

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ
2021—B Cycle



“The Last Supper”
by [Juan de Juanes](#) (16th c.)

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

O God, our Mother, our Father,
bread baker . . . wine maker,
I give you thanks and praise.
You worked the world into being,
instilled all creation with life,
and shaped us as your people.
In Jesus Christ, the bread of life
and the true vine,
you feed me with the Word,
and nourish me from the stalk.
Amen

Source: Brief Communion Prayers at cloudfront.net

Scripture Readings

Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Exodus 24: 3-8 “Moses took the blood (of a bull) and sprinkled it over the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant . . .’”

Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-18 “Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones.”

Hebrews 9: 11-15 “Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be.”

Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26 “While they were eating he took bread . . . and said, ‘Take and eat. This is my body.’”

A Reading from the Book of Exodus (24: 3-8)

“Moses came and told the people all the words of Yahweh and all his laws. The people replied with one voice: ‘Everything Yahweh has said, we shall do.’

“Moses wrote down all the words of Yahweh, then rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve raised stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. He then sent young men from among the sons of Israel to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice bullocks as peace offerings to Yahweh.

“And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins; and with the other half of the blood he sprinkled the altar. He then took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.

“They said, ‘All that Yahweh said we shall do and obey.’

“Moses then took the blood and sprinkled it on the people saying, ‘Here is the blood of the Covenant that Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”



*“Moses with Ten Commandments,”
Gustave Doré,
engraving, 1865*

Personal Reflection

The most important events of the Scriptures are, at times, the most briefly related. At the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses presented the Covenant to govern the life of Israel for centuries to come. Two scenes in this passage from Exodus depict the celebration of the Covenant. First, Moses and the elders of Israel witness the Glory of Yahweh over Mount Sinai. Later, upon Moses' return, the people seal the Covenant with a solemn sacrifice.

With the passage of time, Israelites forgot the original commitment from which the Tablets of the Law originated. They came to regard the Ark, the structure encasing the Covenant tablets, as a miraculous object in itself, guaranteeing God's protection. Having lost sight of the Ark's historical role, it lost its original significance. Over time, Yahweh permitted the Ark to disappear during a catastrophic war.

In the Sinai Desert, the former Hebrew slaves promised, “All that Yahweh said we shall do and obey.”

— *When have I promised God something I later dismissed or no longer allowed to define my commitment to living a godly life? What happened next? And next? Where do I stand today in my faith commitment?*

— *When and to what extent have I allowed the 10 Commandments to become, at best, ten suggestions for defining my behavior and lifestyle?*

Responsorial Psalm 116 (12-13, 15-18)

Prayer of a person saved from death.

*I will take the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.*

How can I repay Yahweh
for all his goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of Yahweh.
*I will take the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.*

It is painful to Yahweh
to see the death of his faithful.
O Yahweh, I am truly your handmaid's son.
You have freed me from my bonds.
*I will take the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.*

I will offer you a thanksgiving sacrifice;
I will call on the name of Yahweh.
I will carry out my vows to Yahweh
in the presence of his people.
*I will take the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.*

Personal Reflection

This psalm is a simple prayer of thanks to God, after an escape from death by sickness, accident, or malice. It became part of the Hallel ('Hymns of Praise')—Psalms 113-118—sung at the annual Paschal supper. Our Lord, therefore, went to death with these very words on his lips. Matthew relates this in his gospel (26: 30): "After singing psalms of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

On Jesus' lips, the words received new meaning. Unlike the psalmist of old, he does not pray to escape the snare of bodily death. Rather, he defies death and defeats it, as St. Luke writes in Acts 2: 24: "It was impossible for him to be held by the power of death."

The psalmist asks himself, "How can I repay Yahweh for all his goodness to me?"
— *How am I repaying God for the good things I enjoy in my life—both spiritual and material? How hard is it to pray when I encounter heartaches and suffering? What is my "go to" prayer when life becomes difficult?*

"It is painful to Yahweh to see the death of his faithful."
— *What does this statement mean to me personally? How does God suffer at the sight of natural and human-made tragedies in the world today?*
— *What is my typical response to the devastation I see on the nightly news . . . here in my own region and across the country and world? What connection do I see between Yahweh's suffering and my own?*

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews (9: 11-15)

"Christ has appeared, as the high priest, with regard to the good things of these new times. He passed through a Sanctuary more noble and perfect, not made by hands, that is, not created. He did not take with himself the blood of goats and bulls, but his own blood, when he entered, once, and for all, into this Sanctuary, after obtaining definitive redemption.



"St. Paul"
by Rembrandt
1657

"If the sprinkling of people, defiled by sin, with the blood of goats and bulls, or with the ashes of a heifer, provides [people] with exterior cleanliness and holiness, how much more will it be, with the blood of Christ? Moved by the eternal spirit, He offered himself, as an unblemished victim, to God, and his blood cleanses us from dead works, so that we may serve the living God.

"So, Christ is the mediator of a new Covenant, or testament. His death made atonement for the sins committed under the old covenant, and the promise is handed over, to all [both Jews and Gentiles] who are called to the everlasting inheritance."

Personal Reflection

Paul addressed this letter to both Gentile and Jewish converts in Rome. Paul knew the basic tenets of Judaism would prove difficult for the Gentile Roman converts to understand. His aim? To help Gentile Christians—most of us—understand the religious background of their fellow converts of Jewish descent. Paul wants both groups to understand their shared priesthood with Christ the new High Priest. Christ's priesthood plays out today in the worldwide Church and in our personal involvement in the life of our local faith community, as we find our place and role in the apostolates of preaching, service to neighbors, or quite simply in our personal space and vocation in life.

- *In what ways do I exercise my shared priesthood with Christ in the Church and world?*
- *How tempted am I to give up and say, "I don't get this whole 'lay priesthood' thing?" and move on . . . taking more from my faith community more than I ever give back to it?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (14: 12-16, 22-26)



"Last Supper" by [Bohdan Piasecki](#) (1998).
A Roman Catholic group called '[Brothers and Sisters in Christ](#)' commissioned this artwork from the Polish-born artist.

He adds seven women and two children to the typically depicted men-only gathering.

Note that he dresses all the figures in Palestinian clothing.

*Image found at
[Salvation Army Women's Ministries](#)*

“On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the day when the Passover Lamb was killed, the disciples asked him, ‘Where would you have us go to prepare the Passover meal for you?’

“So Jesus sent two of his disciples with these instructions, ‘Go into the city. A man will come to you carrying a jar of water. Follow him to the house he enters and say to the owner, “The Master says: Where is the room where I may eat the Passover meal with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs, already arranged and furnished. There, you will prepare for us.’

“The disciples went off. When they reached the city, they found everything just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And he said, ‘Take this. It is my body.’

“Then he took a cup; and after he had given thanks, he passed it to them and they all drank from it. And he said, ‘This is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not taste the fruit of the vine again, until that day when I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God.’

“After singing psalms of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Personal Reflection

On the eve of his death, Jesus remembered the first Covenant on Sinai and the spilling of sacrificed animals’ blood [*see the Exodus reading for this feast day*]. He would soon spill his own blood for us. This is best understood today by the many, wherever they might live, who recognize Christ as their Savior and believe in him. These are the people purified through his death. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we renew this same Covenant. Jesus lives among us as we remember his sacrifice on our behalf. He becomes our spiritual bread and wine. He consecrates us to his Father that we may participate more and more in his ongoing work of salvation.

“The disciples went off. When they reached the city, they found everything just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.”

— *Who do I think actually prepared the festive Passover supper? The two unnamed male apostles mentioned in Mark? Or might women and children have participated in the preparation and celebration of that sacred meal we call the Last Supper?*

— *After studying Bohdan Piasecki’s “Last Supper,” how would I interpret his painting? In what way(s) does the artist help me to understand the Last Supper event? What other feelings/reactions do I have?*

Note: Be sure to listen to Bishop Barron’s remarks in this reflection (below) about controversy among Catholics today regarding the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist vs. merely symbolic presence.

For Inspirational Listening/Viewing/Reading

Video:

[The Eucharist Problem](#) by Bishop [Robert Barron](#).

Barron discusses a widespread crisis in the American Catholic Church, namely, the revelation by a recent survey that the vast majority (70-80 percent) of those identifying themselves as Roman Catholic **do not** believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Instead, they believe his presence is purely *symbolic*.

Book:

[Bread Blessed and Broken for the World: A Pastor's Reflections on the Celebration of Mass](#) by [Fr. Paulson Mundanmani](#) (Pastor of Christ the King/St. Stephen's Communities in Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek, CA)

A step-by-step journey into the deepest riches of the Roman Catholic Mass. The author intersperses the chapters with humorous anecdotes and real-life experiences.

Music:

[Panis Angelicus](#) sung by [The Priests](#), performed at Armagh Cathedral, Northern Ireland.

This trio of ordained clergy (Frs. Eugene and Martin O'Hagan and Fr. David Delargy) have sung together since their student days in the 1970s at St. MacNissi's College, County Antrim. After signing a deal with SonyBMG in April 2008, they recorded the first of their many albums.

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .*

*(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and
(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?*

— *Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?
Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?
Why do I hesitate?*

Take some time to write about your experience and feelings about events occurring in your life today and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 17: 22-24 “As I, the Lord, have spoken, so will I do.”

Psalm 92: 2-3, 13-16 “It is good to give thanks to the lord.”

Second Corinthians 5: 6-10 “We all must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Mark 4: 26-34 “Without parables, he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.”

Closing Prayer

(edited for use here)

Father, thank you for your sacrifice.
Thank you for what Jesus, your Son,
did on the cross to allow me
to have a relationship with you.
Thank you for your grace and forgiveness
and help me to honor you
every day of my life.
Amen.

Source: [Leading Communion](#)

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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(follow this link to my spiritual novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#))