

# *Nisan 14 ~ The Last Supper*

## **The Betrothal of the Bride and the Lamb**



**Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by Jan van Eyck  
from the Ghent Altarpiece, 1432**

*<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying,*

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.*

*<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

*<sup>8</sup> it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—  
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

*<sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Rev 19:6-9)*

Why bring up the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb in an essay about Holy Thursday and the Last Supper? Because the marriage of Jesus Christ and His Church is the “end game” of all the events that occurred on Nisan 14, the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden, the betrayal of Judas, Jesus’ arrest, His interrogation by the High Priest, Herod, and Pilate, the scourging at the pillar, the carrying of the cross, His crucifixion and death, and His burial. All of these events were folded into Jesus’ Passover and into the mystery that is the Last Supper carried forward through time and eternity in the Mass for this end—that the bride be “clothed with fine linen, bright and pure;” made ready for her Bridegroom.

On that mystical day we know that we, His bride, will be like Him for we shall see Him with unveiled (*apocalypsis*) face:

*Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1John 3:2, emphasis added)*

*All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2Cor 3:18, emphasis added)*

“We shall be *like Him*,” John the Beloved tells us. “All of us...are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory as from the Lord...” Saint Paul says encouraging his flock in Corinth. We, the Bride, are going to be *like God!* Where have I heard that before? That’s right—in the Garden of Eden.

*Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?"<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;<sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die.<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" (Gen 3:1-5, emphasis added)*

These are two very different "like Gods" aren't there? Satan offers humanity to choose his way, to become *like god without God*, while God the Father offers His Son so that we might become *like God with God*. There are also two different trees: there is the tree of the Garden of Eden whose fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil will liken us to the *man-god* who has set himself to be the measure of all things, and then there is the Tree of Life, the Cross, whose fruit is the *God-man*, Jesus Christ, for when we eat of this fruit, His Body and Blood, we are transformed into His image from glory to glory.

So we see that the Passover of Christ is far more expansive than the Passover of the Jews as recorded in Exodus. The Passover of Christ reaches all the way back to the beginning, to Genesis, and the Fall of humanity. It is even prophesized in Genesis that this would be so in the passage known as the *protoevangelium* (the first Gospel):

*Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."<sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen 3:13-15)*

We will see this scripture fulfilled on *Nisan 14*, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Preparation Day before the Feast of Passover on *Nisan 15*. But it is also fulfilled daily in Catholic Church throughout the world in the Mass and in the Divine Liturgy of the Churches of the East. Christ undoes the work that Satan did that day in Eden:

<sup>8</sup>*He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1John 3:8)*

And in destroying the works of Satan Christ opens up again the opportunity to become *like God* through the participation in His divine nature:

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and **become partakers of the divine nature.** (1Peter 1:3-4, emphasis added)*

How does God share His divine nature with us? We participate in Christ, fully God and fully man, through His Church and through His sacraments, most especially in the Eucharist. This is explicitly made clear in the very liturgy of the Mass itself in both the *Novus Ordo* Mass and the traditional Tridentine Mass:

"By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." (from the *Novus Ordo* Mass of Pope Paul VI)



**Immaculate by Antonio Ciseri. Chiesa del Sacro Cuore (Church of the Sacred Heart, Florence.**

The Latin Vulgate of Saint Jerome translated Gen 3:15 as: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.* Mary is the New Eve and the Mother of the Church. She, with her Son and His Bride crush the head of the serpent.

“O God, Who in creating man didst exalt his nature very wonderfully and yet more wonderfully didst establish it anew; by the Mystery signified in the mingling of this water and wine, grant us to have part in the Godhead of Him Who hath deigned to become a partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God. World without end. Amen.” (from the Tridentine Mass)



**Blessed are they who have washed their robes  
in the blood of the Lamb**

Both liturgies make available through faith this mystery of water and wine and of participating in the divine nature, to becoming *like God with God*, through which the Church is transfigured into His Bride:

*Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?”<sup>14</sup> I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev 7:13-14)*

<sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* <sup>26</sup> *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* <sup>27</sup> *that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:25-27)*

Water, wine, bread, and flesh and blood—these were and are the corporal instruments of Christ’s Passover by which He defeated Satan and death, and paid the “bride price” through which he brought us out, delivered us, redeemed us, and made us His people, His Bride. In the command He gave during His Last Supper to His disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me,”

He left His Church the single liturgical mystery not only of His Passover and burial, but also of the completion of His betrothal to His Church in the paying of the bride price for our salvation. These mysteries are *re-presented* in every Mass in the “real time” of *kairos*, not as historical events nor as events yet to come, but as existent realities of God’s Kingdom to be experienced in the sacramental now. This is what we will be exploring as we enter into the Pascal Mystery of *Nisan* 14. We will learn that the Last Supper did not end when Jesus and His apostles left the Upper Room, but continued until it was *finished* on the cross. One, continuous Betrothal Feast (*Eyrusin*) between the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church, in which Jesus served Himself as the Passover Lamb so that we might abide in Him forever.

### **Water in the Passover Seder and Eyrusin Ceremony**

Ceremonial washing was an essential element of every Jewish holyday and ceremony. In the essay, [John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus](#), I proposed that baptism was a ceremonial washing or *mikveh*, and that Jesus’ baptism represented the *mikveh* of the *Shiddukhin*, or the “marriage arrangement,” between the Bridegroom, Christ, and the Bride, the baptized who are the Church. The next part of the traditional Jewish wedding was the Betrothal or *Eyrusin* ceremony. This ceremony would begin with the *Eyrusin mikveh*.

*The betrothal of the groom and bride in the traditional Jewish wedding during Jesus’ time was very much like the actual wedding ceremony except that the betrothed couple did not live with each other nor did they have sexual relations, yet in all other respects they were considered married. Prior to the betrothal ceremony the couple would separately take a ritual immersion in water (mikveh) symbolizing spiritual purification. Sometime after the mikveh the public Eyrusin ceremony would be held. The couple would stand under the huppah or canopy which represented the future home that the groom and bride would share together. The ceremony itself consisted of both the groom and bride-to-be making vows, exchanging rings, and sealing the arrangement with a cup of wine at the betrothal feast. (an excerpt from the essay, “The Eyrusin,” from a collection of my essays entitled, “Come, Let Me Show You the Bride.”*

What I am proposing in this essay is that the Last Supper is not only Jesus’ Passover Seder with His disciples, but it is also the betrothal ceremony between Him and His nascent Church. We would expect, therefore, to find elements of both the traditional Passover *Seder* and the *Eyrusin* or Betrothal ceremony in the Last Supper. So where in the Last Supper is the *Eyrusin mikveh*?



**The interior of the Cenacle (dining room) also known as the Upper Room.** The Upper Room is considered by many Christians to be the first church building in Christendom. This room has been reconstructed numerous times throughout history including the Gothic columns, which were added by Crusaders. Later, when the Ottoman Muslim took over Jerusalem, the Upper Room was turned into a mosque and then later into a madrasa, or Islamic school.

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.<sup>2</sup> And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,<sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,<sup>4</sup> rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel.<sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. (John 13:1-5)*

A *mikveh* would have also been practiced prior to the Passover Seder, but it would have been primarily the washing of hands. Jesus, however, was doing something that would surpass the *seder* meal in combining it with the *Eyrusin* ceremony. The Bridegroom and the Bride would not take separate *mikvehs*, rather the Bridegroom, the Incarnate Word, would purify and sanctify His Bride.

*... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,<sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,<sup>27</sup> that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:25-27)*



**Albert Gustaf Aristides Edelfelt  
Jesus Washes the Feet of His Disciples**

The Last Supper *mikveh*, like the Eucharistic sacrifice, was to be carried on in perpetuity.

<sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:1-17)

Jesus instructed His Apostles to carry on this tradition of washing one another's feet. The heirs to the Apostles are the bishops, priests, deacons, and religious. They are God's gifts to the Church to prepare His Bride so that She will attain to the measure and the stature of the fullness of the Bridegroom:

<sup>11</sup> And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love. (Eph 4: 11-16)

Is something like the Passover and *Eyrusin mikveh* performed during the Liturgy of the Catholic and Orthodox churches? Yes. In the Catholic Church there is the tradition of placing a holy water font near the entrance of the church. When the faithful enter the church they dip their finger into the holy water and make the Sign of the Cross. This is a ritual washing, a *mikveh*, so that we might enter into the holy place of God's presence cleansed of the world and prepared to worship and to participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

It is also part of both Catholic and Orthodox liturgical tradition to have regular water cleansing in a ceremony known as the Asperges. I will discuss in detail the Asperges from the Catholic Tradition; the following is an excerpt from my *The New Roman Missal* (1945) by Father Lasance:

"The Asperges or sprinkling with holy water may be performed every Sunday immediately before High Mass. This water is blessed before the ceremony. The priest who is about to celebrate high Mass enters the sanctuary vested in alb and stole of the color of the Mass, accompanied on his left by an acolyte bearing the vessel of holy water. Arriving at the foot of the altar the priest while intoning the following anthem sprinkles the altar three times, then himself, and afterward his assistants. The he sprinkles the congregation...."



Priest: "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."

Priest: "Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy."

Response: "And grant us Thy salvation."

Priest: "O Lord, hear my prayer."

Response: "And let my cry come unto Thee."

Priest: "The Lord be with you."

Response: "And with they spirit."

Priest: "Graciously hear us, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God; and vouchsafe to send down from heaven Thy holy angel, that he may watch over, foster, safeguard, abide with and defend all who dwell in this house. Through Christ Our Lord."

Response: "Amen."

There is also the *mikveh* of foot washing that is performed in many Christian communities on Holy (Maudy) Thursday. In fact, the "maudy" of Holy Thursday comes from the Latin *mandatum*, or command that Jesus gave to His disciples in the Upper Room to "love one another" shortly after He had washed His disciples feet: "*Mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos*" ("I give you a new commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you"). We are all charged to be servants and wash one another's feet. In this way the Church, His Bride, grows and "upbuilds itself in love." This is the Passover and Betrothal of the Bridegroom and the Bride made present in the Mass and the Divine Liturgy.

## I go to prepare a place for you:

It was shortly after Jesus washed His disciples' feet in a ceremonial *mikveh* that He introduces another theme of the Jewish wedding tradition, that is, after the *Eyrusin* ceremony, the bridegroom would return to his father's house.

*After the betrothal ceremony the groom and bride would return to their respective homes for a period of about one year, but not less than nine months. During this time the groom would spend the year preparing a house for his bride and future children after their marriage. Usually, this might be a structure built onto his father's house. The bride spent her time preparing her beautiful wedding dress. For both the groom and bride Eyrusin was a time of preparation, introspection, prayer, and sanctification. (from my essay, *The Eyrusin in Come, Let Me Show You the Bride*)*



**The Return of the Bridegroom from the Ten Virgins by Eugene Burnard (1850-1921)**

Adding further credence to the idea that the Last Supper was not only a Passover *seder*, but also a *Eyrusin* ceremony are the words of Jesus explaining this very aspect of the traditional Jewish wedding:

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.” <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. (John 14:1-3)

Jesus reassures His disciples that He will come back for them and “take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.” In the Jewish wedding tradition it would be the father of the Bridegroom that would tell his son that it was time to retrieve his bride. Whereas the *Eyrusin* ceremony was conducted in the mother-of-the-bride's house the wedding would be held at the father of the bridegroom's house. Only the father knew the day and the hour in which he would send his son, and the bride would not receive advanced warning of the coming of the bridegroom. Since the bride did not know when the bridegroom would be coming to take her to his father's house for the wedding ceremony (*Nissuin*), she instructed her bridesmaids to keep watch. The traditional Jewish

wedding ceremony is called the *Nissuin*, which means “to carry” which apply describes the bridegroom coming “to carry” his bride back to his father's house.

All of this makes beautiful sense, doesn't it? It was just the day before on the Mount of Olives that Jesus' told his disciples the Parables of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids.

*“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he replied, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Matt 25:1-13)*

This “carrying away” of the bride was not only described by Jesus in the previous chapter of Matthew, but also by prophets of the Old Testament; this was the “great and terrible day of the Lord” that would occur at the “end of the age.”

<sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; <sup>30</sup> then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, **and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven**

*with power and great glory;*<sup>31</sup> *and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* (Matt 24:29-31, emphasis added)

What comes next? The marriage of the Lamb and His Bride:

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.  
7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
8 it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” —  
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* (Rev 19: 6-8)

Let us now return to the Last Supper and the continuation of the Passover *seder* and *Eyrusin* ceremony because together they form the foundation of the Divine Liturgy and the Mass perpetuated throughout the history of the Church as a Sacrament of His continual abiding in us. And instrumental to this ceremony, as with the Passover *seder* and *Eyrusin* ceremony, it would involve wine, four cups of wine to be exact.

### **Wine (and Water) in the Passover Seder and Eyrusin Ceremony**

Wine was an important element in almost every Jewish ceremony, but it was especially important in the Passover *Seder* and *Eyrusin* ceremony. Let's start this examination by looking how wine was used in the traditional Passover *Seder*.

There were four cups of wine that were drunk during the Passover *Seder*. The order in which they were drunk during the Passover were as follows:

1. The *Kiddush cup*
2. The *Haggadah cup*
3. The *Ge'ullah cup*
4. The *Zebah Todah cup*

Each of these cups, according to Midrashic tradition, represented the four different aspect of deliverance that the Lord God of Israel provided for His people as explained in the Book of Exodus:

*6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, 7 and I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.* (Exo 6:6-7)

Here we see the four deliverances and their association with each cup of wine:

The *Kiddush cup*: *I will bring you out...*  
The *Haggadah cup*: *I will deliver you from their bondage...*  
The *Ge'ullah cup*: *I will redeem you...*  
The *Zebah Todah*: *I will take you for my people....*

Beautiful! All of these deliverances God achieve for the People of Israel with the Passover. And all of these deliverances Jesus Christ achieved for the Church, His Bride, in His Passover on Nisan 14 which began with the Last Supper, His Passover *Seder* and Betrothal Feast with His nascent Bride. Before we begin this discussion I wanted to raise a question, “So why is water part of the story of the four cups of wine shared in the Passover *seder*?”

### **Water, wine and transfiguration:**

We already saw that water was used in both the Passover and *Eyrusin* as the *mikveh* when Jesus washed His disciples feet, but what association does it have with the four cups of wine? Well, for one it was the custom of the Jewish people in Jesus' day to mix their wine with water. There is additional significance between water and wine connected with Jesus'



Within the same building that houses the Upper Room is the Tomb of King David. The picture above is a monument to the Psalmist King from whose line would come a King, Jesus Christ, whose Kingdom would be everlasting.

ministry. No doubt you remember Jesus' first miracle in which He transformed water into wine at the Wedding Feast at Cana. Might there be a connection between the miracle performed at the Wedding Feast at Cana and the Betrothal Feast of the Last Supper? Both events involve a bridegroom and a bride, and both events involve transubstantiation, the former of water into wine, and the latter wine and water into the sacred Blood of the Bridegroom. The first miracle occurred because His mother told her Son to do it (John 2:5); the second miracle occurred because His Father told His Son to do it (Matt 26:39). Why? Because only through the obedience of the Son would the Church be *brought out, delivered from bondage, redeemed, and taken as a people*, who are His Bride.

We also remember from earlier that the Mass and Divine Liturgy is a re-*presentation* of mystery of the Last Supper. Here too, the priest mixes water and wine:

*“By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”*

What Christ accomplished with His Passover is infinitely greater than the Passover recorded in Exodus for He *brought us out* of the slavery of sin (Rom 6:15-18), *delivered us from the bondage* of death (Heb 2:14-15), *redeem us* by His blood (1Cor 6:19-20), and *took us for His people*, that is, His Bride (Isa 54:5; Rev 19:7-8).

The Last Supper was also an *Eyrusin* ceremony through which our Lord betrothed Himself to His Church, the Bride. And who is this Bride who has been washed in the water of the word and by the Blood of the Lamb? She is the one who has come out of the Great Tribulations (Rev 7:14), she bears in her body the marks of her Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:17), and has been conformed to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29), and she has partaken of the Divine Nature (2Peter 1:4). She looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners reflecting the glory of her Bridegroom (Song of Solomon 6:10) having been made like unto Him for she sees Him as He is (1John 3:2). She is the new Eve who has eaten, not of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but of the Tree of Life, Jesus Christ, who offered to her the real food of His Body and Blood as Eucharistic Bread and Wine and then, later that day, as Pascal sacrifice.



#### **Water, wine, blood and covenant:**



Where then are the elements of the *Eyrusin* ceremony in the Last Supper? Earlier in this essay I described elements of the traditional Jewish betrothal ceremony:

*The ceremony itself consisted of both the groom and bride-to-be making vows, exchanging rings, and sealing the arrangement with a cup of wine at the betrothal feast.*

We find in the Gospels that vows and the sealing of these arrangements with a cup of wine were indeed made during the Last Supper. The Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, offered a cup of wine to His apostles:



<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt 26:27-29)

Jesus offered His apostles the wine as a sealing of a covenant (vows), and as an exchange, not of rings, but of the righteousness of the Bridegroom for the sins of the Bride. This would be a blood covenant that would fulfill and surpass the covenant established between God and the People of Israel as described by the Book of Exodus:

<sup>3</sup> Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do.” <sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Exo 24:3-8)

The apostles did not vow, as the People of Israel had done centuries before, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do.” Israel had broken its vows to the Lord God, and had shown them selves again and again to be an unfaithful bride. Would the apostles prove themselves better at keeping their promises than their ancestors before them? No, Peter proved that they were no better than their forefathers just a few hours later when he denied that he even knew Jesus. Neither the sacrifice of oxen nor the sprinkling of its blood would be sufficient for the Bride of the Messiah. The Bride would need nothing less than to drink the Blood of the Bridegroom; she had to consume the *ketubah*, the “bride price,” that the Father had set for the Bride. Why the Son’s blood and why the drinking of it?

### **Blood is Atonement and Life:**

<sup>11</sup> For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.... <sup>14</sup> “For the life of every creature is the blood of it....” (Lev 17:11, 14)

The Father knew that the Church would not be any more faithful to His Son than the People of Israel had been to Him, “for all men sin and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23) What was needed was a remedy to undo the works of Satan (1Jonn 3:8), that is, the deception that led humanity’s first parents to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil through which sin and death entered the world. What was needed was atonement and life, the transubstantiating divine Life of Christ’s Blood *within* us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

The only way that the Bride will remain faithful is to abide in Christ for apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). As we will discuss momentarily, the Eucharist *is* the sacrament of abiding in Him. And when we abide in Him then we can say, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13)

### **The Ge’ullah cup:**



#### **Exterior of the Cenacle.**

It may have been at this location where Jewish pilgrims gathered on the Feast of Pentecost and marveled at the miracle of hearing the disciples of Jesus “speaking in their own tongues of the might works of God.” (Acts 2:11)

A couple of things I would like to point out before we move on. I wrote earlier that four cups of wine were drunk during the Passover Supper. Which cup of wine were we describing above in which Jesus offered His Blood as the blood of the New Covenant? There is some debate about this, but most biblical scholars believe that it is the third cup, the *Ge'ullah* cup because this is the cup of redemption. I think that this makes perfect sense when we remember exactly what it means to redeem something?

When I was a kid I would save the box tops off of cereal boxes. When I had a certain number of them saved I would send them in the mail to General Mills (or Kelloggs or Post) and I'd redeem them for a toy (I actually still have that baking soda powered submarine I waited forever to receive in the mail). Basically, redemption is a trade, one thing for another. This is what Jesus did in redeeming His Bride. He traded His holy and innocent life for the sinful and condemned life of His Bride. This was the *ketubah*, the bride price that the Father had arranged as the payment for the bride.

Did Jesus drink from the *Ge'ullah* cup? The scripture does not indicate that He did, nor does it make sense that He would drink His own precious Blood. Rather, He Himself was the Blood whose "accidental" appearance was that of wine (using the terminology of St. Thomas Aquinas), just as He Himself would be the Lamb that was shared by the apostles in the appearance of bread (as we will discuss momentarily).

### **Zebah Todah cup:**



**Father Joel with his pilgrims in the Upper Room.** This room was the site of the Last Supper, where Jesus met with some of His disciples after the resurrection, where Thomas place his fingers in the wounds of the risen Christ, and where the Holy Spirit fell upon Mary, the Mother of our Lord, the Apostles and disciples.

This leaves just one more cup of wine, the *Zebah Todah* or the "*I will take you for my people*" cup to be drunk by Jesus and the apostles. This, I believe, is most akin to the cup of wine that was shared between the bridegroom and the bride in the traditional Jewish betrothal ceremony as Christ our Bridegroom is *taking us* not just as a people, but as a Bride. Did Jesus and His disciples share the *Zebah Todah* cup that would have been drunk at the end of the Passover *seder*?

According to Jewish tradition at the close of the Passover *seder*, the fourth and final cup of wine, the *Zebah Todah* cup, would have been be drunk and this would then be followed by the reciting of the Hillel (Psalms 113 –118) and the *Birkat ha-Shir* (a song of thanksgiving). The Gospel of Matthew records at least part of the conclusion of these Passover events:

<sup>30</sup> *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* (Matt 26:30)

None of the Gospels record if another cup of wine was drunk after the *Ge'ullah* cup, that is, the Eucharistic cup. It seems unlikely that the Jesus and His disciples would have shared the last cup of wine before heading out to the Mount of Olives given what He said following the sharing the Eucharistic cup, after which He said:

<sup>29</sup> *I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" (Matt 26:29)

Was this just an accidental omission by Jesus? I can't image such a thing; rather it is evidence that the Passover *Seder* and the *Eyrusin* ceremony had not yet been completed. As we will see Jesus will refer to this cup during His Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. He would drink the *Zebah Todah* cup, but only when His Passover-Betrothal was "finished," and the bride price paid. And what about the apostles, will they too drink the *Zebah Todah* cup? We know that they did as Jesus said they would in a conversation with two of the apostles' mother:

<sup>20</sup> *Then the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.* <sup>21</sup> *And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."* <sup>22</sup> *But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."* <sup>23</sup> *He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."* (Matt 20:20-23)

Indeed, all of those who wish to be betrothed to Christ must drink of this *Eyrusin (Zebah Todah)* cup which is a cup of suffering, Yet...

*if we endure [suffering], we shall also reign with him;* (2Tim 2:12)

Yes, reign with Him, because that is what a Bride does when her Bridegroom is the King of kings. But now, let us continue with our discussion of the Last Supper and the Bread that came down from Heaven.

### Bread and Flesh

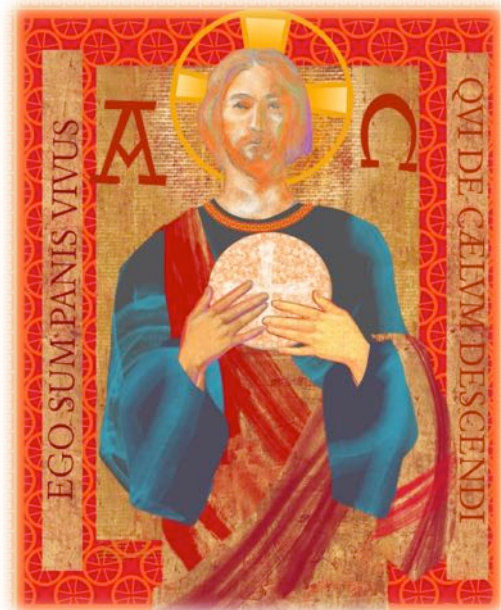
In the traditional Passover *Seder* unleavened bread was served. This goes back to the story of the Exodus where the Jews ate unleavened bread because they had no time to let the bread leaven for they were in haste to leave Egypt:

*They shall eat the flesh [of the sacrificed lamb] that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.* (Exo 12:8)

We see from the scripture above the connection between bread and flesh, they were to be consumed together. The Passover supper that Jesus shared on Nisan 14 with His disciples would fulfill the Passover liturgical requirements just as in Jesus all of the Law and Prophets are fulfilled (Matt 5:17). There was no lamb served at the Passover *seder* that Jesus celebrated with His disciples because the lambs would not have been sacrificed until later that day. Yet, Jesus' Passover *seder* still fulfilled the commandment of Exodus 12:8 because the bread that He served His Apostles was in substance His flesh, the flesh of the Lamb of God, yet hidden in the "accident" of bread (as Thomas Aquinas would have explained).

<sup>19</sup> *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* (Luke 22:19)

Saint John is the only one of the Evangelists who does not have a passage describing the consecration of the Bread and the Wine in his gospel account of the Last Supper. Perhaps it was because he included the most theologically exquisite passage on the Eucharist in chapter six of his gospel which I present below in its entirety:



**I Am the Bread of Life  
Who Came Down from Heaven**

<sup>27</sup> *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.* <sup>28</sup> *Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* <sup>29</sup> *Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."* <sup>30</sup> *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?"* <sup>31</sup> *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'* <sup>32</sup> *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.* <sup>33</sup> ***For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.*** <sup>34</sup> *They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."*

<sup>35</sup> *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.* <sup>36</sup> *But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.* <sup>37</sup> *All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.* <sup>38</sup> *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me;* <sup>39</sup> *and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.* <sup>40</sup> *For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

<sup>41</sup> *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."* <sup>42</sup> *They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from*

heaven'?"<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.<sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.<sup>46</sup> Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.<sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.<sup>48</sup> **I am the bread of life.**<sup>49</sup> **Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.**<sup>50</sup> **This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.**<sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."**

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"<sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you;**<sup>54</sup> **he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.**<sup>55</sup> **For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.**<sup>56</sup> **He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.**<sup>57</sup> **As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.**<sup>58</sup> **This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever."**<sup>59</sup> This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um. (John 6:27-59, emphasis added)

This is such a beautiful passage the depth of which will never be plumbed and certainly I am only scratching the surface here. I will only focus on two verses 55 and 57 (in the next section we will examine verse 56) as they have their fulfillment on Nisan 14 and are re-presented in remembrance of Christ throughout the world and throughout time in the Mass and Divine Liturgy.

### **For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed:**

Some translations of this scripture use the words *true* or *real* food and drink and in some ways I think that that demonstrates to us that Jesus was speaking literally to His incredulous audience (their incredulity also speaks of the literalness of Jesus' language). They understood that Jesus meant what He said to be taken literally and they did and that's why they were so outraged by Jesus' teaching. Even the disciples were troubled by it. When Jesus asked His disciples if they were going to leave also they didn't respond with, "Oh, we get it Jesus, you were speaking figuratively." No, they said, "Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life." The disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying, but they trusted and had faith in Him. Did they understand it better during the Last Supper? May be, may be not, but they experienced the mystery; Jesus made sure of that. His disciples were going to need His life in them in order for them to make it through the trials of the rest of that day, and thereafter.

And what is this food that Jesus gave His disciples that has been passed on through the centuries down to us today? It is *real* food, food that nourishes the spirit as well as the soul and the body because all three coexist in a unity within the human person. The True Food that Jesus offers us is not at all like natural food. The natural food we eat will be digested and absorbed into our tissues and cells so as to provide us with the energy and the basic molecules which will, in turn, be reassemble according to the pattern of our own DNA within our cells so that we can continue in being. The True and Real Food of Christ's body and blood is not broken down and reconstructed to make us, rather it breaks us down when we receive it saying, "Not my will but Thine be done;" and then reconstructs us so that we are made into the image of the Son (Rom 8:29). The *real food* of Christ's Body and Blood does not just allow us to "continue in being" for a time, but for an eternity, for he who eats this *real food* "will live forever."

### **As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.**

Jesus' flesh and blood is the food from the Tree of Life which humankind was denied when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-24). The Serpent had deceived Eve into believing that if she ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil she would become *like* God. She and Adam ate of that fruit and death entered the world because of their disobedience. On Nisan 14 the cherubim that guarded the Tree of Life with a flaming sword drew back and permitted the Bride to eat of the Tree of Life. Bread and wine, Flesh and Blood, the mystery of the Eucharist, the Father's life in the Bridegroom, and His life in the Bride—it may not yet be evident what we will be, but we



know that we will be *like Him* for we shall see Him as He is (1John 3:2)

When? When the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made her self ready as she abides in the sacramental life of Her Bridegroom.

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.  
7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
8 it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” —  
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

### **The Eucharist: The Sacrament of Abiding in Christ**

Jesus continues His Last Supper with His disciples by explaining to them that He is the vine and they are the branches:

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15: 1-11)



This is the ideal of the Christian life—to abide in Christ. But this *life* is not to be confused with some lofty concept or abstract idea that is only achieved through great study or simply doing good works. The ideal of the Christian life is communion with our Lord.

*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.* (John 6: 56)

When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we abide in Him and we bear much fruit. The works that I do are not the fruit of *self-righteousness*, but of His righteousness. Why? Because it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20). Sounds simple right? It can be, but it is necessary to understand what the Church believes and then have faith in this belief. I’ve discussed this before, that is, the distinction between belief and faith. Belief is the domain of the mind and as such it ought to be reasonable because God has given humanity the gift of reason and as such He expects us to use it. I believe in the teachings of the Church regarding the Eucharist because they are beautifully reasonable in their coherence with both Old and New Testament Scripture, and with the oral, written, and liturgical Tradition of the Church.

Although the teaching of the Eucharist is reasonable, reason alone cannot circumscribe the Reality of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of the Person in perfect unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit—the Trinity. So, how do we approach the Mystery of this Sacrament of Abiding? May I suggest that Mary who more than any other human being had intimate knowledge of and experience with the Incarnate Son, and as such knows how we should approach the mystery of the Son incarnate in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

***But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.*** (Luke 2:19)



**But Mary Kept All These Things And Pondered Them In Her Heart**  
by Alice Havers (1850-1890)

Luke 2:19 is not the only place that mentions how Mary pondered the mystery of her Son. Whether it was at the annunciation when she learned that she was to be the mother of the Lord, or at His birth and presentation in the Temple, or finding Him as a young man in the Temple, Mary “consider in her mind” (Luke 1:29), “pondered all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:19), “marveled at what was said about Him” (Luke 2:33), and “kept all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:51). All of this reminds me of something Saint Theophan the Recluse said, “The principal things is to stand before God with the mind in the heart and to remain here forever.” Theophan was an Eastern Orthodox saint who was describing what might be considered a mystical epistemology, a synthesis or perhaps better a synergy, between reason and faith which is different but complimentary to the Catholic teaching of the West. To understand this approach one has to understand the Eastern conception of what reason and faith are and “where” they occur in the human person.

Whereas the mind is the domain of reason, the heart is the domain of faith in Eastern Christian thought. The Eastern Church (both Catholic and Orthodox) has a different understanding of faith. In studying Eastern Christian thought one cannot help but be reminded of Blaise Pascal’s famous quote, “The heart has its reasons that reason does not know.” Pascal is not suggesting that the heart is in contradiction with the mind of reason (although it might be), rather he is offering that the heart has another way of knowing, one that is intuitional, not

methodological; immediate and not discursive. The mind knows in *chronos* whereas the heart knows in *kairos* (more on this momentarily). This intuitional way of knowing was not new to Pascal, the Greek Philosopher, Plato, had a very similar idea and he had a tremendous influence on the thinking of the Eastern Church (whereas Aristotle had a greater influence on the Western Church). The Greeks called this way of knowing, *noesis*, and for the Eastern Church the greatest mysteries of the Faith, such as the Trinity and the Eucharist, are often approached primarily through *noesis*, rather than through logic and method. I have read some Orthodox theologians who have dismissed the Catholic doctrine of “transubstantiation” not because they doubt the Real Presence, but rather they think that such an enormous mystery is diminished by reasoned explanations. Personally, I believe reason and *noesis* are complementary and as such may be approached fully when “the mind is in the heart.”

When there is complementarity between belief and faith there is assurance (Heb 11:1), both in the mind and in the heart, and it is this assurance that will strengthen me in the hour of temptation (Rev 3:10) that nothing will separate me from the love of God (Rom 8:35-19). My mind and heart are assured that when I receive the Eucharist I am receiving the Body and Blood of my Lord. I am assured of this because *only this Truth* can satisfy the deepest longing of my heart to be united with Him in that deepest intimacy of abiding, that is, to participate in the *perichoresis*, the mutual indwelling of love within the Trinity; and that this same indwelling love that is existent between the Persons of the Trinity will also exist within the many membered Body that is Church, His Bride. How can this not be so since our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, prayed for this reality to be ours during His Last Supper:

<sup>20</sup> “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word,<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.<sup>22</sup> The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,<sup>23</sup> I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.<sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.<sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me.<sup>26</sup> I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:20-26)

When I consider my own frail and sinful nature, I look upon the Bride that You have bedecked with satin, and fine jewelry now rewarding you with shameless harlotry (Eze 16), I despair that you will never have a bride worthy of You. Then I am reminded that with God all things are possible (Matt 19:26); that when I see the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist I am assured that He has the power to transubstantiate even us, the Bride, from glory to glory into the likeness of the Bridegroom.

<sup>8</sup> *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* (2Cor 3:18)

### The Fourth Cup

If you remember from earlier, the fourth and final cup of wine shared at the Passover *seder*, the *Zebah Todah*, represented that part of the Exodus narrative in which God speaks to Israel, *I will take you for my people*. To my thinking this final cup could certainly qualify as the *Eyrusin* cup that was shared between the bridegroom and the bride as he took her and her people as his people. Yet, there is no mention in the Gospels that Jesus and the Apostles shared the *Zebah Todah* cup.

After Jesus had consecrated the third cup of wine, the Blood of the New Covenant, and after He had passed it to His apostles to drink, He said to them:

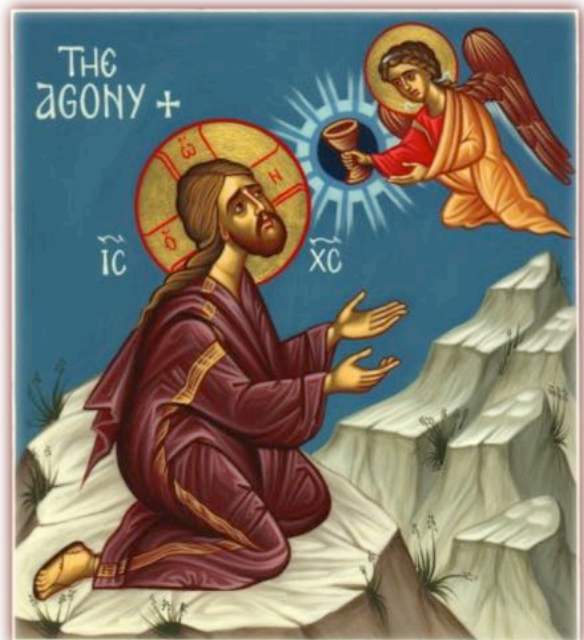
<sup>29</sup> *I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* (Matt 26:29)

There is no scriptural evidence that they shared the *Zebah Todah* cup at the Last Supper. The scripture does tell us that the disciples recited the Hallel (Psalms 113-118) and probably sang the *Birkat ha-Shir* (a song of thanksgiving) which was traditionally sung after the fourth cup.

<sup>30</sup> *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* (Matt 26:30)

So, technically, without the drinking of the fourth cup of wine the Passover *seder* of Jesus with His disciples was not finished, and neither was the *Eyrusin* ceremony. Nevertheless, Jesus does refer to this fourth and final cup when He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

<sup>38</sup> *Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”* <sup>39</sup> *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”* (Matt 26:38-39)



This cup, the cup that He will drink in obedience to the Father, is the final cup of His Passover *seder* and the cup of betrothal to His Bride. It is the cup of His Passion, the *ketubah* or the bride price, that He would pay with His Body and Blood for His Bride so as to *bring us out, deliver us, redeem us, and take us as His people*. He drank that cup on the cross and then, and only then, was His Passover and Betrothal finished.

<sup>28</sup> After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.” <sup>29</sup> A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28-30)

What about Jesus’ disciples? Shouldn’t they have also drunk from the final cup of Jesus’ Passover *seder* and the betrothal cup? As it turns out they all would, when it was their time to drink of the cup. It was just a few days before the Passion that Jesus told the sons of Zeb’edee that they would drink of the cup from which He would drink.

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zeb’edee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. <sup>21</sup> And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” <sup>22</sup> But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” (Matt 20:20-23)

All of us who wish to be betrothed to Christ will have our opportunity to drink of the *Zebah Todah* and *Eyrusin* cup. In fact, it is offered to us every day.

<sup>23</sup> And he said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. (Luke 9:23-24),

So, we rejoice in our suffering for He has permitted us to participate in His suffering for the sake of the Bride,

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church* (Col 1:24),

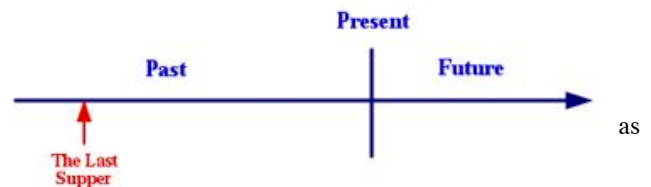
This is our *Zebah Todah* cup from which we must drink every day until the day He calls us to His Father’s house, or He returns and carries us away to the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb. And because we share this cup with our Bridegroom we shall reign with him (2Tim 2:12). We know this because, after all, this is what the Bride of the King does.

### Do This In Remembrance of Me

*And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* (Luke 22:19)

It would be a mistake to think of the Mass or the Divine Liturgy as a liturgical commemoration of the events of the Last Supper. That would be to think of the Last Supper as a historical event, and it was not, well not exactly, it is and it isn’t. If that is confusing it is because of our Western understanding of *time*. You see there are actually two types of time; there is *chronos* which is what 99.99% of people think about when they thinking about time. *Chronos* is the arrow of time and it looks something like this the picture here:

On the arrow of time, we are firmly fixed on the “Present.” We can experience the past through memory or by learning about it from those who lived or studied it. The “Future” is certainly much more opaque as we are limited to speculation to what may or may not happen. That is unless you have a Time Machine.



This actually reminds me of one of my favorite movies. It was made in 1960 and starred Rod Taylor and Yvette Mimieux and was loosely based on HG Wells’ book by the same name, *The Time Machine*. Great movie, but I won’t go into details; I’ll just suggest that you watch it. I am going to tell you the last two lines of the movie though, but don’t worry it won’t be a spoiler. So we are near the end of the movie and our Time Traveler, Rod Taylor, had just told his friends that he had gotten back from the future. His friends, however, don’t buy it, except for one, David Filby (played by Alan Young), whom although he doesn’t quite know what to make of the stories he’s heard does know



that his friend is trustworthy. Okay, now back to our final scene. Our Time Traveler has now gone back to the future and the Time Traveler's housekeeper, Mrs. Watchett, asks Mr. Filby if he thinks that Mr. Wells (the Time Traveler) will ever return; to which Mr. Filby offers, in a flawless Scottish accent, the best line in the movie: "One cannot choose to wonder. You see, he has all the time in the world."

I've often thought how cool it would be to have a Time Machine. Well we do sort of...it is the Mass and the Divine Liturgy. They do not take us back in *chronos* time to the Last Supper, nor do they take forward into time. What they can do, however, is take us out of *chronos* and bring us into an entirely different type of time—*kairos*. So what is *kairos*?

First of all, *kairos* is not in linear time; there is no past and no future, there is only the present or rather the Eternal Moment. *Kairos* is the time of the Kingdom of God, of the heavenly host, and of the Church Triumphant. *Kairos* encompasses all of *chronos*, permeates, fills, and suffuses it. Yet, we are largely unaware of it until it manifests itself to us, and when this happens the heart knows, but reason is silent before it. CS Lewis experienced this unplanned experience of stepping out of *chronos* and into *kairos*, and explained this remarkable experience this way:

*As I stood beside a flowering currant bush on a summer day there suddenly arose in me without warning, and as if from a depth not of years but of centuries.... It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me.... It was a sensation, of course, of desire, but desire for what?.... And before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison."*

Perhaps you have had experiences similar to this, I have. Just the briefest experience of *kairos*, makes everything else seem insignificant in comparison and we yearn to stay in that moment forever. But of course we do—we have been touched by heaven; this is the Kingdom of God. This is the time of Liturgy.

I believe that the Eastern Catholic and the Orthodox Churches understand this idea better than we do in the West. As Father Michel Najim, an Antiochian Orthodox Priest, explains:

*The ancient Greeks had two words for "time:" chronos and kairos. The modern Western mind thinks almost exclusively of time as chronos, which is sequential time, linear and moving in only one direction into the future.... Kairos, on the other hand, is multidirectional and repeatable.... Kairos is not time as we know it in this world; it is sacred time, time as experienced by the heavenly hosts. In chronos, the past and the future can only be said to "exist" in the abstract; in the fluidity of kairos, all aspects of time are immediate and accessible.*

The Divine Liturgy celebrated by both Eastern Catholics and Orthodox is essentially the same liturgy that was originally written by Saint John Chrysostom (347-407) and Saint Basil (330-379). These liturgies contain elements within them which explicitly state that the believer is now entering the *kairos* of the Kingdom of God. I won't discuss them all, but I will mention just a few to make my point.

Prior to the beginning of the Divine Liturgy the Deacon announces, "It is *kairos* to begin the service of the Lord." Right at the beginning the believer is made to understand that they are not commemorating a historical event, because in *kairos* "all aspects of time are immediate and accessible." It must first be understood that the Last Supper celebrated by Jesus and His apostles was not *just* an historical event trapped in the past. It could not be as the celebrant of that Passover *seder* and *Eyrusin* ceremony was Jesus, the author of *chronos* and begotten by the Father in the eternity of *kairos*. The Last Supper permeates, fills, and suffuses *chronos* and the Divine Liturgy and the Mass calls the believer to approach this mystery with the "mind in the heart," to step out of *chronos* and enter the *kairos* of the Kingdom of God. Then the priest proclaims at the beginning of the Liturgy, facing the altar and holding high the Book of the Gospels saying,

*"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever."*

And the people say, "Amen." Yes, we are *now* in the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yes, we are *now* in the Upper Room with Jesus and His Apostles. Yes, we are *now* partaking of the same Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity that Jesus offered to His Apostles on *Nisan* 14.

This is *kairos*. Liturgy, whether it is the Divine Liturgy of the East or the Mass in the West, it is an opportunity to enter into the Eternal Moment of the Kingdom where the *entirety* of the mystery of our salvation is present. This too is evident during the part of the Divine Liturgy called the anamnesis during which the priest prays the Eucharistic Prayer:

*“Remembering, therefore, this command of the Savior, and all that came to pass for our sake, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming....”*

Wait a minute, how can we remember our Lord’s “second, glorious coming” when that hasn’t even happened yet? First of all, it “hasn’t happened yet” only applies to *chronos*, not *kairos* which is the time of the Divine Liturgy. In *kairos*, the “second, glorious coming” is present and experienceable. Mind boggling, isn’t it? We find another clue to understanding this in the Greek word, *anamnesis*, which is most often rendered as *remembrance* or *remembering*. For example, when Paul describes the Last Supper he writes,

<sup>23</sup> *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,* <sup>24</sup> *and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* (1Cor 11:23-24)

That word, remembrance, is actually *anamnesis* in the Greek text. Sounds familiar doesn’t it. You recognize it from the word “amnesia,” that is when you can’t remember, so the word *an-amnesis* actually means you cannot *not* remember, or a bit less confusing, you “cannot forget.” Is it really possible to not be able to forget something? Yes, it is possible not to forget something when you are experiencing that something right now in the present, or in the “eternal moment” of *kairos*, even when that something hasn’t happened yet in *chronos*. If your mind is reeling it is because *kairos* is experience by the heart, and is only imperfectly communicated to the mind, which struggles to comprehend the nonlinearity of *kairos* which can only be apprehended by the heart intuitively (*noetically*).

So how do we go about entering into *kairos* during the Mass or the Divine Liturgy? We’ve already taken the first step, that is, we now know that this is something that is available to us. Then, we need to remember what the Saint James warns us, “You have not because you ask not” (James 4:2), so this is the next step—now that we know that during the Mass we can enter into the time of the Kingdom of God we need to ask our Lord for His help, “Lord Jesus, let me enter into your time; the time of the Kingdom where you reign and we, your Bride, reign with you.” Then as we approach this profound mystery we should be like Mary who “pondered these things in her heart” believing that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). This is what I’m going to be doing the next time I go to Mass. I’ve always wanted to travel through time: to sit with the Apostles at the Last Supper, to pray with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, to behold Him when Pilate exclaimed, *Ecco Homo*, to stand by Mary and John at His crucifixion, to run with Peter to the empty tomb, and to watch Him ascend from the Mount of Olives. All of these things are made present in the Mass and Divine Liturgy, and yes, even his “second, glorious coming” for you see in *kairos* “we have all the time in the Kingdom.”