

A Bit More to Chew On... Meditation on the Eucharist as the *Eternal Thanksgiving Feast*



Did you know that they celebrate Thanksgiving in Heaven? Yep! It's true! Heaven is described by Christ himself as a type of feast (Matthew 22), but the Thanksgiving we celebrate once a year is *nothing* as compared to the Heavenly Banquet to come! God the Father is our host, the communion of saints is our company, and our meal is not "the food which perishes," but "the food which endures to eternal life" (John 6:27), that is, the Eucharist!! The Eucharist is the Church's highest prayer, an eternal act of thanksgiving from which she draws life and by which she brings others the very life and presence of Christ.

What a gift Christ has left us in this Sacrament of sacraments! In the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, Christ sat down with his disciples one last time to celebrate the Jewish Passover meal. This is a significant feast in the Jewish religion, as it commemorates one of the most important events in the history of God's people; when by Moses' obedience, He freed them from their harsh captivity in Egypt and led them into the Promised Land (check it out in Exodus 1-15). On that night of the final plague, God smote all the first-born males of each Egyptian household, but spared the first-born of the Israelites whose door posts were marked by the blood of a young, unblemished lamb. What's the meaning behind all of this imagery? Sometimes these biblical customs are tough for us to understand, but we can find the answer when we look at the work that Christ did for us when he came to earth thousands of years later. This is what scripture scholars call a *foreshadowing* in a text, in that certain events or stories in scripture relate to, and anticipate, future events in the life of Christ.

He came proclaiming a message of salvation for the world – just as the Israelites were freed from their slavery in Egypt, Christ freed humanity from its slavery to sin and death. Just as Moses led God's people through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land, so it is that by the waters of baptism we are made God's sons and daughters, heirs to His Kingdom, and put on our way to heaven, which has been prepared for us by Christ. Just as it was the blood of a young, unblemished lamb

that saved the Israelites on the night of Passover, so it is the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God – shed on the wood of the cross at Calvary – by which we are protected and claimed as His own. Jesus chose the feast of Passover to institute the Eucharist so that by participating in this Sacrament we remember the Passion, Death and Resurrection by which we have been saved, just as Jewish people remember Passover to commemorate their liberation from Egypt.

What an awesome gift He has left us in the Eucharist! We offer the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Son back to the Father in our liturgies, as our thanksgiving for His never-ending goodness and love. And he blesses us even more so in return, that in receiving Christ in this way He becomes part of us and we in turn are made more like Him. If that's not a reason to give thanks every week, I don't know what is! We should never let the Eucharistic amazement end in our hearts.