

In the Book of Exodus, the Lord instructs Moses about all of the fine details for the first Passover Meal concluding with: “This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institution” (Ex 12:14).

The Israelites had been celebrating the Passover for over 1400 years by the time Jesus was born. Every year in springtime, the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph traveled to the holy city of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Meal. The Passover Meal has another name. Sometimes it is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After preaching and teaching for three years, Jesus returned to the Holy City of Jerusalem once again to celebrate Passover with his Apostles.

On Holy Thursday, Jesus gathered them in the Upper Room. Looking to the past, they reverently recalled Israel’s escape from slavery and celebrated the traditional Passover. Looking forward to Christianity, Jesus celebrated the Lord’s Supper. “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Cor 11:23-25)

When we gather for Mass, we participate in the very same Lord’s Supper with Jesus and the Apostles in the Upper Room. Instead of once a year, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper every Sunday because Jesus told us “do this in memory of me.” Some even come on a daily basis to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

The Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. We refer to Mass as the Feast of Heaven and Earth. When we pray here on earth, we pray with the Angels and Saints in heaven. They participate with us at Mass. At life’s end, Jesus wants each of us to rise with him to new life in heaven. Holy Communion is God’s way of helping us now for the eternal life to come.

Our active participation at Mass is vitally important to a dynamic and living faith. It is more than simply being present. Jesus wants us to hear the Gospel proclaimed in a community. Jesus wants us to forgive others as he has forgiven us. At the Lord’s Supper, Jesus transformed bread and wine into his Body and Blood. At Mass, the priest acts in the person of Jesus Christ. He prays the words that Jesus prayed at the Lord’s Supper. And when his hands come down over the bread and wine, he is calling down the Holy Spirit. The words of Jesus prayed by the priest and the calling down of the Holy Spirit change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. With a pure heart, with our grave sins confessed in Reconciliation, with full acceptance that this is the Body and Blood of Jesus, the Father offers us his only begotten Son in the Eucharist that we may be changed more and more into the likeness of his Beloved Son.

The words of Jesus from the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday are also connected with Good Friday. God loves each one of us so much he suffered a horrible death. Jesus freely offered his life for us on the cross. Truly, blood poured out of the wounds of his body on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we hear the words of the Eucharistic prayer:

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. Do this in memory of me.

We also look to our beautiful Crucifix and see the connection between Holy Thursday and Good Friday. There is one more connection we must make.

Grant, almighty God, that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion and an interior joy the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. Help us to honor the risen Lord that what we relive in remembrance we may always hold to in what we do (From collect 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter).

1. Bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Christ.
2. We are invited to reverently receive Jesus who is really present in the Eucharist because God wants us to be transformed as well.
3. Our active participation at Mass does not end with the last Amen. God wants us to go into the world and transform it. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Mt 25: 19-20).

Each Holy Thursday, Jesus reminds us of our responsibilities as Christians to serve others. “Do you realize what I have done for you? If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

Our active participation at Mass does not end with the last Amen. We are called to encounter Jesus in disguise ... in the world ... in the poor and the suffering. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25: 35-36).

With the great gift of the Eucharist we receive, also comes a great responsibility. “Do this in memory of me” calls us to the table of the Lord as a community to receive his Body and Blood. “Do this in memory of me” calls us to the cross and to offer our lives in loving sacrifice and service to God. “Do this in memory of me” calls us to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Lk 10:27).