

This Tuesday morning I will have surgery to remove a cataract from my left eye. The surgeon will also correct an astigmatism. Many people have said, "You're too young to have cataracts." I tell them, "My secret is out: I'm really 75 years old." The truth is my left eye got injured when I was a kid. I normally avoid telling this story because it shocks people, but I will tell it today in hopes it will make kids more careful. One day in June, when I was 7, playing in the backyard, one kid found a razor blade on the ground. He picked it up and tossed it aside without looking; it ricocheted off a tree and briefly hit my eye - just long enough to cut the pupil. I spent 3 days in the hospital and had 3 stitches. Thanks be to God, I continue to see very well out of that eye, even though the pupil is large and it lets in more light than it should. Forty years after that injury, a cataract appeared in that eye. I may not have one in my other eye until I really am 75 years old. They all say this surgery is a piece of cake, but I'm sure I'll be a puddle of sweat come Tuesday morning. If the surgery is successful, the next time I see you, you will be a sight for sore eyes.

Some parts of the human body are more precious than others. Even more precious than eyes is our blood. Today's first reading describes a ritual involving the blood of a bull. Moses had led the people out of slavery in Egypt, across the Red Sea, through the desert, and to the slopes of Mt. Sinai on their way to the Promised Land. God appeared to Moses on the mountain and gave him the great covenant by which the people were to live. As today's reading opens, Moses has come down the mountain and recites the law. The people say, "We will do everything that God has told us." Moses set up an altar. He had some bulls slaughtered and reserved their blood. Half the blood he sprinkled on the altar, their symbol of God. The other half he sprinkled on the people. It is a story that shocks. But God and the people were thus united in a covenant of blood.

The Catholic belief in the eucharist also shocks people. We drink the blood and eat the body of Christ, because this eucharist represents all that we believe. It shows our willingness to sacrifice everything for Christ and to become more like him in every way.

When we receive communion we accept the terms of the covenant on human life, sexuality, stewardship and forgiveness. We are not always faithful, but we try. When we receive communion, we say, "Amen." And we should say it like we mean it. It means what the Israelites meant: "All that God has said, we will heed and do."