

## REFLECTION ON THE LAST SUPPER

**The children of Abraham**, the Israelites, were enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years. God heard their cries and led them out of bondage by many miracles through Moses. When God led the Israelites out of physical bondage in Egypt He ratified it with the blood of an unblemished lamb. We read in the Book of Exodus:

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month will stand at the head of your calendar; you will reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every family must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a household is too small for a lamb, it along with its nearest neighbor will procure one, and apportion the lamb's cost in proportion to the number of persons, according to what each household consumes. Your lamb must be a year-old male and **without blemish**. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You will keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole community of Israel assembled, it will be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They will take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They will consume its meat that same night, eating it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or even boiled in water, but roasted, with its head and shanks and inner organs. You must not keep any of it beyond the morning; whatever is left over in the morning must be burned up. This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you will eat it in a hurry. **It is the Lord's Passover**. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn in the land, human being and beast alike, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the Lord! But for you the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thereby, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you. This day will be a day of remembrance for you, which your future generations will celebrate*

*with pilgrimage to the Lord; you will celebrate it as a statute forever. (Ex 12:1-14)*

God used the blood of a spotless lamb to save the Israelites from physical death. God also commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover for all generation. Jesus, being a devout Jew, celebrated Passover with His disciples.

Jesus shared His last supper with His disciples, knowing that the hour was coming when in His humanity he would die for us so that in His Divinity we could rise with Him. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus said to His Apostles:

***“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it [again] until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”*** Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, ***“Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you [that] from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”*** Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ***“This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.”*** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ***“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.”***  
(Luke 22:14-20)

Through His actions, a new covenant was introduced with Christ as the unblemished lamb. The shedding of His blood was the atonement that marked our liberation from spiritual slavery. We became sons and daughters of God, heirs to the new kingdom. The sacrifice of Christ the unblemished lamb instituted the new Passover. That was the institution of the Eucharist.

As they reclined at supper Jesus knew that one of His Apostles, one of the twelve Disciples closest to Him, would betray Him. And betray Him for money, 30 pieces of silver. In the Gospel of Matthew we read:

*Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that*

*time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. (Matt 26:14-16)*

Now Judas was a person of questionable character. He was characterized in the Gospel of John as a thief in an earlier incident during the ministry of Jesus.

*Judas the Iscariot, one [of] his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, "Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days' wages and given to the poor?" He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. (John 12:4-6)*

Why would someone who was so close to Jesus betray Him? Was his love of money so great? Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke:

*No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16:13)*

Are we in any way like Judas? Do we betray Jesus? When we go to Mass and receive the Body and Blood of Christ are we worshipping God with our whole heart? Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, quoting from the Prophet Isaiah, said to the Pharisees and Scribes:

*"This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; (Mt. 15:8)*

God made a new covenant with the children of Abraham. Jesus led them out of the bondage of sin and ratified it with the shedding of His blood, the blood of a man unblemished by sin, the Lamb of God. God used the blood of His Son, the unblemished Lamb, to save us from spiritual death. The new covenant supersedes the old. Unlike the ritual sacrifices under the covenant in the Old Testament, the sacrifice ratifying the new covenant only needed to be done once, for all.

Jesus is remembered in each Mass celebrated by Catholic Church. He is the one offering the sacrifice; and He is the sacrifice being offered to the Father. We, the faithful, eat His body and drink His blood as Jesus told us to do in the Bread of life discourse in the Gospel of John (John 6:22-58). Jesus said to His disciples,

*“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 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.”* The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, *“How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?”* Jesus said to them, *“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”* (John 6:47-58)

We are invited to share in Jesus’ sacrificial death and look forward to resurrection with Him every time the sacrifice is made at Mass. Each one of us is invited to join in the Messianic banquet. And just as God provided Manna in the desert for the Israelites after he led them out of Egypt, He has provided spiritual manna for us through the Eucharist, which will strengthen us to hear and understand God’s word, and be obedient to God.

## **PRAYER**

Almighty and eternal God, we are your children. You constantly seek us and invite us to seek You. You have promised that You will never leave us or forsake us and you keep your promises through eternity.

Open our hearts and minds to Your presence and fill us with the wonder of Your love. Open the eyes and ears of our understanding so that we may draw ever closer to you. Wrap your loving arms around us and

protect us from harm. Hold us in the palm of your hand so that we may have the strength to reflect Your goodness in our lives.

You love us so much that You sent Your Son into this world to show us the way home. And even though we do not fully understand the depths of what He did for us, help us to gladly make whatever sacrifices life demands of us so that we too can help others on their journey of salvation.

Loving Jesus, We thank you for giving us your Body and Blood to strengthen us spiritually, and for inviting us to partake, as often as we want, in Your Messianic Banquet. As the bread and wine are transformed into Your body and blood, let our hearts and minds be transformed, so that we may live a life of service to You and our neighbor. Through Your grace, help us to be lights to guide others through the darkness and shadows of this world.

Help us to love You with our whole being and to be always filled with gratitude for the physical, emotional and spiritual suffering you endured for us. The burden of our past, present and future sins, through our disobedience, was nailed to the cross, and You now wait in your glory for us to come to You.

We thank you, we praise you, we adore you, we glorify you, and we worship you. We surrender our lives to you. We are ready to do your will. Amen