

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

June 2, 2024

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Background:

There is general agreement among scripture scholars that John's chronology of the events of Jesus' passion and death is more accurate than that which is found in the synoptic Gospels. Jesus died on the afternoon before the celebration of Passover began, and his body was removed from the cross before sunset as the Jews gathered to begin that sacred meal.

However, when Mark and the early Christians gathered to remember that last meal with Jesus, they understood it as a kind of new Passover. It was similar to the way their celebration of Passover was not just a remembering of what had happened one night in the past in Egypt. In their yearly celebration of Passover, they believed that that they were once again making present that night when Yahweh acted on their behalf. They were Egyptian slaves, and they became God's chosen people.

The early Christians carried their Jewish understanding of celebrating the Passover as a way to carry into the present the relationship that was established in the original Passover. For early Christians the celebration of Passover takes on the meaning of Jesus' celebrating of the Passover with them and his institution of the Eucharist. When they were celebrating Jesus' last meal with them, they were renewing that new relationship with Jesus and God that Jesus had begun. Their understanding and appreciation grew as they participated in the ritual itself and reflected on its meaning. The condensed description of Jesus' celebration of the Passover with his disciples that appears as our text incorporates years of reflection on their old traditions, their remembrance of Jesus, and their new experiences as people who believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you remember certain days each year because of a significant event that took place on that date? (birthday, graduation, vows, society, surgery, cancer free)
2. How aware are you of the kinds of food you eat, or when your body is hungry or thirsty, or the effect certain kinds of food have on you?
3. Can you recall times when you have used a meal to help communicate to another how you felt about that person?
4. When you think of Jesus having meals with others in the Gospels, which stories come to mind? What kind of message is being communicated by those meals?
5. If you consider the Eucharist as an expression of God's desire, what is being communicated to you?
6. What are you communicating by standing before the person holding the host with your hands outstretched?
7. Can you take some time to talk to God about your thoughts and feelings around the Eucharist, or about this feast, or your own experience of your body and blood?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for June 2, 2024, The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

When Moses related all the words of the Lord, they all answered, "We will do everything the Lord has told us." Moses then wrote down all the words of the Lord and, rising early the next day, he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, having sent certain young men to sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord, Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it to the people, who answered, "All that the Lord has said, we will do." Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his."

*I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.
How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?
The cup of salvation I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.
Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones.
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds.
To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.
My vows to the Lord I will pay in the presence of all his people.*

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came as high priest, passing through the more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God. He is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two disciples and said, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples then went and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover. While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Excerpts from Exodus 24:3-8; Psalm 116:12-18; Hebrews 9:11-15; and Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for June 2nd, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Gospel is Mark's short version of the story of the last supper. Jesus breaks the bread, gives it to his disciples, and says, "This is my body." Then after he gives thanks and gives them to drink from the cup, he says, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many."

The other readings also have references to blood, and sacrifice, and covenants. In the first reading, from Exodus, Moses reads the book of the covenant to the Israelites. Then as he sprinkles the blood of the sacrifice on them, he tells them, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his." Psalm 116 exclaims, "I will take the cup of salvation. To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. You have loosed my bonds." In the second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, Paul writes, "Christ came as high priest, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands. He entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. He is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance."

The different covenants have different destinations for different lives. The Old Testament covenant promised the Old Testament chosen people a land of their own to live in and prosper on this earth. In the new covenant, the New Testament chosen people are promised a new eternal life, in a new destination. In his last words of this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus says, "Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!