

Our Sacramental Belief Second Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, January 21, 2017
8:15 AM **Heb 9:2-3, 11-14;** Mk 3:20-21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr (“The whole Christ” offers “the whole Christ” to the Father, meaning Jesus with all of us baptized into him offer him, the head, but all of us the members as well to the Father in one single eternal sacrifice.)

We are continuing to read from the Letter to the Hebrews, and I will speak about it for a moment because this is the basis for a great deal of the imagery of our sacramental life. So we are talking here about the **two temples: the heavenly temple**, the real temple where God actually dwells, and then **the earthly temple**, which is a copy of the heavenly temple. As I mentioned many people starting with Moses had visions of this heavenly temple. Isaiah has a vision. Ezekiel has a vision, many others. Literature outside of the Bible is full of **visions of this heavenly temple. So it was a major component in the mystical life of Israel.**

The earthly temple started out as just a tent, rather small actually. It had seven basic parts, each one corresponding to a day of creation. The high priest was one of the parts. The high priest belonged to the temple, an essential component of the temple. Without a **high priest**, you didn't have a temple. The high priest went back and forth into the holy of holies, the inner sanctum representing the presence of God, the place of God, and then out into the world, **so mediation back and forth, from God to the world, from the world back to God. That is the ritual.**

The main ritual was only performed once a year. It was called the ritual of Atonement. The seat in the inner sanctum was called the *kaporet*, the mercy seat. The Day of Atonement was **Yom Kipper**. Blood was prepared from immolated animals consecrated for this purpose and it was brought into the holy of holies and poured out in front of the seat. That happened every Yom Kipper. **The symbolism meant that all of the sins of the people as a collective were washed away**, all their indifference, their impurity washed away. Thus the year could begin on, you might say, a new setting, rebooted as they might say today.

Now what the Letter to the Hebrews says is that that's what **Christ** did. Only he didn't go into the earthly temple; he **went to the heavenly temple**. And he didn't take the blood of goats. **He took his own blood**. And his sacrifice is not good for one year; **it's good for all eternity**. And he himself since he was raised from the dead and went to the Father now exists forever for all eternity, **interceding for his people, his blood being an eternal remembrance of his gift on the Cross of love poured out**.

That is the same blood that we concentrate on the altar. In the Eastern Church, as I mentioned before, they put up screens, curtains because they don't believe people should actually look at the table. It's too sacred. It represents heaven itself. That has never been a Western custom, but it's the same belief. It is the same blood on our altar, in our cups and in our chalices, that Jesus shed on the Cross and took to the Father in the inner sanctum of the true heaven not made by hands. That's the basic teaching of Hebrews. It's out of that we get so many aspects of **our sacramental imagery and theology and belief**. Therefore when we offer the Mass, and it is not only the priest who offers the Mass, it's the people who offer the Mass, the Church offers the Mass. As St. Augustine says "the whole Christ"—**the whole Christ—offers "the whole Christ" to the Father, meaning Jesus with all of us baptized into him offer him, the head, but all of us the members as well to the Father in one single eternal sacrifice**, that then becomes present on earth every time we gather for the Eucharist. That is our belief. It is rooted in the teachings of the Letter to the Hebrews.