**FIRST READING**

From the letter to the Hebrews       *9:11-28*

*By the shedding of his own blood, Christ, the high priest, entered the sanctuary once and for all*

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be,  passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes  can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit  offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.  Now where there is a will, the death of the testator must be established. For a will takes effect only at death; it has no force while the testator is alive. Thus not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.

When every commandment had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, together with water and crimson wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is 'the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you.'" In the same way, he sprinkled also the tabernacle  and all the vessels of worship with blood.  According to the law almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified by these rites, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf. Not that he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages  to take away sin by his sacrifice. Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment, so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many,  will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

**RESPONSORY**   SUNG BY CANTOR       *See Isaiah 53:7, 12*
*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter;
no complaint from his lips against the evil done to him.
He was given up to death,
 - to give his people life.*

*He surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked.
 - To give his people life.*

**SECOND READING**

From the Catecheses by St. John Chrysostom , bishop
(Cat. 3, 13-19; SC 50, 174-177)

*The power of Christ's blood*

If we wish to understand the power of Christ’s blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. *Sacrifice a lamb without blemish,*commanded Moses, *and sprinkle its blood on your doors.* If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord’s blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master’s side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood of the holy eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord’s side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

*There flowed from his side water and blood.* Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, *the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit*, and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!*As God then took a rib from Adam`s side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and water after his own death.

Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.

**READING**               *Isaiah 52:13-15*

See, my servant shall prosper;
   he shall be exalted and lifted up,
   and shall be very high.
Just as there were many who were astonished at him
   — so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
   and his form beyond that of mortals —
so he shall startle many nations;
   kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
   and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

**LAMENTATIONS**

**The Voice of a Suffering Individual**[**\***](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003000-1)

1I am one who has known affliction

under the rod of God’s anger,[**a**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003001-a)

2One whom he has driven and forced to walk

in darkness, not in light;

3Against me alone he turns his hand—

again and again all day long.

4He has worn away my flesh and my skin,

he has broken my bones;[**b**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003004-b)

5He has besieged me all around

with poverty and hardship;

6He has left me to dwell in dark places

like those long dead.[**c**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003006-c)

7He has hemmed me in with no escape,

weighed me down with chains;

8Even when I cry for help,

he stops my prayer;[**d**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003008-d)

9He has hemmed in my ways with fitted stones,

and made my paths crooked.

10He has been a bear lying in wait for me,

a lion in hiding![**e**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003010-e)

11He turned me aside and tore me apart,

leaving me ravaged.[**f**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/lamentations/3#31003011-f)