

## The Blood of Christ and our Baptism

---

**Gospel:** Mark 10:32-45. *"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. "*

"Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?  
and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?  
And they said unto him, We can."

Yes, we can get baptized with His baptism and share in His cup! But the question presented to us today is, "Who will give us the power, and how can we get the resolve to do so?"

The Gospel passage talks about a testimonial cup and a baptism. The cup is full of the blood of Christ Himself. Christ is the Sacrifice spoken about by the Apostle Paul in today's letter to the Hebrews. St. Paul made a comparison between the old religion and the new call. The blood of sacrificed offerings (such as calves) sanctified the people and purified the body. How much more, then, the blood of Christ Himself shed on the Cross for us could purify, not just the body, but also our conscience from dead works, in order to worship the living God?! This is the cup that Christ talks about to His disciples, the one full of His venerable blood, which is poured on us, sanctifying us.

The human conscience is the natural law found in every being created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore man is directed towards good and does not rest in evil.

The Apostle Paul identifies this conscience with "law" when he says that those who do not have a law (religion or a belief) have their conscience leading them to doing the works of the law.

After the Fall, however, the passions pulled us back and forth, our self-interests imprisoned us, and our desires darkened the voice of our inner conscience. It is often that we silence and sacrifice our conscience in order to protect our self-interests. Conscience is a divine channel in the human soul, but it is so easy to conceal its voice. How often our desires block this channel and our ears get clogged upon hearing its voice, in order to listen to worldly melodies.

For this reason, the Divine Wisdom opted to give man a written Law strongly condemning sin, even if he shuts out the voice of his conscience. The Law was given to protect human life. It cries loudly at every moment through religion and the altar and the generations against sin, unveiling sin's works. This Law reveals clearly the truth to whoever silences his conscience. The Law rebukes, reprimands and deters when the conscience is unable to do so.

In the New Testament a new cry appeared. The cry of Grace calls, unlike the Law, which rebukes. Christ knew that His mold which He created was noble and venerable. In the Gospel of John this is clear. Jesus said that, when He is lifted up, He will raise many to Himself. The Lord knew that the nobility of man would not see His sacrificed blood on the Cross without being moved to follow Him. Jesus knew very well that these two disciples would not be afraid from the word cup, and would not hesitate when faced by Baptism, as they said, "Yes we can." The Apostle Paul, bidding farewell to the Church of the Ephesians, knelt and spoke to Her shepherds, beseeching them in the name of the blood of Jesus by which we were bought.

In the New Testament there is no stronger call than that of the blood of Jesus sacrificed for us on the Cross. The Christian who looks at the Cross of the Lord cannot pass by and remain neutral. We have been healed by the wound of Christ. Yes, the Blood of Christ is able to purify our minds dirtied by desires and customs and all bad inclinations and passions. The Blood of Christ is a living call enflaming every human heart and burning all past desires.

This is what happened to our righteous mother Mary of Egypt, whose memory we celebrate today, being the fifth Sunday of Great Lent. This saint fell into the abyss of passions. But when she visited the Holy Land, she remembered the venerable blood of Christ. This memory purified her darkened conscience and washed it with grace. Her heart was moved and the thick and hard layer covering her conscience was broken by the outpouring of the Divine blood. After that she went purifying her conscience for forty years through asceticism, fasting and prayers.

The blood of Christ is calling us to purify our personal conscience from the tumors of passions and the dirty pleasures of the world. The one whose heart is wounded by the love of the Crucified burns his love of passions through meditating on the Cross. Passionately loving the sacrifice of Christ, a noble person and his soul will certainly renounce everything that is base.

The blood of Christ calls us to purify our social conscience. The Cross of Christ is not an ethical or sociological matter, personal to each one of us. The Cross of Christ holds together the four corners of the earth through Its four branches. Our salvation is not an

individual matter. The Cross of Christ is life to each person. It is a subject we live for and live through.

We sprinkle the Blood of Christ upon our societies, purifying them from their consumer mentality, and from injustice and enslavement.

When the conscience, as a natural voice, was unable to work, and after the written Law had been given to help people, there came the season of Grace for man. This season spoke to man not innately, or by duty, but through the nobility of human nature. Man, facing the Blood of Christ, puts off all oldness and puts on all newness, the spirit of purity and holiness which renews both man and society. If the blood of the sacrifices in the Old Testament was able to purify the body, then how much more the Blood of Christ is able to purify our minds. Thus we may cry to the Lord going to His Holy Passion next week, "Yes O Lord we can," and we want to drink from this same cup, making your blood our Christian baptism.

Amen.