

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.

HOMILY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

11 June 2009, Excerpt

These words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper are repeated every time that the Eucharistic Sacrifice is renewed. We have just heard them in Mark's Gospel and they resonate with special power today on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. They lead us in spirit to the Upper Room, they make us relive the spiritual atmosphere of that night when, celebrating Easter with his followers, the Lord mystically anticipated the sacrifice that was to be consummated the following day on the Cross. The Institution of the Eucharist thus appears to us as an anticipation and acceptance, on Jesus' part, of his death. St Ephrem the Syrian writes on this topic: during the Supper Jesus sacrificed himself; on the Cross he was sacrificed by others (cf. Hymn on the Crucifixion, 3, 1).

"This is my Blood". Here the reference to the sacrificial language of Israel is clear. Jesus presents himself as the true and definitive sacrifice, in which was fulfilled the expiation of sins which, in the Old Testament rites, was never fully completed. This is followed by two other very important remarks. First of all, Jesus Christ says that his Blood "is poured out for many" with a comprehensible reference to the songs of the Servant of God that are found in the Book of Isaiah (cf. ch. 53). With the addition "blood of the Covenant" Jesus also makes clear that through his death the prophesy of the new Covenant is fulfilled, based on the fidelity and infinite love of the Son made man. An alliance that, therefore, is stronger than all humanity's sins. The old Covenant had been sealed on Sinai with a sacrificial rite of animals, as we heard in the First Reading, and the Chosen People, set free from slavery in Egypt, had promised to obey all the commandments given to them by the Lord (cf. Ex 24: 3).

In truth, Israel showed immediately by making the golden calf that it was incapable of staying faithful to this promise and thus to the divine Covenant, which indeed it subsequently violated all too often, adapting to its heart of stone the Law that should have taught it the way of life. However, the Lord did not fail to keep his promise and, through the prophets, sought to recall the inner dimension of the Covenant and announced that he would write a new law upon the hearts of his faithful (cf. Jer 31: 33), transforming them with the gift of the Spirit (cf. Ez 36: 25-27). And it was during the Last Supper that he made this new Covenant with his disciples and humanity, confirming it not with animal sacrifices as had happened in the past, but indeed with his own Blood, which became the "Blood of the New Covenant". Thus he based it on his own obedience, stronger, as I said, than all our sins.

This is clearly highlighted in the Second Reading, taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, in which the sacred author declares that Jesus is the "mediator of a new covenant" (9: 15). He became so through his

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blood, or, more exactly, through the gift of himself, which gives full value to the outpouring of his blood. On the Cross, Jesus is at the same time victim and priest: a victim worthy of God because he was unblemished, and a High Priest who offers himself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and intercedes for the whole of humanity. The Cross is therefore a mystery of love and of salvation which cleanses us as the Letter to the Hebrews states from "dead works", that is, from sins, and sanctifies us by engraving the New Covenant upon our hearts. The Eucharist, making present the sacrifice of the Cross, renders us capable of living communion with God faithfully.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What do you believe about the Eucharist?



Heart: Calling to mind an image of the crucifixion, how do you experience the cross of Jesus? (e.g. as judgement? love? hope?)



Hands: If the bread and wine truly becomes the body and blood of Jesus, what might we do differently in our lives to reflect this fact?

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. Offer 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 praying the 'Glory Be'.