

“Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” (Mk 14:14). When Jesus gathered with his disciples on Holy Thursday, they came to remember the sacred meal celebrated by the captive Israelites their last night in Egypt. For Passover, the Israelites slaughtered a lamb and placed its blood on their doorposts making the sign of the cross. Moses led them through the dry riverbed of the Red Sea and they passed into safety. The waters however closed in on Pharaoh’s army. The first Passover was an escape from slavery. The chosen people were liberated by God as they began a journey towards the Promised Land. Each year as the Jewish gather for Passover, they remember and are present for the very first meal and their escape from slavery.

“Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” Jesus gathered his apostles in the upper room not only to remember the past but also to give Passover a new meaning. The Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the cross, shared a meal of bread and wine with his disciples. At this sacred gathering, “our Savior instituted the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church his Spouse a memorial of his death and resurrection.”<sup>i</sup>

Each time Christians gather for Mass, we remember the new Passover and the entire Paschal Mystery of Jesus.

- It began with a meal on Holy Thursday: “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’ (Mt 26:26-28; cf. Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25). In the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus prayed by the priest.
- The Paschal Mystery continues on Good Friday as Jesus offers his Body and Blood for us on the Cross. Christ is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Jesus willingly offered his human life that we might have a share in the divine life of the Trinity.
- After his death, Jesus was taken down from the cross and buried in a tomb. He descended to the dead. With deep Love, Jesus opens the gate of death to lead people to a new-found freedom from sin and death. The first Passover with Moses was an escape from slavery. The New Passover is an escape from slavery to sin.
- “While our sins would have made it impossible for us to share in the life of God, Jesus Christ was sent to remove this obstacle. His death was a sacrifice for our sins... Through his death and resurrection, he conquered sin and death and reconciled us to God. The Eucharist is the memorial of this sacrifice. The Church gathers to remember and to represent the sacrifice of Christ in which we share through the action of the priest and the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>ii</sup>
- “In the Eucharist, Jesus does not sacrifice himself again and again. Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit his one eternal sacrifice is made present once again, re-presented, so that we may share in it. Christ does not have to leave where he is in heaven to be with us. Rather, we partake of the heavenly liturgy where Christ eternally intercedes for us and presents his sacrifice to the Father and where the angels and saints constantly glorify God and give thanks for all his gifts.”<sup>iii</sup>

With Passover, the chosen people were liberated by God as they began a journey towards the promised land. With the New Passover, the Promised Land is heaven. Jesus tells us: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:51).

God’s deepest desire is for more than just the transformation of bread and wine into his Body and Blood. God wants our lives to be transformed. He wants us to change more and more into the likeness of Christ. When you see the priest or deacon pour a little water into the wine, he offers a silent prayer: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity” (RM).

And when the priest prays the Eucharistic Prayer, he takes the chalice and prays:

**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.**

Why is the forgiveness of sins for many and not all? With our free will, we have the choice to reject God. We have the choice to choose sin and death over Jesus and eternal life. Jesus invites us to the heavenly banquet every Sunday and we may choose to join him, or we may be tempted into going elsewhere.

The Body and Blood Christ that Jesus offers us, looks so plain and ordinary. We often fail to see the heavenly reality before us. We never know when we will meet Jesus in disguise in the poor and the hungry. We never know when God will send an angel to help us. But with the Eucharist, we have the assurance of Jesus that it is his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Jesus said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world... For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (Jn 6:51-55).

---

<sup>i</sup> [uscgb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs](http://uscgb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid