

Blood of Christ, Love of Christ

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This verse from the Gospel of Saint John the Apostle tells us the love Christ has for us. As we already knew, Jesus really gave up his life and took our place to be punished for sin. Through his death, we found the life our first parents lost. This miraculous exchange was motivated by nothing other than divine love, the kind of love that only God was capable of carrying out its demand: a total self-sacrifice for the happiness of the beloved.

The love Christ had for us is personal and forever. We go back to the words of the consecration of the Eucharist for proof. “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you,” and “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.” During Mass, these words are spoken by the priest, but they are the words of Jesus addressing each person who is present. Jesus addresses you. He gives his body up to torture for you. He pours out his blood for you. He loves you as much as he loves the many, just like he loves the one sheep as much as the ninety-nine and is willing to leave the ninety-nine for seek for the one. To Jesus, that one sheep equals the ninety-



nine. That's why Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận said that Jesus was really bad at math. How do you respond to Jesus' personal love for you?

Jesus' love is eternal because his blood is the blood of the new and eternal covenant. At Mass, the priest does not sacrifice a new victim. The victim remains the same: our Lord Jesus Christ. This is because the Mass is the same sacrifice of Jesus two thousand years ago. The value of Christ's sacrifice remains the same after two thousand years, and it remains the same in the next world. This is good news for us

who are living thousands of years after Christ's death because, even though we were not there at Christ's crucifixion, the merit of his sacrifice extends to us. We can receive the forgiveness brought about by the pouring out of Christ's blood. His love was not only for those who lived during his time, like Mother Mary, Peter, John, and other apostles, but is also for each of us who are living today. This means that Jesus loves us as long as we live, and he will continue to love us even after we pass away. “His love endures forever” is the right description for Jesus' love for us. We should repeat this verse of Psalm 136 to remind ourselves that Christ's love surpasses our weakness and frailty. He loves us regardless of our sinfulness.

The right response to this divine love is love.