

Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), Year B

GOSPEL

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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.

(Mark 14:12-16, 22-26)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The Passover is an important Jewish feast that commemorates the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 12:1-13:16). The blood of a sacrificed lamb was daubed on the doorposts of the homes of the Jews so the angel of death would 'pass over' their dwellings and kill only the first born of the Egyptians.
- The Passover festival included a ritual meal, with the eating of unleavened bread, cooked lamb and the drinking of a ritual cup of wine. Jewish families still practise this ancient ritual today.
- The Passover is more than a remembrance of a past event; it makes present again the reality of God's saving action.
- After Israel had been liberated from slavery in Egypt, God entered into covenant with them at Mount Sinai. This is a special relationship. 'I will take you as my people and I will be your God' (Exodus 6:7). This meant that Israel had to live in a certain way. They had particular obligations to follow in keeping their side of the agreement.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The ritual meal of the Passover is always shared by families, and Jesus and his disciples have formed a family so it is natural that they will celebrate this great Jewish feast together. The traditional Passover celebration looked back to the experience of Exodus, but it was always understood not only as a commemoration, but also as a making present again of that experience of liberation through the saving action of God. The unleavened bread recalls the manna given in the desert, and the wine recalls the crossing of the Red Sea. At Jesus' meal, he changes the point of reference. He no longer looks back to the Exodus experience but looks forward to the cross. The bread is no longer the manna of the desert but his own body, which will be broken. The wine no longer symbolises the crossing of the Red Sea but his own blood, which will be spilled for many. The blood of the Lamb sacrificed on the cross will be the symbol of a new covenant between God and people—no longer the covenant of Moses, but the covenant of love that Christ inaugurates through his death and resurrection; the gift of himself to the world.

- What might be required of those who drink the blood of this new covenant? What does our part of the agreement entail?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What preparations are you making for your 'pass-over' to full membership of the Church?
- Do you long to share in the Eucharist?
- What family rituals do you have in your home? Where or how did these originate? What special celebrations do you observe? Share your stories with others.
- Find ways to pour yourself out for others this week.
- Jesus' own prayer life was nourished by the psalms. Pray today's responsorial psalm often this week:

How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?

The cup of salvation I will raise;

I will call on the Lord's name.

