

St. Louis Catholic Church

Holy Thursday

It is Passover. The Christian Passover commemorates the passing over from sin to grace and death to life and life eternal. Jesus was identified by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God. The lamb of the Old Testament was slaughtered after being procured and prepared. The Israelites ate the lamb with unleavened bread and wine to recall the saving act of God to free the people from bondage. The blood of the Lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites homes so that the angel of death would pass-over their dwellings and save their firstborn sons.

Each year the Jews recall and make present a memorial of God's saving acts. The Seder Meal has been experienced by many Catholics. Not only do the Jews mark the covenant with God to remember the past but they celebrate that He frees them today from bondage like sin, weakness, addictions and the enslavements of this world.

A good Jew, Jesus celebrates Passover with His disciples. One year in his public ministry, around Passover time, He multiplied loaves and fish. Then He taught the Bread of Life discourse found in John 6. In it He promised the Eucharist. "I am the Bread of Life. He who eats of My Flesh and drinks of My Blood will live forever". "I am the living Bread come down from Heaven, he who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will not die".

At Passover, on the night before He died, Jesus spoke of a new covenant. It was the only time He mentioned it and indicates a new relationship that is eternal between God and His people. During the meal He took bread and said "Take this all of you and eat it--this is My Body". In other words this is the essence of "Me". He is giving us His Flesh to eat. He is food. Born in a trough where food is placed to feed creatures in a town (Bethlehem) called House of Bread, He is food from day one till all eternity. He took a cup of wine and said "Take this all of you and drink it, this is the cup of My Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. Do this in memory of Me". That means make Him present, He is not a historical person of the past but He is the living Lord.

This was done during the Cup of Blessing where the Israelites would drink a third cup of wine. St. Paul spoke of the Church and referred to the Cup of Blessing, "Is not the cup of blessing we bless a share in the Blood of Christ? And is not the Bread we break a share in the Body of Christ?" From day one we have taught and believed that the Eucharist is the Body--Blood--Soul and Divinity of Jesus. It is TRUE presence.

Scott Hahn speaks of Jesus going to the Garden of Gethsemane before completing the Passover Meal. He says it is then that Jesus says "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it in the Kingdom". As He falls in prayer in the Garden He says, "Father if it be Your will let this cup pass from Me, but not My will but Yours be done". What cup? The cup of the Passover. Yes the Passover Meal continues.

After His arrest Jesus is tried, scourged, beaten, mocked, clothed in royal garments and sentenced to death. Through the streets of Jerusalem He is jeered and then offered a taste of wine. It contained an opiate to ease the pain. He refused.

When put on the Cross He finally says "I thirst". They take wine on a Hyssop branch and place it on His lips. The Hyssop branch was also used to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts in the original Exodus. Christ was stripped of his seamless garment. The katon garment was what the High Priest was to wear in offering the sacrifice.

Jesus is the lamb, the victim and the High Priest who offers the sacrifice of Himself. When He tastes the wine, He states "It is finished!" What is finished? The Passover Meal. It begins at the table and ends on the cross. That is why our Mass and Eucharist is THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS!!! In an unbloody manner on the table of sacrifice we remember and make present the salvific act of Jesus. We do it every single day. And we are fed with His Body and Blood. We received the glorified death of Jesus.

He broke Himself and emptied Himself for our salvation. We are in Communion with Him when we receive the Eucharist. Therefore we are called to be as prepared though we are unworthy to receive the Bread of Life. Holy Thursday commemorates the Institution of the Eucharist. Our Passover and our Thanksgiving.

During the meal Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. He became a slave and it prefigured what He was to do beginning that night. He would be a slave by giving Himself up for us, to serve us and forgive us, and to be there for all eternity to feed us with Himself.

When we receive the Eucharist we share in the sacrifice. When we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, we become ONE WITH THE ONE we receive. It is Communion. We are to be what we eat. We are to be the Body of Christ in the world. The priest says go in peace to love and serve the Lord. When we receive the Eucharist we are not to go into the parking lot and gossip and judge our neighbor. We are to go and break ourselves and pour ourselves out in service to others as He did. We are to die to ourselves and rise to the One within.

Tonight come and celebrate the gift of the Eucharist. Like Thomas we can say "My Lord and My God." Like John we can say "It is the Lord". Like Peter when we are asked to believe in the Real Presence, we can say, "You have the words of everlasting life".

This is My Body. This is My Blood. I am the Bread of Life. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will never die. Words of Jesus. And also, "Heaven and Earth will pass away but My words will never pass away."

God Bless,
Msgr. John McArthur

Key Events This Week:

1. Confessions
Thursday 5:00-6:30 p.m.
Friday 5:00-6:30 p.m.
Saturday 2:30-4:30 p.m.
2. Holy Thursday Mass of Lord's Supper--7:00 p.m.
3. Good Friday
Stations of the Cross--3:00 p.m.

Passion of Lord--7:00 p.m.

4. Easter Vigil and Mass of Resurrection--Holy Saturday--8:00 p.m.

5. CBC/CBU graduates--please contact the church office with your contact information and any friends who also graduated CBU by emailing jan.odonnell@stlouis.cdom.org or calling 682-6606.