

The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

In Latin, the phrase is only four words: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. In English, we need more words to understand its meaning. On the surface, it means: the law of praying is the law of believing. A deeper rendering would be: *If you wish to discover what you believe, look at how you pray.*

The gospel of this solemnity is from the 19th chapter of John's gospel. It describes the breaking of the legs of those crucified with Jesus (so they would die quickly), and says that Jesus' legs were not broken, since he was already dead. One of the soldiers thrust a lance into Jesus' side, and we are told that blood and water poured forth.

In the preface to the eucharistic prayer for today, we hear this proclamation: *For raised up high on the Cross, he gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out blood and water from his pierced side, the well spring of the Church's Sacraments, so that won over to the open heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.*

Here, Blood symbolizes the Eucharist, and water symbolizes Baptism. Thus, the wounded side of Jesus is the wellspring of the sacramental life of the Church, the Body of Christ. When Thomas touched that wounded side, he proclaimed "My Lord and my God". St. Francis of Assisi found faith in his embrace of the leper, as did St. Damien of Molokai and his companions. St. Teresa of Kolkata found faith in touching the untouchables, and Pope St. John Paul II reminded us that we find the keys to the kingdom of heaven in the hands of the poor. We should remember that God did this first; in his embrace of our wounded human nature (the Incarnation), Jesus found his life's work and mission.

Consider the last word of the phrase: *credendi*. It is from the verb whose first principal parts is *credo*. *Credo* is a compound of two words - *cor* and *do*. *Cor* means *heart* and *do* means *I give*. Belief is not mere notional assent to the truth of certain propositions; *I believe* means *I give my heart*. Jesus Christ has given his heart to us; what shall we offer in return?