

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on June 18, 2006
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
Liturgical Year B

We have all heard remarkable stories of personal generosity: the off-duty firefighter who was one of the first responders to the fire in Fall River the other day, or those who donate a kidney or bone marrow or blood for another person. There are not just the extraordinary stories of generosity. Think of the parents who manage two jobs while juggling 2AM feedings, coaching, driving, doing homework with their children. In every case, we have people giving themselves, lending their bodies to the service of others – to love them, protect them, rescue them, save them.

It isn't enough to wish to help them to make it happen, not enough to deeply desire it. Our desires are accomplished because our bodies make us present. We lend our bodies to the desires and choices we want to accomplish for others – to do for them what they cannot do for themselves.

This is My Body, given for you.
This My Blood, poured out for you.

I'm sure you've been invited to someone's house for dinner. When you arrive, you discover more is happening than you knew. Perhaps the host remembered that you were going to be alone this weekend. Or perhaps the host is going to have surgery this week and didn't want to be alone. When you know the meaning of the event, the observance is enhanced. It is more poignant. You feel more deeply connected to the host – the guest of honor – a member of the family.

This is My Body, given for you.
This My Blood, poured out for you.

In today's Gospel, the significance of the meal is Passover, the meal that further reveals Jesus's connection to Israel but also interprets his approaching death. His action sets us free, builds us into His risen body and prepares us for service in His name. He commands us and challenges us to do this in His memory...so that we might experience His presence here...so that He can deepen His generosity in us...so that we'll be willing to lend our bodies to the service of others...so that we might help them in gratitude that He saved us.

In this Eucharist, Christ takes our gifts and gives us Himself in return, not simply saying 'I am for you' but doing it. Christ puts His body on the line for us, so much does He love us.

This is My Body, given for you.
This My Blood, poured out for you.

He gives us these gifts – gifts beyond measure – so that we can, by receiving them, become who He is and then we can love one another as He has loved us.