

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD  
IN THE  
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST  
June 6, 2021**

**SCRIPTURES:**

<b>Exodus 24:3-8</b>	The Covenant is sealed in blood.
<b>Hebrews 9:11-15</b>	We are made holy by the blood of Christ
<b>Mark 14:12-16, 22-26</b>	The cup is the blood of Christ.
<b>Psalms 116: 12-13, 15-18</b>	I raise a cup in thanksgiving.

**READ THE SCRIPTURES:**

*Read the Scriptures carefully in your group, beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?*

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Mark:**

The Passover Supper would have been most familiar to Jesus and his friends. It was an annual event commemorating the Exodus, the passing of the people of Israel from slavery to freedom. The food was precisely prescribed: unleavened bread, bitter herbs, a cup of wine offered in blessing, and the flesh of the lamb. Jesus takes and transforms these elements as new signs in a new order of things.

Deliverance had come to Israel during a family meal; an annual meal brought back the memory and the reality of God’s gifts; now, a meal again will be the setting for this great sign of God’s ultimate purposes. Jesus breaks bread and shares a cup of wine. The new Lamb is now also the priest who offers the sacrifice: his body and his blood.

Mark does not furnish impertinent details in his account of the Last Supper. He is most precise and very concise. But he does not fail to connect the *breaking of bread* and the *sharing of the cup* at the supper with the *breaking of Jesus’ body* and the *outpouring of his blood* on the cross. The supper is an anticipation of the sacrificial death of the Lord.

Jesus invites his followers to share in his death. Our lives must be absorbed into his living and his dying for all people. By giving us the cup and the bread, he asks us to become “eucharist” ourselves, broken and given for others. We cannot presume to sit at the table of the Eucharist without being willing to mount the altar of the cross in our own self-giving for the sake of others. Finally, he invites us into heavenly glory, where we will “drink again.”

## **Exodus:**

There are several versions of the ratification ceremony for the Covenant between God and the people of Israel. This one in Exodus focuses on the sprinkling of the people with the blood of animals. Blood was seen as a sign of life. It was the God-principle in living beings. Today, we would say: *soul*. The blood of animals is symbolic of the life of God now binding the people to one another and to God. They live as a community consecrated to God alone. They respond: "Amen," which literally means, "All the words the Lord has spoken, we will do."

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Whenever the Church gathers, Christ is present. In addition to the Eucharist, list some of the instances in which the Church gathers as family and as community. How can we become more actively aware of the presence of Christ in our midst when we gather as a community of faith?

2. In our parish and in our homes, is the Eucharist the "source and summit" of our religious lives? (Those words come to us from the Constitution on the Liturgy from Vatican II.) What does the Church mean by using these words to characterize the Eucharist? Is it any wonder that the Catholic Church celebrates the Liturgy of the Eucharist every Sunday, indeed, every day?

3. How can this parish fulfill its call to "do this" (the Eucharist) in the Lord's memory? ("Do this in memory of me!") Do you suppose the Lord meant that we should just do liturgy to remember him? Is it not likely that he meant we should follow through and *become* Eucharist, that is, *pour ourselves out* for one another?

## **PRAYING TOGETHER**

**Lord Jesus, you are the bread that gives us life:**

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ Jesus, you are the wine that delights our hearts:**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus, you are the food that lasts forever:**

**Lord, have mercy.**

## **CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

In the past 40 years, the Catholic people have witnessed a shift and a change in the area of eucharistic devotion. There was a time when we abstained from all food and drink from

midnight whenever we wanted to receive the Eucharist. We genuflected deeply toward the tabernacle when we entered and left the church. We “made visits” to the Blessed Sacrament at different times during the day or evening. “Forty-Hour Devotions” called the whole parish to adoration of the Eucharist, sometimes around the clock, with confession and Communion.

Without denying the truth of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, our devotion and focus seem to have shifted in the direction of the power and the effect of Christ in the Eucharist. The body and blood of Christ is not only the bread and the wine but is truly the Church, too. We are the body of Christ; we are Eucharist.

The Feast of Corpus Christi was instituted at a time when people denied or neglected the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Surely, it was and continues to be important that we acknowledge and worship Christ truly present as Eucharist at Mass and in the eucharistic reserve kept in the tabernacles of our churches. But, in isolation from the rest of our lives, such devotions can lead to a form of privatism, individualism, a passive concept of Eucharist, or to the idea that the Eucharist is “something there,” outside ourselves, other than our relationships with one another.

Just as Jesus invited his disciples at the Last Supper into the experience of his dying and rising, his being “broken and given,” so are we called by each celebration of the Eucharist to be available in love to one another, to share ourselves with our sisters and brothers for the sake of justice and peace in the world.

Today, we do not ordinarily “receive Communion” outside the celebration of the whole rite of the Eucharist at Mass, with the proclamation of Scriptures, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sign of Peace, and the experience of community with one another and with the whole Church. The body and blood of Christ cannot be separated from the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church at prayer. **Corpus Christi** is more than the bread and the wine. The *whole* body and blood of Christ is among us in the Church.

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