

Dear People Whom God Loves,

FOR MANY OR FOR ALL

These are the words of consecration in the translation that we now have in our mass:

“Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
For this is the chalice of my blood,
The blood of the new and eternal covenant,
Which will be poured out for you and for many
For the forgiveness of sins”

There has been much debate about whether “for many” or “for all” should be the proper wording. There is a difference of opinion about whether the words used in the Gospel of Mark for “many” corresponds to “for all” or “for many” in Hebraic usage.

This, however, doesn’t seem to me to be the heart of the problem. We have two doctrines that need to be held. One is that Jesus died for all of humanity. The other is that we cannot say that we know that every human person will be saved.

It is important to look at how both “for many” and “for all” can be understood in a way that does not preserve the teaching of our church.

“For many” can easily be understood as Jesus only died for some individuals and not for the whole human race (the multitudes). This understanding is contrary to the belief of our church. We must remember that the Saving Love we call God embraces everyone.

“For all” can easily be understood as meaning that we know that every human individual will be saved. Our church’s belief is that because we have free will, we cannot know that every human person will make the choice of accepting that gift from God. Salvation is a gift totally from GOD (LOVE). Love (GOD) will continually to entice us with love to soften our hearts. Because God is Love, God will not obliterate our freedom. Loving persuasion is not the same as force.

My personal hope is that LOVE (GOD) will find a way to soften the hardest of hearts. I think that Karl Rahner was expressing the same hope when he wrote that we have to believe in hell but we don’t have to believe that anyone goes there.

Smile, God Loves You,
Father Clay

P.S. The background for this reflection is the book “Mercy” by Cardinal Walter Kasper pg. 76, footnote #32.