

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

GOD'S BLOOD AND OURS...

One of the things that I find particularly difficult is giving blood. Actually, I only have done it twice in my life when there was a blood drive at Saint Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers. Both times, I almost turned green and had a bad reaction. When the nurse came over and asked me to breathe into a paper bag, she wasn't kidding when she advised me never to give blood again. Today I might need some blood instead of giving it!

As we all know, blood is the life giving liquid that courses through our veins and arteries and keeps us going. Certainly, if our blood stops, we stop!

When we speak about Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we refer to his blood as "The precious blood." Christ's blood is most precious because it was poured out as the price of our redemption. The whole month of July is dedicated to the precious blood of Jesus and we should have devotion to it.

At each Mass, after the host is consecrated, the priest takes the chalice of wine and says the words of consecration over it. He says, "For this is the chalice of my blood... which will be poured out for you and for many for the remission of sin..." Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin. It was the price that Our Lord had to pay for our salvation.

Last year I had the opportunity to attend a wonderful retreat up at Trinity Retreat House in Westchester. The retreat was lead by Msgr. Thomas Caserta, the Pastor of Saint Bernadette's Parish over in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. One day at Mass, the Monsignor offered the Mass of the Precious Blood. He reminded us priests that in years past when the chalice was elevated at Mass, many people would whisper these words, "My Jesus, mercy!" That is a beautiful practice because all of us weak sinners must rely on the mercy of the Lord.

On the cross, after Jesus had died, a soldier pierced his side with a lance to make sure that he was dead. Saint John tells us that from his side there flowed out blood and water. Literally, Jesus had given all his blood, there was nothing left to give. His blood should be precious to each one of us.

The precious blood of Jesus was shed several times in his life. First at his circumcision, then during the Agony in the Garden, at the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns and finally on the cross with his five wounds. We should reflect upon the sacrifice that Jesus made for us in the shedding of his blood and appreciate it!

The Lord does not ask us to give our blood or to shed our blood-nothing that difficult! But he does ask us to bear our share of the daily hardships that come our way-the problems, the trials, the anxieties of life without "caving in" and giving up. The scripture reminds us that in our struggles against sin in this life, we have not resisted unto blood! No, we have it rather easy when you think about it.

During this month of July dedicated to the Precious Blood, may we thank God for his gifts and for his great mercies in dealing with us.

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*