#### Yet, He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; He rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. Mortals ate of the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance. He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by His power He led out the south wind; He rained flesh upon them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; He let them fall within their camp, all around their dwellings. And they ate and were well filled, for He gave them what they craved.

#### Psalm 78:23-29

#### For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds. Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you. Titus 2:11-15

*The story is told about a CEO of a fortune 500 company who pulled into a service station to get gas. He went inside to pay, and when he came out he noticed his wife was talking with the service station attendant. She had dated the attendant before she met her husband.*

*The CEO got in the car, and the two drove in silence. He was feeling pretty good about himself when he finally spoke: “I bet I know what you were thinking. I bet you were thinking you’re glad you married me, a Fortune 500 CEO, and not him, a service station attendant.”*

*“No, I was thinking if I’d married him, he’d be a Fortune 500 CEO and you’d be a service station attendant.”*

Heroism of Life

1. Following my message, I will invite you to celebrate with me the Holy Communion. The significance of sharing at the Communion Table is clearly present in our text. At this Table we embrace the sacrifice of Jesus: *“Who gave Himself for us.”* We express our gratitude today, as we remember Jesus offering Himself for us and dying on the cross of Calvary. The major aspect of Paul’s message in his letter to Titus is *“God’s Grace.”* Paul writes: *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.”* This God’s *“Grace,”* is obviously Jesus Christ, who offered Himself, and became a sacrificial *“Lamb,”* to reconcile us with God. Only through His death the act of our redemption might have occur.

2. In many interviews given by the people labeled *“heroes,”* most of them would admit that although they saved someone, be it from drowning, rescued from the fire, or saved from some unexpected and unusual circumstances, they would not consider themselves as *“heroes,”* they just acted in the heat of the moment. Some, because of their training would attribute their action to the *“instinct”* of such training. In the heat of the moment people are often able to make extraordinary feats not because they act rationally, but because of the so-called *“adrenaline rush.”*

3. A few years ago Dustin Hoffman portrayed a very unlikely hero in a movie *“Hero.”* He played a petty criminal, who did not want any publicity, and when, following the plane crush, he saved the lives of a number of people all he was concerned with, were a pair of his shoes, lost in the rescuing commotion. It was a very interesting study of human behavior patterns in particular circumstances. The underlying factor in that movie was the reluctance of becoming labelled a *“hero,”* and the fact that anyone may be a potential heroes, for we do not know what and how we might act certain situations. Jesus, however, *“gave Himself for us,”* meaning He not only offered His life on the cross to save us, but He did so willingly and knowingly, to reestablished our broken relationship with God. The story of Christ’s life here on earth was a *“never-ending story”* of giving and sacrifice. Jesus lived His entire life for the sake of others. He never sought His own welfare; He did not seek gratification for what He did. In everything He did, He honored His Father and He never even wanted to be honored for any of His action. The three years of His ministry were constantly filled with acts of giving and with serving others. His motivations and His acts highlight the difference between us, even when we act unselfishly, and Him. He was always there to respond and to help, whenever and whoever needed it. His life was indeed filled with *“the plane crushes, people drownings, or being trapped by the fire.”*

4. Jesus’ *“heroism”* was however not an impulsive act or and action driven by the *“adrenaline rush.”* A long time ago I came across a comment about a difference between the *“art”* and the *“science”* of medicine. The comment was that when the doctors practiced the *“art or medicine”* they were in tune with the suffering of their patients, but when they began practicing the *“science of medicine,”* they lost this personal touch. Jesus’ life was the practice of the art of giving. He practiced a *“personal touch,”* not the reason. Nobody could do what Jesus did because no one is without sin, without blemish left by the touch of *“sin”* which is left on hearts of all of us. Jesus was a perfect *“lamb,”* and not only at the moment of His sacrifice, but in His entire life. Nobody could, or in that matter can do anything, to save even one soul. Sure, we may save someone’s life, but cannot transform anyone and to make them anew. We may try to achieve perfection, and we may even come close to, but without Jesus Christ transforming a person’s heart, nobody might be able to succeed.

5. With the tools offered by the scientific discoveries, we may try to perfect the human nature, but we fail miserably every time, because we cannot *“create”* perfection, only God can do this, it is only within His domain. As the society, the countless number of times we tried to improve and to perfect the society, but to no avail. We tried *“theocracy,”* but no religious leader was ever able to succeed in transforming the society. We tried *“democracy,”* and we constantly see the system being abused by the political leaders. We tried *“dictatorship”* and as result we ended up with the two terrible conflicts that we still remember, as WWI and WWII. The only way the human nature might be harnessed is through God’s touch and through Jesus’ sacrifice. Just a few years ago, a newly elected Prime Minister of Norway, said on record: As I see it, *the Bible is a book I can comfortably recommend to everyone. With all due respect to political programs and declarations, they are of limited value, both in content and in duration. But we should all relate the biblical message of Jesus Christ, a message of importance for time and eternity.”* We can create all sorts of programs and projects, but sooner or later they will all fade away as of no value. We will never achieve what Jesus achieved through His life and in His death.

6. A number of years ago I came across a story of a West Point graduate who was sent to Vietnam. *He led his group of new recruits into the combat zone. He did his job well and tried his best to keep his men out of booby traps and ambushes. They were surprised, though, one night by the battalion of Viet Cong. All the men except one were able to get to cover and fight from a safer position. The one soldier left behind was severely wounded. From their position, the young lieutenant and his men could hear the agonized cries of the wounded comrade. They wanted to reach him and tend to him, but leaving cover meant being subjected to the vicious cross fire of the enemy. Finally, the young officer could stand it no more and went himself into the deadly area. He reached his wounded man and managed to drag him to safety but at the very last moment he was hit by the bullet and died instantly. Months later, the rescued soldier returned to the states. The parents of the dead officer, the young hero, learned that this soldier was close by and invited him for dinner. They wanted to know the man for whom their son died while saving from the enemy. On the dinner night he came late, drunk, loud, rowdy, and obnoxious. He told off-color jokes, was rude and showed no concern for his suffering hosts. The parents of a dead hero were also brave, and they did the best to salvage the evening, to make it worthwhile. The visit finally came to an end and after the doors were closed behind their guests the mother collapsed crying: To think that our son has died for someone like that.*

7. We might be able to literally save someone’s life, but we cannot save that person from himself, or herself in that matter. Only God can do this, and this is what Jesus did on the cross, where *“He gave himself for us,”* and whoever is saved by Jesus, is truly transformed, and renewed because of what Jesus did. Tony Campolo who shared the story of that young lieutenant concluded: *“Before we go too far in our criticism of that ungrateful soldier, shouldn’t we consider how much like him most of us are? Jesus died for us, yet we continue to sin. Jesus paid the terrible price to give us life eternal, yet we continue behave obscenely. We owe Him something better, but we fail to deliver what we should. The suffering of God did not end with Calvary. The sins we commit here and now bring pain to Jesus here and now.”*

8. The Church History lists a great number of martyrs, and we remember them respectfully. Many people became heroes at some point in their life and we may even have such heroes among ourselves. It is wonderful that there are still people able to commit acts of bravery even in today’s indifferent world, yet, we must all learn from Jesus Christ that leading a Christian life is not a one-time occurrence. Leading a Christian life means to constantly focus on the issues at hand and means to constantly ask Jesus what He wants us to do. It is not an unexpected, heroic response caused by the *“adrenaline rush,”* or an *“instinctive response.”* It must be a continuous, never-ending way of life. Many politicians today invoke the name of God. Many finish their speeches with the same phrase: *“God bless America.”* How many of them truly trust God? Hom many of them truly follow God’s Word? How many of them were truly *“transformed”* by Jesus? He offered *“Himself for them,”* they dare to invoke His name, and yet they do not embrace Him. Jesus offered Himself for us and He offered more than just a part of His life. He offered Himself and made Himself available to all the people who needed Him. As I invite you to this Table, I want you remember what Jesus did and the reason He did it. *“He it is who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds.”*