

you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the householder, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.”

And the disciples set out and went to the city, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’”

Commentary

“Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” In the context of the Jewish feast of Passover, Jesus institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist with complete freedom.

Jesus tells his disciples: “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.” He carefully describes for them the way he wants to celebrate what would be his Last Supper, when he will institute the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He does not do it forced by

circumstances, but in fulfillment of the Father's plan. By doing it freely, he acts out of Love, because only where freedom is present is there true Love. Jesus has carried out everything in his life freely, and when the final moments of his existence draw near, the value of freedom is highlighted even more forcefully. In doing so, the Love with which he acts shines forth.

The events take place just as Jesus had indicated. "And the disciples set out and went to the city, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover."

"And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.'" Before offering his life on the Cross for the salvation of the world, Jesus wanted to find a way to stay with us. He did so by turning the bread into his Body. Jesus' words

admit of no other interpretation: “this is my body.”

The highest reason that leads Jesus to remain with us under the appearance of bread is Love. As Saint Josemaría said: “Jesus has remained within the Eucharist for love... of you. He remained, knowing how men would receive him... and how you would receive him.

“He has remained so that you could eat him, so that you could visit him and tell him about your concerns; and so that you could talk to him as you pray beside the Tabernacle, and as you receive the Sacrament; and so that you could fall in love more and more each day, and make other souls, *many souls*, follow the same path.”[1]

After turning the bread into his Body, “he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the

covenant, which is poured out for many.” Jesus turns the wine into his Blood which will be poured out on the Cross the next day. With his death and subsequent resurrection he establishes a new covenant between God and men. He does so by giving his life for us, which is the greatest sign of love: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (*Jn 15:13*).

Everything in the Eucharist speaks to us, with silent cries, of Christ’s Love for us. They are silent cries since he awaits our free response. Love cannot be imposed. The Eucharist is the meeting of two freedoms: Jesus’ freedom and ours. It is a mystery of deep love that we are called to contemplate, and the feast of Corpus Christi is a marvelous opportunity to do so. John Paul II in his final encyclical, which dealt with this mystery, told us that he wanted to

rekindle in us this “Eucharistic amazement.”[2]

[1] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge* no. 887.

[2] Cf. Saint John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia Eucharistia*, no. 6.

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