

# Sunday Message

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

THE WORD

Year B • 2 June 2024 • Psalter Week 1



Today's feast doesn't commemorate any particular event in Jesus' life, but is a celebration of his gift of the Eucharist. The traditional day for this feast is the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

The reason Thursday is chosen is because Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on the Thursday before he died when he gifted his disciples with the Eucharist during the Passover meal. Many local churches have moved the celebration to the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. The churches in the UK and Ireland follow this practice.

In today's Gospel, the disciples ask Jesus about his plans to celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus sends two of them into the city and tells them what they are to do. Normally, the Passover meal would be celebrated by a Jewish family. However, Jesus is not going to celebrate this meal with his blood relatives but with his "new family" of disciples. When the disciples go into the city, everything happens as Jesus foretold and they make the preparations.

Later that evening, during the meal, Jesus speaks words about his death over the bread and wine. Following the Jewish custom at Passover, Jesus blesses God for the gift of food and then breaks the bread and gives a piece to all present with the words, "Take it, this is my body." The broken bread he shares with the disciples is his body broken in death for others. Those who eat this bread are now connected to him in the most profound way.

He does the same with the cup and adds, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." The Jews understood that the covenant made between God and Israel at Mount Sinai had been sealed in animals' blood. Blood symbolised life and since the Sinai covenant was sealed in blood, it meant that Israel then shared in God's very own life. Jesus now offers us an eternal, life-giving New Covenant, sealed in his very own blood. ■

## SAY

"Lord, I thank you for the gift of the Eucharist. Help me to treasure it always. Amen."

## PRAY

Pray that you will never lose your sense of awe and wonder at what takes place in the Eucharist.

## LEARN

The Body of Christ is our soul-nourishing food, the bread that gives us life.

Vatican II teaches that the Eucharist is the source and the summit of the life of the Church.

The Eucharist leads us from church to world to serve others.

## DO

Think about how you respond to the gift of the Eucharist. Does it amaze you, enrapture you, fill you with awe?



## REFLECT

It's easy to lose our sense of wonder, to live in a world of the mundane. Every day I follow the same route on my early morning walk. I know the terrain like the back of my hand, and so don't pay much attention to what's going on around me as I listen to a book on Audible. My route takes me past Limerick's famous King John's castle. One morning last year saw a glorious red sky as the sun rose majestically behind the castle. I didn't pay it much attention. It was just another sunrise, until a man standing behind a tripod commanded me to stop. He had been taking photographs of the castle framed against the crimson sky. "Stop, stop, you gotta stop and look at this," he said, pointing towards the castle. "It's gorgeous; you need to take it in." And I did. I took out my AirPods and stood with him for several minutes gazing at the awesome sight before our eyes. And I expressed my gratitude to

him for forcing me to stop and look and marvel. My morning walk had become so routine, so quotidian, that I didn't appreciate what was going on around me. I try not to make that mistake now.

Repetition dulls excitement. Doing more or less the same thing every day, we can fall into a rut and lose our capacity for awe, for wonder.

It's the same when it comes to the Eucharist. If we go to Mass regularly, we know what to expect. The readings will differ each time, and hopefully the homily will be original and engaging, but otherwise there is a sameness to the celebration: the same consecration, the same holy communion, the same words, the same gestures. It becomes so routine, so predictable, that we can lose our sense of awe, of wonder, at what is taking place. We fail to marvel at the

miracle unfolding among us, the gift of the body and blood of Christ given to us out of love.

In one sense, today's feast may seem superfluous. After all, every Eucharist is a feast of the body and blood of Christ. What we celebrate today, we celebrate every time we come to Mass. But precisely because we are so used to it, occasionally we need a little jolt, a nudge, as I was given on my morning walk, to remind us to look more closely at what is happening, to stop and appreciate more fully what it is we are celebrating, to be amazed at the event unfolding, awestruck at the gift we are receiving. As you receive the Lord in holy communion today, let this feast be a reminder to you to be, in the words of St Thomas Aquinas, "lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art." ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

He fed them with the finest wheat  
and satisfied them with honey from the rock.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament  
have left us a memorial of your Passion,  
grant us, we pray,  
so to reverse the sacred mysteries of your Body  
and Blood  
that we may always experience in ourselves  
the fruits of your redemption.  
Who live and reign with God the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Exodus 24:3-8

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Moses went and told the people all the  
commands of the Lord and all the ordinances. In  
answer, all the people said with one voice, "We  
will observe all the commands that the Lord has  
decreed." Moses put all the commands of the  
Lord into writing, and early next morning he built  
an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve  
standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel.  
Then he directed certain young Israelites to  
offer holocausts and to immolate bullocks to the  
Lord as communion sacrifices. Half of the blood  
Moses took up and put into basins, the other  
half he cast on the altar. And taking the Book of  
the Covenant he read it to the listening people,  
and they said, "We will observe all that the Lord  
has decreed; we will obey." Then Moses took the  
blood and cast it towards the people. This, he  
said, "is the blood of the Covenant that the Lord  
has made with you, containing all these rules."

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Psalm 115 (116):12-13, 15-18

Response:

**The cup of salvation I will raise; I will call on  
the Lord's name.**

- How can I repay the Lord  
for his goodness to me?  
The cup of salvation I will raise;  
I will call on the Lord's name. **(R.)**
- O precious in the eyes of the Lord  
is the death of his faithful.  
Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;  
you have loosened my bonds. **(R.)**

- A thanksgiving sacrifice I make;  
I will call on the Lord's name.  
My vows to the Lord I will fulfil  
before all his people. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

Hebrews 9:11-15

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Now Christ has come, as the high priest of  
all the blessings which were to come. He has  
passed through the greater, the more perfect  
tent, which is better than one made by men's  
hands because it is not of this created order; and  
he has entered the sanctuary once and for all,  
taking with him not the blood of goats and bull  
calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal  
redemption for us. The blood of goats and bulls  
and the ashes of a heifer are sprinkled on those  
who have incurred defilement and they restore  
the holiness of their outward lives; how much  
more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered  
himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through  
the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from  
dead actions so that we do our service to the  
living God.

He brings a new covenant, as the mediator,  
only so that the people who were called to an  
eternal inheritance may actually receive what  
was promised: his death took place to cancel  
the sins that infringed the earlier covenant.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**SEQUENCE**

Behold the bread of angels, sent  
for pilgrims in their banishment,  
the bread for God's true children meant,  
that may not unto dogs be given:  
Oft in the olden types foreshowed;  
in Isaac on the altar bowed,  
and in the ancient paschal food,  
and in the manna sent from heaven.  
Come then, good shepherd, bread divine,  
still show to us thy mercy sign;  
Oh, feed us still, still keep us thine;  
so may we see thy glories shine  
in fields of immortality;  
O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best,  
our present food, our future rest,  
come, make us each thy chosen guest,  
co-heirs of thine, and comrades blest  
with saints whose dwelling is with thee.  
Amen. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia, alleluia! I am the living bread which  
has come down from heaven, says the Lord.  
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.  
Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL**

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when  
the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples  
said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to go  
and make the preparations for you to eat the  
passover?" So he sent two of his disciples,  
saying to them, "Go into the city and you will  
meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow  
him, and say to the owner of the house which  
he enters, 'The Master says: Where is my dining  
room in which I can eat the passover with my  
disciples?' He will show you a large upper room  
furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the  
preparations for us there." The disciples set out  
and went to the city and found everything as he  
had told them, and prepared the Passover.

And as they were eating he took some bread,  
and when he had said the blessing he broke

it and gave it to them. "Take it," he said "this  
is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he  
had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all  
drank from it, and he said to them, "This is my  
blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be  
poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall  
not drink any more wine until the day I drink the  
new wine in the kingdom of God."

After psalms had been sung they left for the  
Mount of Olives.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,**

*(all bow during the next three lines)*

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.**

**I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Grant your Church, O Lord, we pray,  
the gifts of unity and peace,  
whose signs are to be seen in mystery  
in the offerings we here present.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood  
remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant, O Lord, we pray,  
that we may delight for all eternity  
in that share in your divine life,  
which is foreshadowed in the present age  
by our reception of your precious Body and  
Blood.  
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**