

Today we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, The Body and Blood of Christ. There are many aspects of the Eucharist which we could reflect upon but all the Scriptures given for this year mention the Eucharist as covenant.

In modern times we define relationships between people by contracts. These are usually for goods or services and for hard cash. The contract, formal or informal, helps to specify failure in these relationships. The Lord, however, did not establish a contract with Israel or with the church. He created a covenant. There is a difference. Contracts are broken when one of the parties fails to keep his promise.

Let's say I have an appointment to see my dentist and I do not cancel it and miss the appointment. Then I have a contract which says I pay a fee for missing that appointment. My dentist is not required to call the house and inquire, "Where were you? Why didn't you show up for your appointment?" She simply goes on to his next patient and sends me a bill for failing to keep the appointment. (P.S. I have a very considerate dentist who sees patients whenever they are in need.)

Our God is not a God of contracts. The Lord asks: "*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!*" (Isaiah 49:15) A covenant is more like the ties of a parent to her child than it is a doctor's appointment. If a child fails to show up for dinner, the parent's obligation, unlike the doctor's, isn't cancelled. The parent finds out where the child is and makes sure she or he is cared for. One member's failure does not destroy the relationship. A covenant puts no conditions on faithfulness. It is the unconditional commitment to love and serve.

The Sacred Scriptures contain many covenants. I will not mention them all here in detail but consider the following.

The first one may not be the one you think. It is the Eternal covenant mentioned in the Book of Hebrews. It is the redemptive covenant that was made before time began, between the Father and the Son. By this covenant we have eternal redemption, an eternal peace from the 'God of peace', through the death and resurrection of the Son.

The covenant of Eden in the Book of Genesis. The creative covenant between the Triune God and newly created humanity, governing the creation of human beings and life in the innocence of Eden. It regulated human dominion of the earth and presented a simple test of obedience. The penalty was death.

Shortly afterward was the covenant with Adam. It deals with fallen humanity after the breaking of the previous covenant. The serpent was cursed (Gen 3:14); the first promise of the Redeemer was given (3:15); women's status was altered (3:16); the earth was cursed (3:17-19); physical and spiritual death resulted (3:19).

The covenant of Noah, still in the Book of Genesis. The earth is destroyed as a reset. Humanity starts over and the rainbow becomes a reminder that God will never inflict destruction on his people again. This covenant is interesting in that it reminds us God is judge and there are consequences for the choices we make.

The covenant with Abraham. It is covenant of promise where the descendants of Abraham were to be made a great nation. In him (through Christ) all the families of the earth were to be blessed (Galatians 3:16; John 8:56-58).

The covenant with Moses, given solely to Israel. It consisted of the ten commandments, the judgments (social) - (Exodus 21:1; 24:11) and the law.

Finally we have the covenant of unconditional blessing based upon the finished redemption of Christ. It secures blessing for the church, flowing from the covenant with Abraham (Galations 3:13-20), and secures all the covenant blessings to converted Israel, including those of the many previous covenants. This covenant is unconditional, final and irreversible. The pattern is simple: God makes a covenant, humanity breaks it. Repeat. The meaning is simple. God never gives up on us. This truth is one thing we remember every the Eucharist is celebrated.

During mass, the presiding priest takes a moment to say a private prayer of preparation just before receiving the Eucharist. All those gathered have the opportunity during this time to prepare themselves to receive this great gift from God, Jesus himself, in the form of bread and wine.

As we each approach the table of the Lord let us remember that Jesus gave his life for not just for us, but for me. If it is helpful, imagine Jesus saying as he hangs on the cross: "I did this for you" as an expression of the personal love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for you.

May this Feast of Corpus Christi be a time of remembering the everlasting covenant of love God has made with his beloved children. Filled with the knowledge of that love, and nourished by the gift of God himself, may we go forth when dismissed at the end of mass to love and serve the Lord and one another.