

# EUCHARIST

R.C.I.A. Chpt. 04 & 14

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Jesus' teaching is unique in that it covers the old covenant and the new covenant. The new covenant is not new law but a new way of understanding the old law. "I did not come to abolish the old but to fulfill it". [Mat: 5-17]

Eucharist is Greek meaning 'thanksgiving'. The Eucharist is a thankful action allowing Christians to practice thanksgiving; bringing to mind what has been received from Jesus. They gave thanks to God by giving thanks to Jesus. He purifies our actions transforming it into a perfect sacrifice. Eucharist expresses unity in the body of Christ. Through Eucharist we are united with God through Jesus and with one another. [The sign of peace is the completion of the unity with one another.] The unity is the one bread with many slices all sharing in the one bread. No matter how large or small the particles, it is still the one bread.

The Eucharist is a renewal. It is modeled upon both the Jewish evening meal of blessings and the prayers of the Passover meal. The meal causes us to remember how God brought Israel out of slavery. However, the actual Mass is not done as a memorial but to keep in mind how God saved His people and how He now saves His people, remembering the history or the roots and promises in the Old Testament, remembering the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. There is only one sacrifice but it is remembered over and over again in all Masses through the ages.

I have often mentioned to you the importance of reading the book of Exodus to understand how GOD SAVED His people. Now appreciate the life of Jesus on His way to the cross to see how God now saves His people, how God takes care of His people in the Eucharist. This is the paschal mystery of Jesus living, dying and

rising. It is the great mystery of His resurrection which we celebrate every day, every Sunday, not just at Easter.

Christ gives Himself to us in Holy Communion; a holy union with Him, not as a reward for holiness but as a means of strength for overcoming our faults and to increase our virtue. Christ has not promised to prolong earthly life, which we seem to hold so dearly. He promised to break the bonds of time and expand through limitless stretches of eternity, to give eternal life by feeding our souls with Holy Communion, the eternal food.

In Exodus 12 the experience is called the “Passover of the Lord.” The signs are the blood of the Lamb on the door posts; the death of the first born of the Egyptians; the parting of the waters; manna in the desert. A condition of this covenant was that the Jews were to keep this custom for all generations. In addition, all first born were to be consecrated to God, “for all first born belong to Me.” This is why Jesus was consecrated to the Father in the temple which we celebrate as the feast of the Presentation. Being first born means to be the inheritor. Failure to keep the Passover was to be cut off from the community. [Numbers 9: 13]

At the last supper, Jesus and the Apostles were celebrating the Passover meal. [Mat: 26] Just prior to this, Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and fish. This was a precursor of the Eucharist division of the one loaf mentioned above. At this Passover meal, Jesus took unleavened bread, blessed it and broke it. The action of breaking is a symbol of sacrifice. “Take and eat, this is my body.” In like manner He took a cup of wine, blessed it and said, “Take and drink, this is the cup of my blood which shall be shed for the sins of the world. Do this in memory of me.” Jesus blessed the bread and wine which were no longer ordinary but divine. This action is what the Church calls ‘transubstantiation.’ The consecration prayers that the church uses are the Passover blessings. “Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, we have this

bread to offer”, etc. At this supper Jesus commissioned and authorized the Apostles to perpetuate in His name what He had done.

The substances used are unleavened bread, wine and water. A drop of water is added to the wine with this prayer, “By the mingling of this water and wine may we become partakers of your divinity as you partook of our humanity; in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” When the Priest washes his fingers, it is a sign of purification before touching the bread and wine to be consecrated.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. [John :1] A lamb was understood to be a sin offering in Jewish tradition. Jesus is the unblemished Lamb of God who conquered death and sin. The body of Christ in the Eucharist is not the crucified body but the resurrected body of Christ; the one body in which Christians are one. As the Passover was the great saving experience, the Mass is the Christian Passover; the end of the old saving process, and the beginning of the new saving process; the final covenant. If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then we accept what He said to be true.

God does not dispense the bread of life wholesale; it is for each individual that He touches who believes in Him.

References: some of the needed quote from Scripture.

John 4: 14----story of living water; The Samaritan woman.

Mat: 26-27--- forgiveness o sin.

Luke 22:19---Last supper.

John 6-----Living bread from heaven.