

To seal this bond of unending love, Jesus offered himself in sacrifice. Just as a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, Jesus gave himself for the life of the world. He offered himself to be lifted up on the cross so that through the gift of his suffering, and by his blood, sinners would be forgiven. Jesus agreed to the cross and all its consequences so that you and I might live and know the love of God.

We are challenged to accept the cross -- this symbol of ignominy and hate -- as an expression of the purest, truest love humankind will ever experience. What do we say in response to such a love? It calls forth more than words; it summons a celebration. Through the sacred remembrance of every eucharistic gathering, we celebrate the new and eternal covenant. Jesus is present in word, in spirit, in sacrifice, in communion and in the assembly who has come together in his name. All present recall his hour, his *raison d'être*; all are graced by his fidelity to God and God's purpose. Then, in God's good presence, we eat the bread that Jesus gave so that we too may be blessed, broken and shared with all who hunger for the communion we have been privileged to know and share.

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