

THE COVENANT
R.C.I.A., Chpt. #4
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The sacred Vow..... The mystical community
Greek [diatheke] Hebrew [berith]

*** The blood of Jesus is the new and everlasting covenant.

*** The Cross is the visible witness to the Covenant.

*** "I will be your God, you will be my people."

Covenant is immutable; as God is immutable.

Covenant is a solemn Ritual agreement.

Covenant implies duties, responsibilities, consequences.

Covenant can not be retracted or annulled.

Covenant is an artificial blood relationship. [kinship]

Covenant is becoming one blood, one family.

Covenant is everlasting love. [hesed]

Covenant requires us to observe standards and conduct

Covenant includes terrible consequences for violation.

Covenant is loyalty, and loyalty is love.

Covenant is a treaty of vassalage.

Covenant concerns boundaries.

Covenant forms a community.

Covenant is to be an elect of Christ.

Covenant makes us holy.

Covenant is established through the Church.

Covenant is power through a sacred bond. [VOWS]

*** The Covenant theme is the background for the whole New Testament and the Old Testament, even when it is not explicitly noted.

*** The benefits [fruits] of the Covenant are received through the Rite of Baptism which defines the relationship between God and man; love and communion. [community and oneness]

FRUITS OF THE COVENANT

# removal of original sin	# restoration of original justice
# inheritance	# identity
# adoption	# hospitality [salt]
# name [power]	# elect/chosen
# salvation/saving	# holy/clean
# faith	# hope/dignity
# repentance/forgiveness	# grace
# freedom	# innocence
# anointed/sacred	# new beginning
# witness	# teacher
# entry into a community	# indelible marking of the soul
# action... the receiving and the bearing of the sign of Christ	

*** Covenant and creation are ongoing events. The Kingdom of God was brought into the world by the death and resurrection of Jesus and is also an ongoing event. Living by the Covenant brings us to the Kingdom.

*** The Covenant is the art of loving which is a voluntary attachment; it is a preference and a desire. Love is also possessive as it can not serve two masters. Two masters is an infidelity that cools love. God's love is poured into men's hearts through the Holy Spirit because of love of neighbor which fulfills the entire law. Love of God is not loving God but being loved by Him. God initiates, man responds. Our gratitude for His forgiveness increases our love for Him. When Gods' perfect love is in our soul, there is no longer room for fear. Receiving the Eucharist is a love ritual between God and man when received with a repentant heart. Forgiveness is a free gift of God to the repentant. It is not due to man's merit but accorded by God's patience and love for the repentant sinner. "If you love me, keep my commandments and live in my COVENANT."

Entrance into the Covenant is a not cause for stagnation but a call to action; a call to growth. There are three levels that must be recognized. First comes KNOWLEDGE; then LOVE and finally

SERVICE. The neophyte must seek knowledge in order to achieve love which leads to service. To enter the Covenant and then do nothing is a rejection of both God and His Covenant.

To an infant, knowledge is acquired from the parents who are the first teachers of the faith. To an adult, DESIRE becomes the entrance to knowledge; for love is the fruit of enlightenment. To know is the willingness to accept the commandments through obedience. The knowledge of God is something that can be refused. Christianity is not acquired by investigation; it is an insight of the soul. True knowledge requires a growth in faith and trust. Obedience then is the cornerstone of love; for there can be no deviation from truth. To know, then, is to experience the enlightenment of faith, which leads to love of truth.

To say I love God is much too casual. We must be IN love with God. The difference is in the way we act. Just TO love God is an accommodation while IN love is compelling. That which is compelling needs to serve its beloved to be fulfilling. To enter the Covenant then is to live a life of service and growth. To imitate the life message of Christ is to bring us to share in the kingdom. This imitation will bring us to justification through any suffering for His sake. To be in the covenant is to be involved.

Growth is not instantaneous, as the word may imply. It is the result of the persistence of desire. To seek truth, you will find truth through a responsible source; not through a warped conscience or your own standards. To judge one's self is the height of hypocrisy. We depend on the mercy of God for the forgiveness of sin and our own sincerity of repentance, for He responds in the justice of love. Our fulfillment of the Covenant is our guide post for living in this world. It is the proof of our conviction of being IN love with God.

THROUGH BAPTISM WE BECOME COVENANT PEOPLE.