

GOSPEL

MARK 14:12-16, 22-26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to Jesus, 'Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the passover?' So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the city and you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, and say to the owner of the house which he enters, "The Master says: Where is my dining room in which I can eat the passover with my disciples?" He will show you a large upper room furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the preparations for us there.' The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover.

And as they were eating he took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them. 'Take it,' he said 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it, and he said to them, 'This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God.'

After psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel recounts Jesus' words pronounced at the Last Supper with his disciples: "Take; this is my body". And then: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many".

Precisely by virtue of this testament of love, the Christian community gathers every Sunday, and each day, around the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's redeeming Sacrifice. And, attracted by his real presence, Christians adore him and contemplate him through the humble sign of the Bread which has become his Body.

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, through this most sober and also so

solemn Sacrament, we experience the New Covenant which fulfils the communion between God and us. And as participants in this Covenant we, although small and poor, cooperate in building history as God wills. For this reason, while constituting an act of public worship of God, every Eucharistic celebration refers to life and the tangible events of our existence. As we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we are assimilated with him; we receive his love within us, not to hold it back selfishly, but rather to share it with others. This logic is inscribed in the Eucharist: we receive his love within us and we share it with others. This is the Eucharistic logic.

Indeed in it we contemplate Jesus, Bread broken and offered, Blood poured out for our salvation. It is a presence which like fire sears the selfish attitudes within us, purifies us of the tendency to give only when we have received, and ignites the desire to make ourselves too, in union with Christ, bread broken and blood poured out for our brothers and sisters.

Thus, the celebration of *Corpus Christi* is a mystery of attraction to Christ and of transformation in him. And it is the school of concrete love, patient and sacrificed, as Jesus on the Cross. It teaches us to become more welcoming and available to those who are in search of understanding, of help, of encouragement, and are marginalized and alone. Jesus' living presence in the Eucharist is like a door, an open door between the temple and the road, between faith and history, between the city of God and the city of man.

The processions with the Most Holy Sacrament that are taking place in many countries on today's Solemnity are an expression of popular Eucharistic devotion. In Ostia [Rome] this evening, as Blessed Paul VI did 50 years ago, I too will celebrate Mass, to be followed by the procession with the Most Holy Sacrament. I invite everyone to participate, even spiritually, by radio and television. May Our Lady accompany us on this day.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to you that Jesus' "real presence" is found in the Eucharist?
- The Church describes the Eucharist as 'the source and summit of the Christian life'. What place does the Eucharist have in your life?
- Have you ever had an experience of Jesus being close after receiving the Eucharist? What happened?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.