

FROM THE DESK OF MARY SHARON . . .

Become what you receive

by Mary Sharon Moore

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At Mass on a recent Sunday, during the Preparation of the Gifts, the priest caringly poured the red wine from the crystal flask into the handcrafted silver chalices, a graceful gesture as he prepared the sacrifice.

In that moment, in seeing that familiar gesture, I finally found a context for all the news I had heard in the past seven days—of war, genocide, unthinkable acts of greed, injustice, and abuse against the common good, innocent lives wasted in the endless madness of evil running rampant in our world. Week by week the details may change but the news remains the same. What I understood now is that the sacrifice of human lives and of the life of God's creation is integral to the sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

As the priest poured the wine from the flask into the chalices, he gently shook the flask to get that last little drop. Nothing wasted, all poured out for the sacrifice.

The wine poured into these cups at this Mass became for me the blood of humanity poured out in the past week, this very same past week when I prayed my little prayers, did my little work, and slept my little sleep.

As the priest lifted the chalice in thanksgiving, I thought to myself: So this is what it means to be a priest, to offer the sacrifice not just of our own little lives, but to offer to God the sacrifice of the world.

Later, at the Fraction Rite, when the priest broke the sacred Host, I recalled those haunting words of Jesus: "Unless the grain of wheat fall and die, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it will yield a great harvest" (see John 12:24). In the past week, in every part of the world, some lives became that grain of wheat that dies, so that God can reap the harvest. In this Mass I offered to God what I had not suffered.

As I processed forward to receive the body and blood of Christ, I realized that the anguish of our world is not at all separate from the One in whom we are in communion. "Become what you receive," St. Augustine says, "the body of Christ." These are vocational words, to which I can only say, "Amen."

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