



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **Corpus Christi - Year B**

### ***Blood Brothers***

*Readings: Exodus 24: 3-8, Ps 115, Hebrews 9: 11-15, Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26*

When I was a little boy, in junior school, about 9 or 10, there was a wonderful comic called 'The Victor'. In one particular issue I recall there was, ahead of its time, a deep friendship between a white American frontiersman and a native American - or Red Indian as we called them then. In one particularly moving episode, where one had saved the other's life, they became 'blood brothers'. This was an ancient ritual where a cut on the arm allowed the blood of the two men to mingle thereby ever after identifying one with the other in an unbreakable common life.

Nowadays in the wake of the Aids crisis such practice would be madness but to us, as little boys, it had a resonance of manhood, commitment and unbreakable solidarity. In short what drives a good unit or team of any men. All for one and one for all. You were now part of a common life, your friend and saviour, and shared each other's destiny, triumphs and disasters, irrevocably committed to your brother and he to you. So, down the end of the field on a hot summer's day, pinpricking our fingers (a

Bowie knife across the arm was a bridge too far) we became 'blood brothers'.

Today, in the Old Testament reading you have heard details of another blood ritual in Exodus 24. The newly liberated people of God have come before the altar and made sacrifice. Moses has taken the blood of the slaughtered beast and put it in two basins. Half of this blood he flings over the altar, the place of offering to God. And then he turns and reads to the people from the Book of the Covenant, the agreement between God and His people. The people pledge their commitment to God and their obedience to His commands.

And then Moses does an extraordinary thing – he flings the other basin of the sacrificed blood over the people. It is, he declares, the blood of the covenant which binds them to God.

What happens next, sadly omitted from today's lection but what, in fact, makes sense of it, is the most amazing episode in the whole of the Old Testament story. Exodus says this....

' Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abi'hu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.'

The Almighty God, whom to see is to die, entertains these blood bound covenanted representatives in His Presence. They see Him and they eat and drink.

The reason, of course, that this text is chosen for the Feast of Corpus Christi, is that it prefigures the final revelation in Christ and it is, providentially, a wonderful day on which to receive Holy Communion for the first time, as young Ruth will today.

As Christians we stand before the altar of God. We offer the sacrifice. But this is no slaughtered beast. Here is offered the God Man, the incarnation, the Saviour, the Lamb of God whose blood takes away the sins of the world.

Like the Apostles of old in that upper room, where the Last Supper was held, we are invited to be in the Presence. Like the ancient people of God we are invited to affirm our faith in God, to confirm the covenant, the sacrament, the oath of the promise that will bind us into the divine life without which we remain mortal and doomed. We take the hand of our brother, Christ, and we are infused with His Blood, the ancient sign of life. We are in the Presence of Almighty God, unharmed, and we eat and drink.

We are committed to Him absolutely and forever and He is committed to us. In this most blessed Sacrament we become blood brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. As He has lived in our humanity so now we come to live in His divinity. As He has lived in time so we come to dwell with Him in eternity, our little mortality translated into immortality.

After Mass we will descend from the mountaintop to the ordinary of everyday life. But we will have had a foretaste of Heaven and we will carry within us the secret of everlasting life.

We will live as those committed to the Covenant, children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, charged with leading the world home to the loving mercy of God and looking forward to that final return to the pavements of sapphire blue, the company of all the faithful and the joy of the Eternal Presence.

As blood brothers and sisters we stand before the altar to affirm our commitment to the covenant and our share in the life of the Risen Lord.

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