

2021 Corpus Christi

1. **When Maria Barba (1884-1949) was a little girl** before she could receive her first Holy Communion she was very aware of her desire to do so. She describes what she would do when her mother returned from daily Mass, "When I was still a child - she herself says - and Jesus had not yet been given to me, I welcomed my mother from the return of Holy Communion, almost at the threshold of the house, and pushing my feet to reach her, I said to her:" To me too the Lord! ". Mama lowered herself with affection and breathed on my lips; I immediately left her, and crossing and clasping my hands on my chest, full of joy and faith, I repeated hopping: "I too have the Lord! I also have the Lord."¹ At a very young age she was aware that the Eucharist was to bring people together. **The Eucharist is a mystery of mutuality and obedience.**

2. **We see this clearly illustrated in the first reading.** First, Moses reads from the Law just given to him by God. It is important to note that the Lord is superior to those with whom he is making the covenant. We give obedience to one who is superior to us: "...all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do." (Exod 24:3)

He gains their consent. Then, gaining their consent again, he proceeds to sprinkle them with the blood of the covenant. This ritual has a special meaning. Moses throws the blood on the altar (signifying God) and then the same blood he throws on the people: "Both God and the people share equally in the blood."² The blood, note, is from the same sacrifices. God and the people both give their consent to these actions. Through this sharing, God establishes a familial relationship or bond between the people and himself. **Such**

¹ "Maria Candida of the Eucharist". <http://www.causesanti.va/it/santi-e-beati/maria-candida-dell-eucaristia.html>. June 7, 2021

an important bond is passed on to all generations of Hebrews up to our own time. If we put the two rituals together we discover the two sides of the covenant: mutuality and obedience. Mutuality expresses the exchange of persons, the gift of self: love. Obedience expresses the inequality of persons, the submission of one to another: obedience. "And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."" (Exod 24:8)

3. **In the Letter to the Hebrews, this inner experience of obedience and love is laid open.** The offering of Christ on the Cross was a public event, but what happened in his heart is out of sight. The author of Hebrews opens up this sanctuary to us. Jesus' act of self-offering on the Cross was an act of obedience to the Father but he offered himself through the Holy Spirit who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son. "...Christ, [who] through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, [will] purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb 9:14)

In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ transfers this act of mutuality and obedience to our heart and conscience in exactly the same measure, **making them capable of his own love and obedience.**

4. **This pattern of obedience and mutuality is given in its first form to the Hebrew people.** In the Eucharist it is given to us in its final form, and destined for the whole world. The Eucharist is a pattern in time to prepare us for eternity. Jesus desires that the Eucharist set afoot a development that will find completion in the Reign of God: "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine

² John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible. Vol. 1, The Old Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018), 182.

until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mk 14:25)

At the Eucharistic celebration we hear both “Take eat ...Take drink” and “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord!” During this time of pandemic we have complained so much about the government’s restrictions on worship and our complaints are real. But like the Hebrews, are we ready to consent to what the Eucharist trains us to do, to eat but also to proclaim it to the whole world? Has our missionary zeal surpassed our complaints? We consent to both eating and proclaiming! The Eucharist is the gate of access to heaven for everyone. **Who will call others? You who consented?**

5. The mutuality and obedience of the Eucharist and our consent impel us to a permanent mode of being and acting. It is like the last interpretation of reality – it has forged a new mutuality and obedience between things – in heaven and on earth! All people become my brothers and sisters! Nobody is excluded. The 215 anonymous children whose bones were discovered on the residential school premises in Kamloops a week ago are my brothers and sisters! There is an unrepeatable closeness that the Eucharist impels us towards: it is called divine compassion. **Do I mirror this closeness in my mutuality and obedience?**

6. In 1933, on Corpus Christi, Maria Barba, now Sr. Maria Candida of the Eucharist, a Carmelite nun, began to write a little masterpiece of lived Eucharistic spirituality. In the Eucharist, Mother Candida saw all the dimensions of the Christian experience. As prioress of her community, she also captured the meaning of the three religious vows as an expression of progressive configuration to Jesus Christ who died and rose for us: “What is Jesus' obedience to Nazareth,

compared to his obedience in the Sacrament for twenty centuries?...Who more undresses, poorer than You ...Lord, if your rest is in pure souls, what is that soul that in dealing with You does not become such?”³ Maria Candida fully developed what she herself calls her “vocation for the Eucharist”, where mutuality and obedience embraced each other. **Today’s feast invites us into the heart of Jesus, full of love and obedience.**

³ “Maria Candida of the Eucharist”