

Scripture Study

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Exodus 24:3-8

(Ps 116:12-13, 15-18)

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel reading takes place in Jerusalem on Holy Thursday, the night Jesus was betrayed. It is on the first day of the Jewish feast of Passover.
- Rather cryptically, Jesus instructs his disciples to prepare for the Passover meal in a certain place in the city. According to tradition, the mother of St. Mark, the writer of this gospel, owned this room. She was also thought to own the Garden of Gethsemane.
- In words identical to those he uses when he multiplied the loaves and fed the 5000 (Mark 6:41, CCC 1335), Jesus accomplishes three things: (1) He changes the Passover bread and wine into his Body and Blood—the same Body and Blood that will be sacrificed for the sins of the world on the Cross. (2) Since a sacrifice requires priests, he establishes the priesthood. His apostles, and their successors the bishops, will comprise that priesthood. (3) He establishes the Holy Eucharist, so that in receiving Communion his people for all time and places may participate in his once-for-all sacrifice until he comes again in glory.
- Thus, just as the Old Covenant was sealed by sacrifice and blood on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:3-8), the New Covenant is sealed in Christ's blood on Calvary (Romans 5:9; Hebrews 9:22), anticipated at the Last Supper, and perpetuated in the Sacrifice of the Mass (John 6:53; CCC 610, 1392-93).

Questions:

- Read the other, parallel, accounts of the Last Supper found in the New Testament (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). What other interesting and enlightening details about the institution of the Eucharist do you find there?
- Why would secrecy be needed as this meal was planned? What risk was involved?
- How does the Last Supper relate to the Passover (see Exodus 12)? To this Sunday's first reading (Exodus 24:3-8)?
- What new meaning does Jesus give to the unleavened Passover bread (see John 6:51-58)? The wine?
- How much do you think the disciples understood when Jesus spoke about his Body and Blood? What might they have been thinking? How would you have felt had you been there?
- What is your focus when you receive Holy Communion? What should it be?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 1323, 1328, 1339-1344, 1403

Closing prayer

In all He did from the Incarnation to the Cross, the end Jesus Christ had in mind was the gift of the Eucharist, his personal and corporal union with each Christian through Communion. He saw in It the means of communicating to us all the treasures of His Passion, all the virtues of His Sacred Humanity, and all the merits of His Life. -St. Peter Julian Eymard

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many"

Scripture: *Mark 14:12-16,22-26*

Meditation: Why did Jesus offer himself as "food and drink" to his disciples? Jesus chose the time of Passover to fulfill what he had announced earlier at Capernaum – giving his disciples his body and his blood (John 6:51-58). Jesus' passing over to his Father by his death and resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Last Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the church in the glory of God's kingdom. This is the most significant meal of Jesus and the most important occasion of his breaking of bread. In this meal Jesus identifies the bread as his body and the cup as his blood. When the Lord Jesus commands his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood, he invites us to take his life into the very center of our being (John 6:53). That life which he offers is the very life of God himself. Jesus' death on the cross, his gift of his body and blood in the Supper, and his promise to dine again with his disciples when the kingdom of God comes in all its fullness are inseparably linked. Jesus instructed his disciples to "do this in remembrance of me". These words establish every Lord's Supper or Eucharist as a "remembrance" of Jesus' atoning death, his resurrection, and his promise to return again. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Our celebration of the Lord's Supper anticipates the final day when the Lord Jesus will feast anew with his disciples in the heavenly marriage feast of the Lamb and his Bride. **Do you know the joy of the drinking Christ's cup and tasting the bread of his Table in sincerity?**



Mark ties the last supper meal with Jesus' death and the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus transforms the Passover of the old covenant into the meal of the "new covenant in my blood". In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in sacrifice as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to their Creator. Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine, who was both priest and king (Genesis 14:18), prefigured the offering made by Jesus, our high priest and king. The unleavened bread at Passover and the miraculous manna in the desert are the pledge of God's faithfulness to his promises. The "cup of blessing" at the end of the Jewish Passover meal points to the messianic expectation of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Jesus gave a new and definitive meaning to the blessing of the bread and the cup when he instituted the "Lord's Supper" or "Eucharist". He speaks of the presence of his body and blood in this new meal. When at the Last Supper Jesus described his blood "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28), he was explaining his coming crucifixion as a sacrifice for sins. His death on the cross fulfilled the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.

That is why John the Baptist called him the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Jesus made himself an offering and sacrifice, a gift that was truly pleasing to the Father. He "offered himself without blemish to God" (Hebrews 9:14) and "gave himself as a sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2). This meal was a memorial of his death and resurrection.

When we receive from the Lord's table we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood. Ignatius of Antioch (35-107 A.D.) calls it the "one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ" (*Ad Eph.* 20, 2). This supernatural food is healing for both body and soul and strength for our journey heavenward. **When you approach the Table of the Lord, what do you expect to receive? Healing, pardon, comfort, and rest for your soul?** The Lord has much more for us, more than we can ask or imagine. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist is an intimate union with Christ. As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens us in charity and enables us to break with disordered attachments to creatures and to be more firmly rooted in the love of Christ. **Do you hunger for the "bread of life"?**

"Lord Jesus, you nourish and sustain us with your very own presence and life. You are the "Bread of Life" and the "Cup of Salvation". May I always hunger for you and be satisfied in you alone."

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