

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews speaks today what we are approaching and what we are not approaching. Let's get some context:

You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them. (Hebrews 12:18-19)

The author here is referring to Moses and the Sinai covenant. In Exodus 19, we read about how God appears to the Israelites after they have escaped Egypt, and arrived at Mount Sinai. Exodus speaks of “peals of thunder and lightning” (the storm), a blast of a ram’s horn (the trumpet), fire and smoke on the mountain, and God answering Moses in thunder (the voice). The people experiencing this begged Moses that they would not have to go up the mountain!

Hebrews contrasts this scene from the Old Testament to how things are now in Christ:

No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.
(Hebrews 12:22-24)

In Christ, we can now approach almighty God without fear. The new covenant, in the Blood of Christ, has allowed us to enter the heavenly Jerusalem!

And we enter in at every Mass!

Do you get it?! This is extraordinary! Every time we come to Mass, heaven meets earth. The eternal mysteries enter into time... or to see it another way, God lifts us from here and now into the eternity of Heaven. There are at least two words in Greek for “time” – *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* means measured time, calendar time, clock time. This is how we schedule our days, and keep track of what has to happen next. *Kairos* is unmeasured time – it is when we’re in the midst of a conversation that is so intriguing that the hours slip by without our noticing. Heaven is this unmeasured time – this *Kairos*. And the Mass enters into this for a little while each day. This is why I take off my watch for Mass (as should everyone else!!), since we are entering God’s time – time spent with God, worshipping and adoring Him... and nothing is more important than that.

At every Mass, angels and saints are present (“the assembly of the firstborn...”). This is the constant teaching of the Church, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and the experience of the mystics – that at each and every Mass, all of Heaven is present, that the angels surround us, and the saints are there in that great cloud of witnesses. Here, at Mass, we are in the presence of the whole Church – the Church Militant (the Church still on earth), the Church Suffering (the Church in Purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (the Church in Heaven). Think on this – if your loved ones have gone before us into the Kingdom of Heaven, the place we are closest to them is at the Mass, for they are here, present in the whole Body of Christ.

The “**sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel**” is here as well. You remember in Genesis 4 how Abel’s blood spoke to God even from the ground after Cain had murdered him (Gen 4:10). Abel’s blood spoke accusing his brother of the crime of fratricide. The sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that is *the Blood of Christ*. Christ’s Blood (in the Eucharist) speaks not of accusation, but of *mercy and forgiveness*. It is here in the Eucharist that we find God (Jesus) appealing to God (the Father) for our salvation and healing and mercy – speaking more eloquently than that of accusation and judgment!

In the Mass, the very presence of God is made manifest – and we can approach Him without the fear the ancient Israelites had in approaching Mount Sinai. We approach God who has forgiven us, who appeals for mercy for us, who loves us as a father, a brother, a spouse. We approach not just a mountain, but the New Jerusalem – Heaven itself. In the Mass, all of Heaven is here – we are all in Heaven – just a quarter inch away, just behind the veil! Let us pray that God gives us the eyes of faith to enter with awe, wonder, reverence, gratitude and love into this great mystery of God’s presence among us.