

From The Bishop - Synod Implementation

4. WHAT DOES CHRIST OFFER THROUGH THE MASS: THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE (1)

God instituted the Passover meal as a sacred ritual community meal for the descendants of Abraham through Moses. It celebrated the presence of God who saved them from slavery in Egypt.¹ It had to be in community; if there were too few, they had to join a larger group.

God, through Moses, also called the Jewish Elders to a meal in God's own presence to seal their covenant (or mutual relationship commitment) with God. They gazed on God and ate and drank.²

The Mass

Jesus instituted the Eucharist during a Passover meal. The Mass is a community sacred ritual meal. It celebrates the presence of the Risen Jesus who shares his power through spiritual gifts. Like the Passover, it is an act of community worship with common active participation – not an act during which those present worship privately as individuals.

All liturgical worship instituted by God since the time of Abraham has been community worship.

Christ the Priest and the Victim

The Risen Jesus is the one offering himself in sacrifice to God the Father, so he is the Priest. He is the one being offered also, and so is the sacrificial victim.

During the supper, he replaced the sacrificial lamb with himself, taking bread and wine and changing these into his Body and Blood. It is the sacrifice of the new covenant (or mutual relationship commitment) he instituted with all who believe in him.

Jesus instituted the Mass the night before he trod the path of his sufferings and death to his Resurrection. By his death, he redeemed or frees those who believe from sin; by his Resurrection, he saves or shares with them his divine life.³

The Preparation of the gifts: What will we offer from our lives?

The first part of the Eucharistic sacrifice prepares the gifts of bread and wine. These represent what those present are offering of their lives to God. Most of all those present offer their resolve to live as the Risen Jesus has called through the Liturgy of the Word.

They offer too their married and family joys and struggles; their daily work and routines; their thanks for blessings and difficulties in living the Gospel; their heart questions and decisions;

¹ Exodus 12:1-12, 21-28

² Exodus 24:11

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church 654

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their psychological and physical sufferings, their prayers for forgiveness and freedom from temptations and sinfulness.

The celebrant thanks God for the bread and wine, recognising that these will be changed by divine power into the Body and Blood of Christ. All present remember that divine power will help whatever they offer from their lives to God.

Reflection: What from my life am I offering to God in this Mass? Where do I need Christ's power?

Next week: The Eucharistic Prayer