

## TO DRINK THE CUP OF SALVATION

by Eliot Kapitan

Anyone who has crossed a desert knows the importance of taking enough water. While I was still in grade school, our family crossed the Badlands on the way to the Black Hills. All across South Dakota we saw signs for free ice water at Wall Drug. When we finally got there, oh, how good it was. We kept getting back in line to drink and drink again.

### HOW THE CHURCH PRAYS

**Part One:** Believers know what it means to thirst. Those who keep Ramadan and Yom Kippur know what it means to forego food and drink. Those who keep Ash Wednesday, all of Lent, and other penitential days know what it means to fast and abstain.

In the Church's liturgy, Christians often pray two Hebrew psalms at both Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Like the deer that yearns  
for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning  
for you, my God.  
My soul is thirsting for God,  
the God of my life;  
when can I enter and see  
the face of God?

Psalm 42:2-3; The Grail translation.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water.  
So I gaze on you in your holy place  
to see your strength and your glory.

Psalm 63:2-3; The Grail translation.

**Part Two:** On Holy Thursday, in the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, we sing from Psalm 116:

**Resp.** Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

How shall I make a return to the LORD  
for all the good he has done for me?  
The cup of salvation I will take up,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

**Resp.** Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

*Lectionary for Mass, no. 39.*

And then the whole Church gathers round the table of the Lord, gives voice to the Eucharistic Prayer, and moves in holy procession to eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ.

### WHAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES BY PRAYING

Our ritual thirsting is much more than liturgical diet. We do it to be more open to the divine. We do it to hear God's voice and know God's will. We do it to see God face-to-face – now as best we can and on the last day for ever.

### WHAT THE CHURCH LEARNS BY BELIEVING

Holy Thursday teaches this great progression of belief.

- Physical thirst is transformed to spiritual thirst. We yearn and thirst for God. Always. For ever.
- Like the Hebrews before us, eating and drinking the Paschal meal transforms us from a life of bondage to one of freedom. We are strengthened for our lifelong procession to God.
- Blessing-cup is transformed to Communion cup. We become what we drink.

- Communion with the Blood of Christ transforms us, empowers us to behave like Christ. We wash feet. We serve. We minister to others. No response to human need or kindness, no activity is beneath the dignity of Christians.

Since we are summoned by the Lord Jesus to eat *and* drink his Body *and* Blood in Holy Communion, we must make every effort to make this possible. Here is what the Church needs.

1. Enough wine is prepared at each Mass.
2. Enough ministers are prepared to offer the cup. This means that for every plate with the Body of Christ there are at least two cups with the Blood of Christ.
3. When talking about Holy Communion, we never speak only of the Body but always of the Body and Blood. We no longer use the older title “Corpus Christi” for the solemnity, but “Sanctissimi Corporis et Sanguinis Christi” that is, The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.
4. During Communion, we choose to sing songs that address the complete mystery, the whole reality. The best refrains the assembly will sing (and thus remember) include the whole truth.

#### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Here is a beginning list of songs for Communion that addresses the whole mystery:

- a. Amén. El Cuerpo de Christo (...La Sangare del Señor) – John Schiavone
- b. Bread of Life from Heaven /Pan de Vida (your blood and body given) – Susan Briehl and Jaime Cortez
- c. Bread for the World (...wine for all peoples) – Bernadette Farrell
- d. Come to the Banquet (...eat the bread...drink the cup) – James Chepponis
- e. Draw Near (...take the body...drink the blood) – Steven Janco
- f. Eat This Bread (drink this cup) – Jacques Berthier
- g. Eucharistic Litany (Bread of life, saving cup) – Paul Hillebrand
- h. Jesus, Bread of Life (...Saving Cup) – James Marchionda
- i. Life-giving Bread, Saving Cup – James Chepponis
- j. Look Beyond (the bread you eat...the cup you drink) – Darryl Ducote
- k. One Bread, One Body (...one cup of blessing) – John Foley
- l. Pan de Vida (...cup of blessing) – Bob Hurd
- m. Remember Me (...when you eat this bread...drink this cup) – Alan Hommerding
- n. Seed, Scattered and Sown (...vine, fruit of the land) – Dan Feiten
- o. Take and Eat (...take and drink) – Michael Joncas
- p. The Supper of the Lord (Precious body, precious blood) – Laurence Rosania
- q. This Is My Body (...this is my blood) – Anon, rev. by Charles Frischmann
- r. To Be Your Bread (...be your wine now) – David Haas
- s. When We Eat This Bread (and we drink this cup) – Michael Joncas

#### IN SUMMARY

At every Mass, let us come in procession to both plate and cup. Let us eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. In so doing, let us take up the psalmist’s song:

What gift can ever repay  
God’s gift to me?  
I raise the cup of freedom  
as I call on God’s name.

Psalm 116:12-13, ICEL translation.