentiles, by Jewish sluggishness the victory was reserved for us.

Jael then destroyed Sisera, whom however the band of Jewish veterans had put to flight under their brilliant leader, for this is the interpretation of the name of Barak: for often, as we read, the sayings and merits of the prophets procured heavenly aid for the fathers. But even at that time was victory being prepared over spiritual wickedness for those to whom it is said in the Gospel: "Come, you who are blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." So the commencement of the victory was for the fathers, its conclusion is in the church.

But the church does not overcome the powers of the enemy with weapons of this world, but with spiritual arms, "which are mighty through God to the destruction of strongholds and the high places of spiritual wickedness." And Sisera's thirst was quenched with a bowl of milk, because he was overcome by wisdom, for what is healthful for us as food is deadly and weakening to the power of the enemy. The weapons of the church are faith, the weapons of the church are prayer, which overcomes the enemy.

And so according to this history a woman, that the minds of women might be stirred up, became a judge, a woman set all in order, a woman prophesied, a woman triumphed, and joining in the battle array taught men to war under a woman's lead. But in a mystery it is the battle of faith and the victory of the church.

¹Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – vol. IV OT – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL , 2005, pg. 116

6/5/18

A Reading about St Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, by Christopher Dawson.¹

In art and religion, in scholarship and literature, the Anglo-Saxons of the eighth century were the leaders of their age. At the time when continental civilization was at its lowest ebb, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons marked the turn of the tide. The Saxon pilgrims flocked to Rome as the center of the Christian world and the Papacy found its most devoted allies and servants in the Anglo-Saxon monks and missionaries. The foundations of the new age were laid by the greatest of them all, St Boniface of Crediton, "the apostle of Germany", a man who had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any Englishman who has ever lived. Unlike his Celtic predecessors, he was not an individual missionary, but a statesman and organizer, who was, above all, servant of the Roman order. To him is due the foundation of the medieval German Church and the final conversion of Hesse and Thuringia, the heart of the German land. With the help of his Anglo-Saxon monks and nuns he destroyed the last strongholds of Germanic heathenism and planted abbeys and bishoprics on the site of the old Folkburgs and heathen sanctuaries, such as Buraburg, Amoneburg, and Fulda. On his return from Rome in 739 he used his authority as Papal Vicar in Germany to reorganize the Bavarian Church and to establish the new dioceses which had so great an importance in German history. For Germany beyond the Rhine was still a land without cities, and the foundation of the new bishoprics meant the creation of new centers of cultural life. It was through the work of St Boniface that Germany first became a living member of the European society.

But in addition to this, Boniface was the reformer of the whole Frankish church. The decadent Merovingian dynasty had already given up the substance of its power to the mayors of the palace, but in spite of their military prowess, which saved France from conquest by the Arabs in 735, they had done nothing for culture and had only furthered the degradation of the Frankish Church. Charles Martel had used the abbeys and bishoprics to reward his lay partisans, and had carried out a wholesale secularization of Church property. As Boniface wrote to the Pope, "Religion is trodden under foot. Benefices are given to greedy laymen or unchaste and publican clerics. All their crimes do not prevent their attaining the priesthood; at last rising in rank as they increase in sin they become bishops, and those of them who can boast that they are not adulterers or fornicators, are drunkards, given up to the chase, and soldiers who do not shrink from shedding Christian blood." Nevertheless, the successors of Charles Martel, Pepin and Carloman, were favorable to Boniface's reforms. Armed with his special powers

¹"The Making of Europe", New York, 1956, pp 185-186.

as Legate of the Holy See and personal representative of the Pope, he undertook the desecularization of the Frankish Church.

Norbert is deservedly numbered by historians among those who made an effective contribution to the reform movement under Pope Gregory VII. He established a clergy dedicated to the ideals of the Gospel and the apostolic Church. They were chaste and poor. They wore “the clothing and the symbols of the new man; that is to say, they wore the religious habit and exhibited the dignity proper to the priesthood.” Norbert asked them to “live according to the norms of the Scriptures with Christ as their model.” They were “to be clean in all matters pertaining to the altar and divine worship, to correct their faults and failings in their chapter meeting, and to care for and give shelter to the poor.”

The priests lived in community, where they continued the work of the apostles. Inspired by the practice of the early Church, Norbert exhorted the faithful to join the monastic life in some capacity. So many men and women responded to the invitation that many asserted that no man since the apostles themselves had inspired so many to embrace the monastic life.

When Norbert was appointed an archbishop, he urged his brothers to carry the faith to the lands of the Wends. In his own diocese he tried unsuccessfully to convince the clergy of the need for reform and was confronted with noisy protests both in the street and in the church.

One of the principal goals of Norbert’s life was to foster harmony between the Apostolic See and the German empire. At the same time he wanted to maintain Rome’s freedom in the matter of ecclesiastical appointments. Apparently his efforts were so successful that Pope Innocent II thanked him profusely in a letter in which he called him a “devoted son”, and Lothair made him chancellor of the realm.

Norbert did all these things with a steadfast faith: “Faith was the outstanding virtue of Norbert’s life, as charity had been the hallmark of Bernard of Clairvaux.” Affable and charming, amiable to one and all, “he was at ease in the company of the humble and the great alike”. Finally, he was a most eloquent preacher; after long meditation “he would preach the word of God, and with his fiery eloquence purged vices, refined virtues and filled souls of good will with the warmth of wisdom”. He spent many hours in contemplation of the divine mysteries and fearlessly spread the spiritual insights which were the fruit of his meditation.

² The Liturgy of the Hours - vol. II - Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1976 – pg 1866

OT-JUD08

06.07.18

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St. Ambrose ¹

Gideon, moved by the message, when he heard that though thousands of the people failed, God would deliver his own from their enemies by means of one man, offered a kid, and according to the word of the angel, laid its flesh and the unleavened cakes upon the rock and poured the broth upon them. And as soon as the angel touched them with the end of the staff which he bore, fire burst forth out of the rock, and so the sacrifice which he was offering was consumed. By which it seems clear that that rock was a figure of the body of Christ, for it is written: "They drank of that rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." That certainly refers not to his Godhead but to his flesh, which watered the hearts of the thirsting people with the perpetual stream of his blood.

Even at that time was it declared in a mystery that the Lord Jesus in his flesh would, when crucified, do away the sins of the whole world, and not only the deeds of the body but the desires of the soul. For the flesh of the kid referred to sins of deed, the broth to the enticements of desire, as it is written: "For the people greedily lusted, and said: 'Who shall give us flesh to eat?'" That the angel then stretched forth his staff and touched the rock, from which the fire went out, shows that the flesh of the Lord, being filled with the divine Spirit, would burn away all the sins of human frailty. Wherefore, also, the Lord says: "I have come to send fire upon the earth."

Then the man, instructed and foreknowing what was to be, observes the heavenly mysteries: and therefore, according to the warning, killed the bull destined for idols by his father, and himself offered to God another bull seven years old. By doing this he most plainly showed that after the coming of the Lord all Gentile sacrifices should be done away and that only the sacrifice of the Lord's passion should be offered for the redemption of the people. For that bull was a type, Christ, in whom, as Isaiah said, dwelled the seven gifts of the Spirit. This bull Abraham also offered when he saw the day of the Lord and was glad. He it was who was offered at one time in the type of a kid, because he is a sacrifice for sin; at another in that of a sheep, because he is an unresisting victim; at another in that of a bull, because he is a victim without blemish.

¹Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – vol. IV OT – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL, 2005, pg 121

TM-HRT01
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**On the mysteries of our redemption hidden and revealed in the heart of Jesus;
a prayer from the *Meditations* of William of St. Thierry. 1**

O Truth supreme, you are the heaven of heavens, you who are what you are, who have your being from yourself, who belong to yourself and are sufficient to yourself. You lack nothing, yet you have no excess; ...you have within yourself supremest concord, utmost clarity, most perfect fullness and completest life.

...O Lord, the height, the depth, the wisdom and the might C are these the heaven of which you are the door? It is so, truly; that is why the ark of the covenant was seen in heaven when the door was opened, as St. John says. For what does the ark of the covenant that was seen in heaven mean, if not, as the Apostle Paul says: *Athe dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning has been hidden in God, who created all things@?* You are yourself that ark. In you from all eternity was hidden, and in you in these latter days has been fulfilled, all that from the beginning of the world has been revealed to all the saints and prophets by the Law and by the prophecies, by wonders and by signs....

These blessings, that were hidden in your secret heaven through the ages, you at the ages= end unveiled to the world=s longing eyes, when you opened in heaven the door that is yourself. You opened that door when your grace appeared to all people, teaching us.... The heavens being thus opened, all the good and glory and delight of heaven poured itself out on earth. And then, O God, who spared not your own Son, but delivered him up for us all, the greatness of your kindness... to us was published openly to all. You made known your salvation to the world, and in the sight of all the nations you revealed your righteousness....

Those unsearchable riches of your glory, Lord, were hidden in your secret place in heaven until the soldier=s spear opened the side of your Son our

Lord and Savior on the cross, and from it flowed the mysteries of our redemption. Now we may not only thrust our finger or our hand into his side, like Thomas, but through that open door may enter whole, O Jesus, even into your heart, the sure seat of your mercy, even into your holy soul that is filled with the fullness of God, full of grace and truth, full of our salvation and our consolation....

Open, O Lord, the ark-door of your side, that all your own who shall be saved may enter in, before this flood that overwhelms the earth. Open to us your body=s side, that those who long to see the secrets of your Son may enter in, and may receive the sacraments that flow from there, even the price of their redemption. Open the door of your heaven, that your redeemed may see the good things of God in the land of the living, though they still labor in the land of the dying....

O good Father, loving Brother, and sweet Lord, you are all that is good and sweet and loving; the sum of goodness overflows in you. Open yourself to us, that your sweetness may flow forth from you to us, and fill us. Open yourself to me, O you who are the door, so that through you I may by longing love attain sometimes to the place of your wondrous dwelling, even to the house of God, although I am not worthy yet to enter there in full reality....

Open to me, O Lord, so that, although I am a stranger unworthy of enrollment as a citizen, yet nonetheless, I may by your gift be suffered on occasion for a little while to journey there, that I may truly see your glory, and not come out again unless I am thrown out!....

O, if only I may see, if only I may persevere, if only I may hear some day:
*AE*Enter into the joy of your Lord,@ and may thus enter in, never to come out again! Lord, you are mighty and your truth is all about you. Finish your work and give what you have promised.

**A reading about the temple of the immaculate heart of Mary,
by Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity. 1**

AThe Virgin kept all these things in her heart@: her whole history can be summed up in these few words! It was within her heart that she lived, and at such a depth that no human eye can follow her. When I read in the gospel *Athat Mary went in haste to the hill country of Judea@* to perform her loving service for her cousin Elizabeth, I imagine her passing by so beautiful, so calm and so majestic, so absorbed in recollection of the Word of God within her. Like him her prayer was always this: *AEcce, here I am!@* Who? *AThe servant of the Lord,@* the lowliest of his creatures: she, his Mother! Her humility was so real for she was always forgetful, unaware, freed from self. And she could sing: *AThe Almighty has done great things for me, henceforth all peoples will call me blessed.@*

This Queen of virgins is also Queen of martyrs; but again it was in her heart that the sword pierced, for with her everything took place within! >Oh! How beautiful she is to contemplate during her long martyrdom, so serene, enveloped in a kind of majesty that radiates both strength and gentleness.= She learned from the Word himself how those must suffer whom the Father has chosen as victims, those whom he has decided to associate with himself in the great work of redemption, those whom he *Ahas foreknown and predestined to be conformed to his Christ,@* crucified by love.

She is there at the foot of the Cross, standing, full of strength and courage, and here my Master says to me: [*ABehold your Mother.@*] He gives her to me for my MotherY And now that he has returned to the Father and has substituted me for himself on the Cross so that *AI may suffer in my body what is lacking in his passion for the sake of his body, which is the Church,@* the Blessed Virgin is again there to teach me to suffer as he did, to tell me, to make me hear those last songs of his soul which no one else but she, his Mother, could overhear.