

Sunday June 23, 2019

## Pastor's Column

### Feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Jesus

Jesus instituted Eucharist at the Last Supper. He did it at a Passover Meal. The annual Jewish Passover Meal (lamb, unleavened bread, spices and wine) remembers the passing over of the Jews from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Before leaving Egypt, God instructed the Jewish people to kill and eat a lamb and spread the lamb's blood over the wooden doorposts of their houses. When the Angel of Death passed over the land, he would strike dead the firstborn in the Egyptian houses but spare the firstborn in the houses of the Jewish people which were marked by the blood. The people also were to have unleavened bread ready for a quick escape from Egypt. The death of so many Egyptians convinced Pharaoh to let the Jewish people leave Egypt, so they grabbed their things, their unleavened bread and hit the road.

God then directed that there be an annual celebration of Passover to remember God's saving action. At Passover, each family eats the flesh of a lamb, unleavened bread and spices, and drinks wine – all in memory of the first Passover.

At his last Passover meal, Jesus held up a piece of the unleavened bread and said "This is my Body." He held up a cup of wine and said "This is my blood. Do this in memory of me." Jesus was saying that, on the cross, he would become the new and definitive Passover Lamb (no need to sacrifice lambs any longer). He, the Lamb of God, would die so we could pass over from sin and death to forgiveness and eternal life. His blood wouldn't be spread on a wooden doorpost but on a wooden cross. He instructed his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood whenever they gathered in his name.

The Church has celebrated Eucharist without interruption since Jesus commanded it 2,000 years ago. At every Mass, we do four things: (1) we remember Jesus, his love and his sacrifice on the cross; (2) we give thanks for Jesus' sacrifice (*Eucharist is Greek for thanksgiving*); (3) Jesus becomes present in the bread and wine which become his body and blood; he is present body, mind, soul and divinity; (4) we become like Jesus by consuming him – empowered to love and serve and be like Jesus in our world.

This is why Mass is so important and is the central act of prayer in the Catholic faith. This is why we need the Mass and frankly shouldn't miss it. This is why we are celebrating the Feast of Corpus Christi. We remember, we give thanks, we consume Jesus, and we are transformed. Happy Feast of Corpus Christi.

God bless,  
Fr. Joe