

20th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

August 19, 2012 5:30pm, 10:30am and 12 noon

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Human Blood Lines

During World War II, the Red Cross made blood available to anyone who needed it – ally or enemy.

The Red Cross would also try to provide the soldier with the name of the donor. That way the soldier could write a note of thanks.

A very poignant custom developed among the Red Cross medics in Europe. If a Nazi officer needed blood, they would find a Jewish donor.

The medic would then tell the officer, *“The bad news is: If left to your own strength and resources, you will die. The good news: We have blood that will save your life – from a Jewish donor.”*

“All you have to do is accept it.” Sadly, a few Nazi soldiers refused the blood.

Most of them gladly accepted it as a gift from a fellow human being. And, accepting life through this blood urged them to adopt a new outlook toward the Jewish people.

Divine Blood Lines

In today’s gospel, Jesus speaks of the gift of himself.

Jesus says, *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life”*. And again, *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them.”*

And again, *“Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.”* So Jesus gives us himself, his flesh and blood, in the signs of bread and wine.

And he does this for one purpose – that we may share life with him. We have a different life, Jesus’ life, God’s life, through the flesh and blood of Jesus.

Those Nazi officers received life by accepting blood from Jewish donors. They had a new life in them and through this were led to a new lifestyle and new outlook.

In a similar way, we also receive life from Jesus in his body and blood, in the bread and wine. And through this life of Jesus and of the Father we also are led to a new lifestyle and a new outlook.

New Life

I see two basic effects that this new life in us brings.

First, we like God the Father are now to be life-giving. We are to be creative, sustaining, and enhancing of human life.

For example, we are to be in awe of the tiny, developing life of a baby in the womb of a mother. We are to do all we can to care for this life and bring it to a healthy birth.

In the bigger social picture, we are to promote ways to provide health care to everyone. Our Catholic social teaching sees this as a human right, closely connected to the right to life itself.

And second, by receiving Jesus' body and blood we are now to be bridge-building. The Nazi officers were led to see themselves as connected with their Jewish blood donors.

In a similar way, for example, in our families, we are to try to stay connected and build bridges with the so-called black sheep who may have been a problem. We in America are to see that we now live in a global world, that we connected with everyone and can build bridges with everyone even by how we use our resources.

We here in Harford County are to be aware of our connection with those in Baltimore City whose life situation is probably very different from ours. And even we as a Church may need to be more bridge-building by adopting a more inclusivist and welcoming mindset.

Conclusion

So, the story of the Red Cross medics is pointed and helpful.

It helps us realize what our receiving the body and blood of Jesus, the life of God moves us to do. We also are to live a new life and that leads us to be 1) life-giving and 2) bridge-building.