

13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Matthew 10:37-42

This coming month, the month of July, the Church honours the Most Precious Blood of Christ—that blood that poured out from the side of Our Lord as He was pierced with a spear, and which poured from His body as He was beaten and nailed to the Cross, and which is given to us now on the altar at every Mass.

There is a moment in the film, “The Passion of the Christ”, when Claudia, the wife of Pontius Pilate, who was troubled by dreams of Our Lord’s innocence, quietly brings fresh linens to the Blessed Virgin Mary to soak up her son’s blood as He was being beaten by drunken soldiers. There is a look that passes between the noblewoman in her elegant clothes and the future Queen of Heaven, whose garments are woven of coarse, brown cloth. The intensity of their gaze breaks, and the Blessed Virgin Mary turns to retrieving from the blood-soaked stones of the square as much as possible of the Precious Blood that poured out of her Son’s sacred veins—the very Blood of God spilled onto the earth.

It is the long tradition of the Church, which traditionally celebrates July 1 as the Feast of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, that Christ was entirely drained of His blood during His torture, crucifixion, and death, drinking the chalice of suffering “to the dregs” by shedding every last drop of His most Precious Blood.

St. Thomas Aquinas famously said that just one drop of Christ’s blood would have been enough to save the whole world, but instead Our Lord spared nothing in His suffering to show us that “God so loved the world...” (*Jn. 3:16*).

The Precious Blood of Our Lord is the lifeblood of the Church. It is what courses through the veins of the Church, giving her not only life but uniting her to Our Lord and so sharing in the grace of His sacrifice. Although Our Lord has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, He still unites Himself to humanity's sufferings, and in the trials of the Church, "Christ continues ... to be in agony until the end of the world", as Pope Benedict XVI said.

We see this even in what would seem like a small gesture in the Mass, when the Priest pours a little water into the wine in the chalice. When he does this he says, "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity." The water is Christ's humanity and the wine is His divinity. The mingling of the water and wine in the chalice symbolises the incarnation of Christ and also His Passion when the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and out flowed blood and water (*Jn. 19:34*), meaning both Baptism and the Eucharist. And more than this, the wine symbolises Christ and the water symbolises us, so we are placed into the Blood of Christ and made one with Him. It is why so little water is poured into the wine, because it is Christ who is the greater.

And we see the blood and water again in the image of the Divine Mercy with the rays of red and white being the red of blood and the white or pale ray that of the water.

And while at Mass the water is poured into the wine which will become the Precious Blood, the many martyrs of the Church—those men and women who throughout history have been killed because they would rather give up their life than give up the faith—have mingled their own blood with the Blood of Christ. It is because of this that we say that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of faith.

One of the best means of participating in the graces of the Precious Blood is to offer it to God our Father. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi once said: "Every time a creature offers up the Blood by which he was redeemed, he offers a gift

of infinite worth." God revealed the practice of making this offering to her when He complained that so little effort is made in this world to disarm His divine justice against sinners. Acting upon this warning, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi daily offered the Precious Blood fifty times for the living and the dead. Because of her devotion God showed her on different occasions the many souls who had been converted or delivered from the pains of Purgatory.

So in this month in particular, let us honour the most Precious Blood of Christ which we receive in Holy Communion, because when we receive the sacred Host we receive not only His Body but also His most Precious Blood, Soul, and Divinity. And let us always pray: "Eternal Father, I offer you the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, in satisfaction for my sins, in supplication for the holy souls in Purgatory and for the needs of Holy Church". Amen.