

Holy Qurbana (Holy Eucharist),

The Dynamic Center Of Christian Life

Holy Qurbana is the central act of Christian worship and a dynamic center for Christian life. When it is celebrated with true repentance, real thankfulness and whole-hearted dedication, it becomes the dynamic center of Christian life. It is the most important sacrament of the Church. All other sacraments are perfected through Holy Qurbana.

Our Lord instituted Holy Qurbana on the eve of His death, and asked the disciples to celebrate it in remembrance of Him. He blessed the bread, and said: "This is My body." He blessed the wine, and said: "This is My blood." He asked the disciples to eat the blessed bread and drink the blessed wine. He also said that he who eats His body and drinks His blood, abides in Him (the Son), and He (the Son) abides in him (St. Jn. 6:56). It is to enable us to lead a sinless and virtuous life that He wants to abide in us.

Special preparation is necessary to participate in the Holy Qurbana. St. Paul says: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." (1 Cor. 11:27-28). Children are to be prepared at home to attend Holy Qurbana and to receive it.

The important parts of the Holy Qurbana

After the memorial of our Lord's birth and baptism of our Lord at the beginning of the Holy Qurbana, we say the following prayer.

“Holy art Thou, O God.
Holy art Thou, Almighty.
Holy art Thou, Immortal.
Crucified for us,
Have mercy upon us.”

When we say this prayer we proclaim that our Lord is full of goodness and power. He is free from all evil and death. In His love He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our salvation. This meditation helps us to realize our sinfulness, and to feel sorry for having grieved the loving heart of our Lord. Hence, the prayer: “Have mercy upon us.” This prayer shows our sinfulness, unworthiness and helplessness.

After the Bible reading and the sermon, we have a long prayer for the forgiveness of sins. “Therefore, O Thou, Who does absolve and sanctify, Who does forgive and wipe away our misdeeds, and does not remember our evils, blot out O Lord God, by the tender mercy of Thy love, my sins, great many and innumerable, as also the sins of all Thy believing people ...”

After special prayers and the ‘kiss of peace’, the chief celebrant (bishop or priest) blesses the bread and the wine. Then there is the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Then the bread and the wine become the body and the blood of our Lord. When we eat the blessed body and drink the blessed blood of our Lord, He renews His presence in us. Thus, we are filled with divine love, and enabled to do the Lord’s will.

We are also praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon the faithful. This prayer is to be considered as a prayer for the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). Again and again, the

following prayer is said dedicating ourselves and the whole mankind to the glorification of God. "May we offer praise and thanks to Thee, Thy only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit, now and always, and for ever. Amen." Offering praise means leading such a holy life as to make others praise God. See St. Mt. 5:16. Offering thanks means dedicating ourselves to a holy life pleasing to God. Offering praise and thanks means dedication of ourselves and the whole mankind to doing God's will.

We commemorate the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord when the blessed bread is broken, and is mixed with the blessed wine. It is the time during which we have to put to death our sinful nature spiritually and get resurrected. The hymn, "Hearken, gracious Lord," is a penitential prayer song to be sung in the penitential tune. It is to be sung in all Qurbanas. The meaning will be clearer if "Halleluya" is omitted. We must have the experience of St. Paul. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me." (Gal. 2:20).

When we say the Lord's Prayer, we commit ourselves to a godly life, following the example of our Lord, bringing glory to the heavenly Father.

When we sing, "With praise stood the princess," we offer ourselves as a spotless bride. (see Eph. 5:25-27)

Reception of Holy Qurbana is a time of the renewal of our baptismal covenant. The covenant in blood means that the promise to lead a virtuous life is made irrevocable, i.e. that the promise will not be broken even if our blood is shed.

We have to realize the seriousness of drinking the blood of the new covenant. There should be a drastic change in our life. God speaks through prophet Jeremiah as follows, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant

with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer 31:31-34). This spiritual change will be had when the penitent realizes the truth the Lord shed His blood for him.

In the baptism of infants, the God-parents enter into the covenant on behalf of the children renouncing Satan and proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ. This covenant is ratified through drinking the blood of the new covenant in Holy Qurbana. When the children are grown up they have to grow in faith and dedicate themselves through the Holy Qurbana. Special classes are to be conducted in Sunday schools to prepare children for receiving Holy Qurbana, preferably in the Passion week before Maundy Thursday.

When we come out of the church after Holy Communion, those who see us must say that the Spirit of our Lord is in us, just as the other disciples of Elijah said when they saw Elisha after the translation of Elijah. They said that the spirit of Elijah was on Elisha, and they prostrated before him.

The moment we become backsliders, we bring disgrace to God, and all our past virtues will become nullified. St. Paul says: “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” (Rom. 2:24) Our Lord says: “He who endures to the end will be saved.” (St. Mk. 13:13)