

What can I do? . . . Do this.

The writer of Psalm 116 asks the decisive question for all of us: ***“How can I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” (Ps 116: 12)***

The apparent context for the Psalm is healing from a life-threatening illness. And the response to the question is . . . ***“The cup of salvation I will take up and call upon the name of the Lord.” (Ps 116:13)***

This refers to a form of sacrifice known as a “libation.” The formal, ritualized act of gratitude and thanksgiving is the pouring-out of a precious cup of wine into the earth in sacrifice.

Healing from a life-threatening illness is one thing but, of course, healing from mortality is a whole other order of healing. And is this not what we profess as our salvation through the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus? Let us review: The eternally begotten Son of the Creator took upon himself a full human nature through Mary of Nazareth. He did this so that he would fulfill Israel’s hope and expectation of a definitive and comprehensive salvation. A physical healing is only temporary and will always give way to another affliction and the death of the mortal body. So a definitive or comprehensive salvation must be the defeat of death itself. And, as we know, death is a result of the infection of sin which had befallen our nature.

And so, the question of Psalm 116 is all the more urgent for us as beneficiaries of this extraordinary saving act of Almighty God in Christ: ***“How can I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” (Ps 116: 12)***

The answer given in the following verse also continues to be instructive when we consider Jesus’ reference to the cup of wine at the Last Supper. As St. Paul would receive the Sacred Tradition, Jesus said, ***“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me!” (1 Corinthians 11:25)***

And so, to the question posed by the Psalmist and echoing right up to our own time, the answer is given: **Do this.** This is what the Church does and what it enables us to do as the best possible response to the reality of our salvation. St. Paul encapsulates it in the verse which follows the foregoing: ***“For as often as you eat the bread and***

drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:26)

This is why the most proper name we give to the Sacrament of the altar is the Greek term “eucharist.” Eucharist renders into English as “thanksgiving.” And we understand the Lord’s instructions as telling us that everytime we gather at the altar the sacrificial out-pouring of his blood on the Cross is re-presented. In other words, the power of that saving sacrifice is made truly present and, in less-than-the-blink-of-an-eye, and angel returns our offering to the Altar as the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation . . . a share in the Divine Life of Jesus, (the one who took upon himself our Human Nature in order to save it).

Is there something more stimulating or fun that I can do instead of this?



Well, of course, good moral living, sacrificial love and all the ways of living subsumed by those terms must, necessarily, flow from our worship and be our response to *“all the good He has done for [us]”* But, at the top of the list, “Do this;” We cannot do better than this!

We are sort of like the Syrian Army Commander, Naaman whom the prophet Elisha cures of leprosy. Elisha tells Naaman what he must do: He must wash seven times in the Jordan River. That’s it! Naaman is indignant. “We have better rivers than this in Syria!!!!” But his companions prevail upon him to do what the prophet as said and, of course, he is healed.

Do we think we can really improve upon what has been given us *“to make a return to the Lord for all the good He has given us?”*