

“The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God’s Word, and Christ’s Body.”

-The Catechism of the Catholic Church (103)

The Body and Blood of Christ⁽¹⁾

Do Christians really eat flesh and drink blood? Yes, when the “flesh” and “blood” is the “body and blood” of Jesus Christ...

Before we can understand why Jesus commanded us to “eat his flesh and drink his blood” (see, John 6:41-69) we must keep in mind that God has repeatedly commanded us to be Holy, for He is Holy:

“For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy.” (The Old Testament, Leviticus 11:44)

“Thou shall sanctify him therefore; for he offered the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy.” (The Old Testament, Leviticus 21:8)

“And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.” (The Old Testament, Leviticus 20:26)

God is Holy because He always was, and always will be, free of all sin. And anyone who wants to be in the presence of God in Heaven must also be Holy, and free of all sin.

Jesus repeated God’s Commandment for us to be Holy when he said, **“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”** (The Gospel, Matthew 5:48). This coincides with previous teachings in the Old Testament which state:

Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day. (The Old Testament, 1 Kings 8:61)

Thou shall be perfect with the Lord thy God. (The Old Testament, Deuteronomy 18:13)

But how can any of us be “perfect” and “holy” and totally free from all sin in our thoughts and actions? This seems like an impossible task considering the sinful nature of our human desires!

For mankind, it *is* impossible for us to achieve a level of Holiness on our own that makes us worthy to be in the presence of God. This is why we need God’s help in the form of a Savior and Redeemer. God sent a representation of Himself (God’s Son, Jesus Christ) into the world to save us from our sins and teach us how to become Holy, like God:

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; [13] looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; [14] who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works. (The New Testament, Titus 2:11-14)

1. Please note, not all Christians believe in the Catholic Church’s teaching of “transubstantiation” where bread and wine is transformed into the actual “body and blood” of Jesus Christ. Some Christians believe in the “spiritual blessing” of the bread and wine, while others believe the celebration of the Last Supper (Communion) to be a symbolic act that professes their devotion and faith to Jesus that he is our Lord and Savior. For more clarification on the different beliefs about Communion, please see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>.

Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; [14] as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: [15] but like as He who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; [16] because it is written, 'Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.' (The New Testament, 1 Peter 1:13-16)

Jesus said, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [22] And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: [23] I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (The Gospel, John 17:21-23)

How do we become holy and "one" with God the Father? By becoming holy and "one" with the Son, first!

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
(The New Testament, 1 Tim. 2:5)

It is through Jesus Christ that we free ourselves from all sin in our *Mind, Body* and *Soul* making us worthy to live in the presence of God in His Heavenly Kingdom. This process of purification and "sanctification" comes through Jesus in the following ways:

1. *Mind* - The Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the Word of God.
2. *Body* - The Body and Blood of Christ which is the Holy Eucharist
and;
3. *Soul* - The Spirit of Jesus when we are spiritually converted ("born again") by the Holy Spirit.

The following scripture explains how our *Mind, Body* and *Soul* are sanctified through Christ:

1. Our *Mind* is purified with the Word of God:

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. (Proverbs 30:5)

And Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (The Gospel, Luke 4:4)

Jesus therefore answered them and said, "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. [17] If any man will do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (The Gospel, John 7:16-17)

Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. [4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (The Gospel, John 15:3-4)

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." (The New Testament, Hebrews 10:16)

2. Our *Body* is purified with the flesh of Jesus, the New Passover Lamb:

(Note: The shedding of a lamb's blood for the atonement of sins dates back to the first books of the Old Testament. The Jews then had to eat the flesh of the lamb in accordance to God's Passover Covenant with them. This is why Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb of God" in the New Testament. This is also why Christians say, "The blood of Jesus washes away our sins." For a more in-depth study of this teaching, please see, "Eucharist, Holy Meal", by Dr. Scott Hahn on page 7 of this document.)

And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, "My father:" and he said, "Here am I, my son." And he said, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" [8] And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:" so they went both of them together. (The Old Testament, Genesis 22:7-8)

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. [8] And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (The Old Testament, Exodus 12:7-8)

Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: [16] And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. (The Old Testament, Leviticus 16:15-16)

And he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he-lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe-lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings: (The Old Testament, Numbers 6:14)

The next day John seeing Jesus coming unto him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." (The Gospel, John 1:29)

Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. [54] Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. [55] For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. [56] He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. [58] This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (The Gospel, John 6:53-58)

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." [27] And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; [28] For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. [29] But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (The Gospel, Matthew 26:26-29)

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. [13] For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh: [14] How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (The New Testament, Hebrews 9:12-14)⁽²⁾

2. The sacrifice of calves and bulls came about in the Old Testament after the Israelites had built the "golden calf" (see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_calf). Worshipping calves and bulls as gods was part of Egyptian culture. When the Israelites began to do this, it enraged God, especially since He had just freed them from Egypt after 400 years of slavery (see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_book_of_exodus). As atonement for their sins, God commanded the Levites (the newly appointed high priests of the Israelites) to make daily sacrifices of calves and bulls on the altar of God's Tabernacle as a reminder to the Israelites they shall have no false gods before Him (see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Leviticus).

3. Our *Soul* is purified through the Spirit of Jesus when we repent for our sins and profess Him as our Lord and Savior. We then ask for the Holy Spirit to come live in our soul, just as the Holy Spirit lives in Jesus:

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [18] I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. [19] Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. [20] At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. [21] He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (The Gospel, John 14:17-21)

Jesus said, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (The Gospel, John 14:26)

Then said Jesus to them again, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. [22] And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: [23] Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” (The Gospel, John 20:21-23)

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. [13] And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, [14] And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” (The Old Testament, Ezekiel 37:12-14)

Believing in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: an act of Faith, and an Act of Obedience

It may be difficult for some people to understand how bread and wine becomes the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. It was a hard saying for the first followers of Jesus to understand as well. However, it may not be as complicated as we think. Let’s look at Matthew 26, and then John 6:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” [27] And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink ye all of it; [28] For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. [29] But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” (The Gospel, Matthew 26:26-29)

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” [42] And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, ‘I came down from heaven?’” [43] Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, “Murmur not among yourselves. [44] No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. [45] It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. [46] Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. [47] Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. [48] I am that bread of life. [49] Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. [50] This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. [51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” [52] The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? [53] Then Jesus said unto them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. [54] Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. [55] For my flesh is

meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. [56] He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. [58] This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” [59] These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. [60] Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? [61] When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, “Doth this offend you? [62] What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? [63] It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. [64] But there are some of you that believe not.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. [65] And he said, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” [66] From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. [67] Then said Jesus unto the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” [68] Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. [69] And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (The Gospel, John 6:41-69)

Notice how Jesus makes it very clear that the bread their fathers ate was *real* bread, and they are now *dead* (verse 49). However, the bread Jesus offers—his body and his words—are the bread of life! (verse 54, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” and verse 63, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”)

If the bread Christ is offering is not really his body, then it is merely bread, which according to Jesus does not contain eternal life because this is the same type of bread the Israelites ate in the desert—and they are now dead!

Now, even if we cannot fully comprehend how bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ, we believe it does as an “act of faith” and “obedience” because the Son of God has told us it does. This why many Christians acknowledge that the bread and wine transubstantiated⁽³⁾ by a Catholic priest is the *actual* body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Remember, the Spirit of Jesus is supposed to live in our *Mind, Body* and *Soul* through the *Word of God*, the *Flesh of Jesus*, and the *Spirit of Jesus* (Holy Spirit). By nourishing our *Mind, Body* and *Soul* with the presence of Jesus, Christ now lives in every fiber of our natural, and supernatural being. How else can we become Holy like Jesus unless he lives in our *Mind, Body* and *Soul*?

But wasn't Jesus speaking “figuratively” and using “symbolism” when he said we must “eat his flesh?”

Jesus used a lot of symbolism in his teaching (i.e., “I am the door”, “You are the salt of the earth”, “You are the light of the world”), however it does not sound like Jesus is speaking to us *figuratively* or *symbolically* here when he says *four times* that we will “not have life in us unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood.” He seems quite serious.

More evidence of how serious Jesus was comes from his followers when they questioned his teaching by saying, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?”. Jesus did not adjust his comment, nor accommodate their

3. In Roman Catholic theology, transubstantiation is the change of the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ occurring in the Eucharist while all that is accessible to the senses remain as before.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation>

disbelief. Instead, Jesus said, “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Simply put, Jesus meant what he said, and said what he meant.

John Ch. 6 goes on to tell us that, “Many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.” Notice how scripture doesn’t tell us that Jesus said, “Whoa. Whoa! Wait, guys! Where ya’ all going? I only meant that figuratively.” No, Jesus knew very well what he said. And in fact, he turned to his twelve apostles and said, “Will ye also go away?”

Peter, dumbfounded by what Jesus just said replies, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (verse 69)

Good answer, Peter! What a wonderful testament of faith and obedience to our Lord. Peter didn’t fully understand what Jesus was talking about, but he still believed in what Jesus had just taught them. This took a lot of courage because drinking blood and eating flesh was strictly forbidden by Jewish law:

Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. [13] And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. [14] For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off. [15] And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean. (The Old Testament, Leviticus 17:12-15)

Now, after reading Leviticus v.14, (“For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof”) do you think Jesus knew exactly what he was saying to his followers when he told them they must “eat his flesh and drink his blood?” Of course he did. The “flesh and blood” of Jesus, is life!

The tradition for the New Covenant began the night of the Last Supper (The New Passover Covenant). Jesus knew he was the sacrificial lamb that would put an end to the practice of executing animals for the forgiveness of sins. But this time, instead of eating the lamb to complete the tradition of Passover, the eating of Jesus’ flesh (body and blood), would bring life to all those who believe and follow him.

Like Peter, even if we do not fully understand the meaning of what Christ said, one fact remains: if Jesus said it, we should believe it, and that should settle it...

- MuslimsSeekingJesus.com

The Eucharist, Holy Meal:

The New Passover Covenant with Jesus as the Sacrificial Lamb of God

from a talk by, Dr. Scott Hahn, Professor of Theology at Franciscan University, OH
<http://catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0092.html>

We're going to be focusing on the very center of the faith this morning, and I feel so woefully inadequate because there is just so much to say about the Blessed Sacrament. It's a sacrament and it's a sacrifice in which Our Lord Jesus Christ not only establishes a covenant, but really, is the covenant. And the sacrament contains our Lord Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul and divinity; but it's also an offering. So in the Eucharist Our Lord Jesus Christ body and blood, soul and divinity is offered to the Father continually in an unbloody manner. Then, finally, it's not just contained. It's not just offered but it's received. All three of those elements are crucial to understanding how the Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacrament. And when it's received, we call that Holy Communion. All three of those belong together. They are inseparable. They are critical.

Now we've got to say one thing right off the bat. We are talking about an unbloody sacrifice and we are talking about a sacrifice in which Christ's death is represented. We are not talking about a bloody sacrifice where Christ is still bleeding. We are not talking about the fact that Christ is still dying on Calvary. He's not dying. He's been buried. He's been raised. He's ascended. He's enthroned and there he is in glory. But as he is in glory, he is the Lamb of God, enthroned as the Pascal Lamb; and so all of this belongs together in a very deep and mysterious way and I for one do not pretend to think that I can encapsulate or summarize it all adequately.

Now let's just also remind ourselves of another important theological doctrine. God is omnipresent. God is present everywhere; but Jesus Christ in His humanity, that is the flesh and the blood that He assumed for Himself from the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is only in heaven. That is spatially limited. In addition to its space, to its place in heaven. However, we also say that through the miracle of the Mass and the Eucharist, Jesus Christ, not just in His divine nature, which is present everywhere; but in His human nature is present on the altars of the Church around the world as Mass is celebrated daily approximately 300,000 times each day.

So we are talking about the humanity of Jesus Christ which is inseparably united to His divinity. This is done, of course, to establish the New Covenant. Jesus Christ wants to be with us. His name, in a sense, is Emmanuel, God with us. God is with us in such a unique way with the New Covenant that we have to say it's a completely different kind of covenant because in the Old Testament, the covenants were all preparations.

In a sense, the first time a covenant is mentioned explicitly is with Noah and the covenant is that rainbow. So that covenant prepares for Christ because we see that when the Lamb is enthroned in Revelation 4 and 5, around his throne is that rainbow. Then the next covenant is with Abraham and Isaac and that oath covenant is established in Genesis 22 on Mount Moriah when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only beloved son, but God stopped him. That covenant was not really completed until Jesus Christ, God the Father's only beloved firstborn Son went to Moriah to a peak called Calvary and there He was offered. And on it goes.

When Moses led the people out of Egypt and to Mount Sinai and he slew the animals and he took the blood and he threw it upon the people and he said, "This is the blood of the covenant." Those exact words were taken by Jesus in the Upper Room when he instituted the Eucharist, only to insert the word, "new" covenant, but it's there, practically verbatim because what Moses was doing was only a symbol or a shadow of what Christ would accomplish.

Likewise when David, seeing in himself and then in his firstborn son, Solomon, a priest king after the order of Melchizedek, there in Salem, there in Jerusalem as he took the Ark up and as he requested the building of the temple and as he gave the people bread and wine; all of this was a shadowy anticipation of what Christ would accomplish. But it was only a partial picture. So how can we possibly exhaust the meaning and beauty of the sacrament? It's impossible, but we can say this: God is not done in history until he is with us, until he is one of us.

For the first time in history, with the New Covenant, God is the covenant in his human nature. The Christian religion is the only religion established on the basis of the divine oath. All religions have divine oaths in this sense but we swear oaths to God, "So help me God." "Curse me God, if I don't fulfill this promise." But only in the Jewish scriptures and in the fulfillment of the Christian New Covenant do we have God swearing the oath, pronouncing upon himself the curse, and then establishing in his own body and blood, the covenant — absolutely unique and distinct.

Now, I could say many more things about that and some other aspects catechetical, historical and so on. But I want to stop now and let you know something that you may be aware of. I have spoken on the Eucharist several times and I can see the tape supply on the table dwindling. That suggests to me that several people here may have already purchased these tapes. Now, I have given talks on the Eucharist. One is entitled, "The Lamb's Supper." Another one is entitled, "The Fourth Cup," and one is just basically a presentation of the meaning of the Eucharist in the series that I did on the sacraments.

Now, I don't want to repeat myself because, you know, it just wouldn't be kosher. Many of you are going to be listening to these tapes. We're making a tape this morning and so I want to go on and cover some new ground, but on the other hand it would be unfair of me to assume too much because I doubt if anybody here has had a chance to listen to any of those tapes just this week. So, I want to suggest a plan for the rest of our time this morning. What I would like to do is rapidly summarize the main points of the talks that I gave, especially the one entitled "The Fourth Cup," and then the one entitled "The Lamb's Supper." And if I had to give a title to this one, I would entitle it "The Meal of Melchizedek." All right, "The Meal of Melchizedek," it's somewhat cryptic and illusive but I think you will understand as we go on.

Before I go on, I want to just read to you some quotations from early Church Fathers about the Eucharist to give to you an awareness that this is not some innovation. This is not some novel invention in the Middle Ages. For instance, there at the end of the 1st Century, St. Ignatius of Antioch, disciple of the beloved disciple John, spoke of the heretics who were plaguing the Church in his day. "They abstained from the Eucharist because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior, Jesus Christ." It's a perennial problem, isn't it?

Then St. Justin Martyr in the 2nd Century, one of the great apologists, defenders of the faith, stated, "This food is known among us as the Eucharist. We do not receive these things as common bread and common drink but as Jesus Christ, our Savior, being made flesh by the word of God." Then in the 4th Century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, another venerable Church Father, wrote, "Since then he has declared instead of the bread, 'This is my body,' who after that will venture to doubt. And seeing that he has affirmed and said, 'This is my blood,' who will raise a question and say it is not his blood?"

So we have testimony throughout all of the first centuries of the Church to this effect. You are hard-pressed, I would say it is practically impossible to find a single statement by anybody in the first eight centuries of the Church where you have a denial of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, flesh and blood, body, soul and divinity there in the Eucharist. I remember when I first discovered that, I was still anti-Catholic, but boy, did that bother me; because I wondered how could John's disciple get it so wrong? How

could St. Ignatius say something so patently false and superstitious after spending all this time at the feet of the beloved disciple, St. John? Now I'm convinced that he didn't get it wrong. Now I'm convinced that Vatican II got it right when it said, "In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the unity of believers who formed one body in Christ is both experienced and brought about." We are in a sense what we eat. We're only in the supernatural body of Christ because in the Eucharist we receive the supernatural body of Christ.

Now before I go on and summarize those two talks, I would like to call your attention to something you've probably heard many, many times. It's taken from the Eucharistic Prayer # 1, the Roman Canon. First of all, just to kind of summarize the whole approach we've taken all week long. "Father, accept this offering from your whole family." In the middle of the Mass, we are told what we are and we are told what we are doing and that is we are praising and loving and sacrificing and worshipping our Father as he gathers his family.

Then it goes on in the same prayer to speak about God. We say, "Father, we celebrate the memory of Christ, your Son," etc. "Look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once you accepted the gift of your servant Abel who offered himself as an oblation." It was a perfect sacrifice of his own body and blood in an act of martyrdom, a very substantial image of Christ, but it was not perfect because it wasn't voluntary. It was involuntary; it's murder. "The sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith who offered his only beloved son, on Moriah." Another very powerful symbol of our Lord, Jesus Christ. But then, he didn't really kill him, did he? So it's only an inadequate image and the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchizedek.

Now, that's taken from Genesis 14 where it says, "After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings," the four kings were with them. It goes on to talk about the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaven, that is the King's Valley, and Melchizedek, king of Salem which we said in another setting, later is called Jeru-salem, Psalm 76 shows us that, and "Melchizedek, the king of Salem, brought out bread and wine for he was priest of God Most High and he blessed Abram." This is the first time in the Bible that the word coen, the Hebrew for priest is used. He was the priest and he brought out bread and wine and those two things are in close conjunction. He brought out bread and wine and then it says he was a priest. Well, what's the connection?

Back then the priest did not need to offer the bloody sacrifices. Those only became necessary, we learn in Exodus and Ezekial 20 when Israel becomes enslaved and addicted to the gods of Egypt and to idolatrous customs which God has got to break by having him sacrifice the gods of Egypt ceremonially on Mount Sinai. But back when we had the patriarchal family religion rooted in nature, what was the sacrifice that pleased God? Well, bread and wine offered by God's priest Melchizedek, the first time that somebody is called a priest, he is offering bread and wine to Abraham who has come and paid his tithes and receives bread and wine and then he receives a blessing.

Have you ever had that experience where you pay your tithes and then you receive what appears to be bread and wine and then you receive a blessing from a priest? This is the pattern of the Eucharistic liturgy, where we give our offerings and then the priest, Christ working through the human priest, transforms them into his own body and blood and then he gives us that under the appearance of bread and wine and then he gives us the blessing.

Summary of "The Fourth Cup"

Now this is going to become very important as we unfold and unpack all of this. But before I go on with Melchizedek, let's just step back and let me summarize these two talks that are on tape. The first talk is "The Fourth Cup." What I did in that talk I will just summarize rapidly. I was investigating one of the last

sayings of Jesus on the cross when He says, "It is finished." I had a professor and a pastor friend of mine ask the question from the pulpit, "What was Jesus talking about when he said, 'It is finished?'" My first response was, "Well, it's the work of redemption." Then he said from the pulpit, "You might be tempted to say, 'the work of redemption.'" Well, I just did, you know. And he said, "Well, actually, if you're going to do careful exegesis and interpret the passage in context, there's no suggestion of that big theological doctrine, there in the context of that passage. So you have to ask yourself, 'What is the primary meaning of the text in context. What is the "it" that is finished.' And besides we can't just summarize and say, 'Well, redemption is completely finished,' because Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead yet. And St. Paul tells us that He was raised for our justification. So redemption still has to unfold some more."

"It is finished," boy, that bothered me. I remember going out and really resolving to do some work. So I did. I went back and I went, I think five or six chapters backwards in John and I started reading the Synoptic Gospels and I believe I found a connection with the Passover, and I'll share it with you. Luke 22, verse 15, our Lord says, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you." So we are assured that the Last Supper in the Upper Room was a Passover meal. In Mark 14, verses 22 through 26, we hear the words of institution, "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 drank all of it and He said to them, 'This is my blood of the New 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 I thought, "Huh, I never noticed those words before, 'I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'" Elsewhere you have the same idea expressed in the gospels where Jesus says, "I won't drink of the fruit of the vine until," you know, I'm being glorified. And I thought, "Well, wait a second, what he said, when he said, 'It is finished,' he had just taken some sour wine." I wanted to work on that connection a little more. And then I noticed the next phrase, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the night." They went to the Mount of Olives, in fact.

Now something disturbed me because I had been studying the ancient Jewish Passover liturgy for some time and I knew the four cups of the Passover liturgy represent essentially the basic liturgical structure of this meal. The first cup is called the kadush. It's the blessing that is pronounced over the first cup. The second one actually initiates the Passover liturgy in a technical way. The second cup of wine is drunk after you do the singing of Psalm 113, which is known as the Little Hallel Psalm and then the third cup, which is called the cup of blessing is drunk after grace is given. This is also done in conjunction with the prayer that is spoken over the bread. But what is so significant about this is that after the third cup but before the fourth and final cup, the Hallel Psalms are sung. It's one great hallelujah Psalm. We get the word hallelujah from hallel which means praise yah, yahweh, hallel-u-yah. And the Hallel Psalms 114 through 118 constitute a gorgeous and majestic Psalm of praise to Yahweh.

As soon as the third cup is drunk, you go ahead and sing that Psalm of the Hallel Psalms and then you proceed to the fourth cup of consummation, which is the climax of the Passover. What's so odd and what many scholars have noticed is that Jesus — it says, "They sang a hymn, which is obvious, the Hallel Psalm, there's really no disputing that point. You know Jews who read this expect them to go on to drink the fourth cup. But it says, "They went out into the night." And right after they drank that third cup and right before they sang that Psalm, the Hallel Psalms, Jesus said, "I'm not going to drink of the fruit of the vine again until the kingdom is come."

Now there are actually some scholars who suggest that Jesus botched it. Maybe He was just so anxious. But to botch the liturgy at this point would be a disaster. It would be like a priest saying High Mass alongside the Pope and forgetting to say the words of consecration. Sure, Jesus is anxious but the disciples

would have stopped Him. There would have been something else, I think. Well, somebody could still say, "Well, you know, maybe He was just too fearful."

Well, I would suggest otherwise, and if we go on a little bit further in the Gospel of Mark, I think we have a good reason to believe that Jesus did this deliberately. He interrupted the Passover liturgy right at its climactic moment. For what purpose? Well, in Mark 14, verse 32, it goes on to read, "And they went to a place which was called Gethsemani and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took with Him Peter, James and John and went up a little farther. Greatly distressed and troubled, He said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even unto death. Remain here and watch.' And going a little further He fell on the ground and He prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him. And what does He say? He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee.' (Remove this cup.) "Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what thou wilt."

What cup? I thought He was scared about dying. Why does he refer to his suffering and death as a "cup"? Hmm. Careful Jewish/Christian readers would see a connection. Why hasn't He partaken of the fourth cup? Why did He interrupt the holiest moment of the liturgy? Why does He go out into the night after the Hallel Psalms are sung? Why does He fall down on the ground and then ask the Lord to 'take this cup' away. Well, somebody could say it's a reference to some prophecy Psalm of Isaiah and Jeremiah regarding the cup of suffering, and I think that it does have a secondary reference to those. But if we are following closely the deliberate motions of our Lord, I think it's very plausible to draw a connection between the interrupted Passover liturgy and this anguished prayer of our Lord in the Garden.

Now you know how it goes on from here. He's arrested. He's beaten. He's mocked. He's tried and then He's convicted and sent out to Calvary. Remember when He was carrying his cross what happened? Mark 15, verse 23 says, "On the way up Calvary they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh," which is like an opiate, a great and powerful pain killer; but He didn't take it. After all He said, I won't drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom comes." And it hasn't come at that point, right?

Then, all of a sudden, we go on and we discover something I think very, very significant. In John 19 we're told that Jesus seeing that all was now finished, He said in order to fulfill the scripture, "I thirst." Now He's racked with pain. It's an agonizing death but He still has presence of mind. In order to fulfill the scripture, He says, "I thirst." Now do you think that man was not thirsty before now? Seconds before His death, is He just noticing, "Boy, I could use a drink?" No, I mean that would be to trivialize the matter. Jesus says in order to fulfill the scripture, "I thirst." John is depicting all this in very beautiful terms.

John (the Baptist) is the one who introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God in the first chapter, and now Jesus has become the High Priest, the sacrifice as well as the victim-sacrifice. How do we know? Well, for one thing, John records how Jesus had a linen garment that was without seam. A seamless linen garment is exactly what the priest was supposed to wear as he sacrificed the Passover lamb. And we also know that the hour of sacrifice was the hour when the Passover lamb was slain. We also read on in John 19 and we discover that the two thieves had their legs broken, but Jesus didn't because he had already died, thus to fulfill the scripture, "not a bone shall be broken." And if you trace it all the way back to the Old Testament origin of this, "not a bone of his shall be broken," you go through the Psalms back to Exodus and you discover that the Passover lamb's bones were not allowed to be broken. If your lamb had a broken bone, you had to chuck it and find another one.

Priest and victim and it's all according to a divine plan. And so Jesus says in order to fulfill the scripture, "I thirst." And just by coincidence, there's a little sour wine down there, a vinegar-like substance and a man takes a hyssop branch, which incidentally and coincidentally was what you use to sprinkle the lamb's blood over the door post, he takes a hyssop branch with a sponge at the end with the sour wine dipped in it and

he lifts it up to Christ and Christ says, "No, I'm not going to drink of the fruit of the vine?" No, he doesn't say that. This time He receives it and He says, "It is finished."

What is it? The Passover begun in the Upper Room. It is now consummated. The fourth cup, the cup of God's wrath, the cup of consummation wasn't drunk in the Upper Room. The reason why Jesus does this, I believe, is to show us that the Passover sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the firstborn son and the priest begins not at the foot of Calvary but in the Upper Room when the Old Testament Passover begins to be transformed by our Lord into the New Covenant Eucharist.

You could also say it this way: that if the Passover isn't finished until Calvary, I would suggest that Calvary is really begun in the Upper Room with the Eucharist. When does Jesus' sacrifice really begin? Well, He insists on the fact that His life is not being taken away from Him. He is laying it down. Now in the trial, in the passion, it's being taken away; but in the Upper Room, prior to all of that, Jesus lays it down. He says, "This is my body. This cup is the blood of the New Covenant."

What happens when you differentiate and separate body and blood? You signify death. When your body and your blood are separated, death begins. That's obvious, I think. So Jesus is symbolically and actually beginning the sacrifice. St. Augustine has said that Our Lord held himself in his own hands and commenced the sacrifice of the New Covenant Passover as He was transforming the old. Calvary really began in the Old Testament Passover being celebrated in the Upper Room, when the Eucharist was instituted and the Passover Eucharist of the New Covenant really isn't over until Calvary, when He says, "It is finished."

But wait a second. You've got to say one more thing because way back in Egypt, fifteen hundred years before, if you had slain a lamb and sprinkled the blood according to Moses' command and say to yourself, "Well, thereby my firstborn son will be saved," and you went to bed, you'd be wrong, dead wrong.

You'd wake up and he'd be dead. Why? Because one other thing had to take place. You didn't just have to take a lamb without blemish without broken bones, then sacrifice him and sprinkle his blood. You had to eat the lamb. You HAD to eat the lamb. I mean, even if you hate mutton, you had to eat the lamb.

So, in a sense, "It is finished," what is the "it?" The bloody death sacrifice. But is that all sacrifice is? Sometimes non-Catholics find it easy to think that way until they go back into the Old Testament, and as I went back into the Old Testament, it dawned on me that that's really only the first half of the sacrifice. And it really isn't even the goal or the end of the sacrifice. The second half of the sacrifice is really what it's all about. God doesn't just want dead bodies with drained blood. He wants peace and He wants love. He wants to restore communion.

How is that symbolically enacted in the Old Testament? By eating the victim in a sacrificial meal, because that is what restores family communion and that's what the covenant is all about. So Jesus says, "It is finished." What is the "it?" The bloody death sacrifice of the Passover victim and the priest of the New Covenant. And so, as Catholics we have always said that He does not die again. He does not continue to suffer. He does not continue to bleed. "It" is finished. That whole dimension of sacrifice is finished. What began in the Upper Room is now finished on the cross and so He gives up his breath and He dies. He gives up his spirit and He dies. But the sacrifice of Passover is not complete until you eat the lamb.

No wonder St. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 5, "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us." Therefore, what? Therefore we don't have any more sacrificial offerings or ceremonies or feasts and so on to celebrate because all those ceremonies are outdated and done with? No. He says, "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed; therefore, let us keep the feast." And he goes on to talk about how we take out the

leaven of insincerity and we have this unleavened bread. What's he talking about? Christ, our Passover has been sacrificed; therefore, we've got to achieve the whole goal of that sacrifice, the second half is communion where we eat the lamb.

Now you can't eat a lamb cookie in Egypt. If you didn't like lamb, you couldn't have your wife make lamb bread, little biscuits in the shape of a lamb and say, "God, you understand, we just can't stand the stuff." No, you do that, your firstborn would die. You had to eat the lamb. Jesus Christ has said to us, "My flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life."

Let's turn to John 6 and see the context in which he says that. John 6, verse 4 tells us, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand." So everything that transpires within John 6 is within the context of the Passover. Jesus is talking to them now. At the time of the Passover, after multiplying these loaves, ending up filling twelve baskets with the fragments from the five barley loaves, He uses that as his point of departure for one of the most important sermons that He ever preaches and also one of the most disastrous from a human perspective.

He goes on talking about this bread and He goes on talking about Moses in context with that bread. For instance, in verse 32, "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, for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.'" Welfare state! "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 not thirst.'" And He goes on talking about this some more. The Jews would then murmur at him in verse 41 because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

They're thinking, "What is He talking about? This guy is Joseph's son. How does He say, 'I've come down from heaven?'" They only look at it from a human perspective. They don't see that He's the divine Son of God. Verse 47, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

How often did they eat the manna? Every day. How often do we receive the Bread of Life? Every day. This is not a once for all sacrifice, like many anti-Catholics allege in the sense that Christ is sacrificed and now there's nothing more to be done. Jesus Christ is sacrificed as priest and as victim, as lamb and as firstborn son and as the Bread of Life, he gives himself to us as well as the unleavened bread of the Passover meal, which commenced, of course, the whole feast of unleavened bread the week after the Passover celebration. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life, the unleavened bread of God which came down from heaven which the Israelites received every day, the manna of the New Covenant.

Christ through the Holy Spirit makes himself available as the Lamb of God to be consumed continuously. That's the whole point of the Resurrection, incidentally. The Holy Spirit raises up that body and glorifies it so supernaturally that body and blood which is glorified may be internationally distributed through the elders and priests of the Church so that all of God's children can be bound back to the Father in the New Covenant sacrifice of Christ. He didn't die again. He's not bleeding and he's not suffering. He's reigning in glory and giving us his own flesh and blood.

Where do you get that? From the Old Testament — the manna, the Passover, the sacrifice as it's described on Calvary as it's initiated in the Upper Room and as he states right here in verse 51. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." Jews stop, wait a second. Hold the phone. "John, what do you mean 'my flesh?'" Verse 52, "The Jews then

disputed among themselves saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" Cannibalism, paganism, barbarism, sin in the highest degree.

So Jesus said to them, "I didn't mean it, guys. I was just kind of, you know, using hyperbole or metaphor." No. He actually intensifies the scandal. He actually raises the obstacle even higher. "He said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood,' which Leviticus condemns, the drinking of blood, 'unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.'"

He said that four times in four different ways. How else can you get a point across? As a non-Catholic preacher, I used to enjoy preaching from John 3 where Jesus says, "You must be born again," or born anew, born from above. But he only says that one time. And we've heard it a million times in the last century. Because all the non-Catholic evangelists stress that rightly. We need to be reborn from the Holy Spirit, but Jesus said it once. Here he says four times, "You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood. My flesh is food indeed. My blood is drink indeed."

Four times. It bothered me that I had never preached a sermon on this before, nor heard one. After years and years and years of hearing sermons from the New Testament, I began to figure out why. Because Jesus made it so clear. He is the manna. He is the sacrifice. He is the priest. He is the victim. He is the firstborn son. He is the lamb. He is all of it wrapped up in one and then He says so scandalously, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood," knowing what offense they would take. But He doesn't back off. In verse 60, "Many of His disciples when they heard it said, 'This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?'" That is an understatement. "Jesus, however, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at it," get it, the disciples, now, the followers, the spiritual protégés, not just the crowd now, the disciples themselves are taking offense at this and murmuring and grumbling! "And He said to them, 'Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the son of man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.'"

Well, some people try to use that verse to nullify everything which is so patently obvious in the preceding verses. I used to as well until I tried to deal as honestly and prayerfully as possible with that passage. I'm talking about verse 63. If the disciples had just proceeded to take the flesh off the body of Christ right there and drink His blood, they would have done nothing supernaturally beneficial. Jesus is saying, "It's the Spirit that gives life," and so wait until the Spirit is given. When I breath my spirit upon the Cross. When the Spirit comes down at Pentecost, but especially when the spirit of Christ raises the body of Christ from the dead, it will be the Holy Spirit that makes Christ's flesh and blood holy, glorious and powerful as food for our souls and bodies. Not just the flesh alone.

"And the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." What words? That you've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood, those words. So we can't just say, "Well, the words themselves are all we need;" because if the words alone are all we take, we're disobeying the words themselves. Did you catch that? I used to always say to these Catholics in Bible studies, "Look at verse 63. It's the words of Christ that give life." The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. That's right, but what are those words? If you just simply take the words without the Eucharist, you're disobeying the words because the words say, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." And it's because of the Holy Spirit that we receive life in that flesh and now it all comes together. There's no either/or; there's a both/and.

In 63 we discover why Christ's flesh and blood will be so powerful and animating for supernatural life. Verse 66, "After this, many of His disciples drew back...." We get the impression that the vast majority of

them said, "This is just too much." "...and no longer went about with him. And Jesus turned to the twelve;" he didn't apologize. He didn't say, "Now that we're down to twelve, I'll tell you what I really meant." He didn't say that at all. In fact he is perfectly willing for this obstacle to remain scandalous even to the twelve. "Do you also wish to go away. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?'" Almost implying we would leave if there was somebody else that we could trust more than you because what you said is rather baffling. But he says, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Peter speaks of the truth for those true disciples because there was one disciple who didn't have the integrity to leave. Next verse, the devil came to Judas because Judas, unlike the honest disciples who left, refused to leave although he disbelieved. This is where Judas really becomes the son of perdition. In a sense you've got to give more credit to the disciples who walked away.

So we have reason to believe that this sacrifice of the New Covenant Passover begun in the Upper Room and consummated on Calvary and ultimately as 1st Corinthians 5 suggests continued and celebrated as a climactic communion on the altars of the Church around the world when we receive the Eucharist in Communion, all of this is right from the Bible but you've got to know your Bible. You've got to know John. You've got to know Matthew, Mark and Luke. You've got to know Exodus. You've got to know the Psalms. You've got to know Corinthians and you also have to know Revelation.

Summary of the Lamb's Supper

Take a look at Revelation 5. In Revelation 5, there is a scroll with seven seals that nobody can break open and everybody is really upset. In fact John almost begins to cry. In 5, verse 2, "A strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven and on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it." What is the scroll? The word is biblion. Most likely it's a reference to a covenant document, the New Covenant document that nobody is worthy to break open. "And I wept much, but no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it," because this scroll would consummate and fulfill the promises of the Old Testament.

"Then one of the elders said to me, 'Weep not. Lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, he has conquered so that he can open the scroll and seven seals.'" You could almost feel the hallelujah rising up from within your soul. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, growl for me, King, you know. You turn. You look and John turns to look and what does he see in verse 6, "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw," what? Azlam, the lion? No. David crowned with glory? No. You'd think so, a lion and a king are the words used to describe it. "I turned and I saw a lamb standing, looking as though it had been slain."

Jesus Christ is the son of David and the king of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and He is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, as it said elsewhere in Revelation. But here in heaven on the throne of glory, after His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, His enthronement, He still looks like a lamb. He still looks as though He had been slain. Why not clean up the body? Why not wipe away the wounds? Why continue resembling a lamb? Because He's continuing the Passover offerings, the sacrifice. Not by dying, not by bleeding and not by suffering but by continuing to offer up Himself as the firstborn and as the unblemished lamb, as the perpetual, timeless, everlasting sacrifice of praise to the Father.

And what do the people do? They rejoice and they break out into a song. And what is the song, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals for thou was slain." Past tense, "And by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." And what has he done? He's

become a priest to be sure, but for what purpose? "He has made them a kingdom and priest to our God." He has made those whom he has saved priests. And what do priests do? They offer sacrifice.

Has Christ's sacrifice ended all sacrifices? No. Christ's sacrifice has ended all ineffective, bloody animal sacrifices that never did anything anyway. Now for the first time in history we can really begin to offer sacrifice to God. Romans 12 says, "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." And it wouldn't be holy and acceptable except that it's united to Christ's perpetual sacrifice. He's not bleeding. He's not dying. He's not suffering, but he is offering a sacrifice as a lamb does, as a priest king does continually, forever.

And that's what it's all about. John wouldn't see a lamb looking as though it had been slain if the whole kit and caboodle was completed and done. Past tense. Yeah, it's completed and done, past tense, and it's still going on present tense, and it's going to go on forever in the future. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, as Hebrews tells us.

Now, is this strange? Is this teaching novel? Well, let's take a look at 1st Corinthians and see how natural it seems to the apostle Paul. We have already looked at 1st Corinthians 5, "Christ, our Passover," that's in verse 7, "Christ, our Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." What's he talking about? Is he talking about leaven being like sin. No. He's saying let us celebrate the feast with unleavened bread. What feast? The Eucharist! The sacrifice continues because communion must be celebrated. We've got to eat the lamb, the resurrected, glorified, enthroned lamb that still looks as though he'd been slain because he's still giving himself to us.

Turn over with me now to Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 13. He says, "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings in the same way the Lord commanded. That those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." Now we might be tempted to read Corinthians 9, 13 and 14 and say, "Well, back in the Old Testament they did temple service and altar service and sacrifice, but now in the New Testament they only proclaim the word."

The problem with that is that Paul goes on to say, Corinthians 11, as we will see, how Christ's death is proclaimed. Take a look with me at 1st Corinthians, 11:23-26. "For I received from the Lord what I shall deliver to you." Interesting, he received it not from Peter and the apostles. When Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus or perhaps at some other time, what did Jesus deliver to Paul? Instructions for the Eucharist. "I received from the Lord what I also deliver to you. That the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, 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.' In the same way also the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in my blood. Do this.' Commandment, imperative tense. "As often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

You proclaim the gospel. Let's go back then to Corinthians 9, verse 14, "In the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." How does Paul proclaim the gospel? Just by preaching? Or by celebrating the Eucharist? "As often as you do this, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." That's the gospel. Paul is talking in verses 13 and 14 about how he should be supported as an apostle and he does so in conjunction with temple service at an altar where there is sacrificial offerings which he as an apostle has the right to receive from. What's he talking about? A New Covenant temple? A New Covenant altar? A New Covenant sacrifice where he proclaims the gospel by celebrating the Eucharist.

Now let's go on to Corinthians 10 and get things straight really quickly here because Corinthians 10, gives us a proper warning. In the first ten verses of Corinthians 10, Paul says that back in the Old Testament with Moses, verse 3, "They all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink." The water from the rock and the manna in the wilderness and both, Paul says in a sense, were signs of Christ's presence among them. Nevertheless, verse 5, "with most of them God was not pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

In the next three verses he describes the Golden Calf incident where thousands of them died. In other words just because you receive supernatural food and drink doesn't mean you've got it made in the shade. You have to set things right with God and keep things right with the Lord. Verse 11, "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages has come." We now have a greater and much more supernatural food and drink. So we can relax? No. We've got to be even more circumspect in searching out our hearts and making sure we are right with God.

He goes on in verse 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a coenia, a communion, a participation in the blood of Christ?" Not a symbol. But a share, a communion. The bread which we break, is it not a coenia, a communion in the body of Christ. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread." He doesn't mean to say that there's one enormous loaf that we all take a piece from. There are many loaves of bread. There are many breads in that earthly sense, but there's only one bread in the heavenly sense, and that's Christ. Because we receive from one bread Christ, the Bread of Life, we who are many become one body, namely, the Body of Christ. He's suggesting that we become what we eat.

He goes on to contrast our sacrifice with other sacrifices and he says, verse 18, "Consider the people of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?" What he is saying is back then when you eat the sacrifice, you have a communion in the altar of those animals. Now we have a communion on all of our altars in the New Covenant with Christ, the Lamb of God. Verse 21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord with jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" For some reason God takes this with the utmost seriousness. Why?

Corinthians 11, he spells it out even clearer. We've already read verses 23 through 26. Now we can conclude with verse 27 where he says, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and the Blood of the Lord." Now that language is actually like civil judicial language. Somebody who's practically guilty of murder or capital offense is guilty of the body and blood. Now if it's only a symbol, he might be guilty in some lesser sense, but when you profane the Lord's Supper, you actually become guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord. "Let a man examine himself, therefore, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning," — the symbolism? No. "...the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself."

Now is he just speaking metaphorically? He couldn't be because in the next verse he says, "That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died." To receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin is playing with fire of the worst sort. He goes on in chapter 12, verse 12, "For just as the body is one," the Church, that is, "...and has many members and all the members of the body though many are one body, so it is with Christ for by one Spirit we were all baptized in the one body." When we received the water of Baptism, we received the Spirit of God. "And all were made to drink of the one Spirit." When we receive Eucharist, Communion, we receive the Spirit as well as the flesh and the blood and the body, soul, humanity and divinity of Christ.

This is significant, very significant. This, in fact, gives us the whole interpretive key to the Book of Revelation. We can't go into it this morning. I go into it in the Lamb's Supper tape, but the fact is many non-Catholic, as well as Catholic scholars have noticed that the whole structure of Revelation is a big Passover liturgy where Christ, the Priest King, the firstborn Son and the Lamb looking as though it's been slain conducts and celebrates the heavenly liturgy. And the earthly liturgy is meant to be a reflection in that, a participation in that, and the early Church took it for granted. There is the Lamb looking as though it's been slain and making all of the people in heaven priests so they can assist in the offering of the firstborn son of God to the Father and join themselves with it.

The Meal of Melchizedek

But now I'd like to call your attention to our final phase and that is the Book of Hebrews. Turn with me now to the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews, chapter 6 describes how God had made a promise to Abraham and then he changed the promise to an oath. In this morning's Mass we had a reading from Ezekial where we saw that oath and covenant are practically interchangeable terms. When God swears an oath to Abraham, he makes a covenant. In Genesis 22:18, right after Abraham went to Moriah to sacrifice his firstborn through Sarah, God prevented it and then swore an oath saying, "Surely all the nations of the earth will be blessed through your seed."

The New Testament begins, "This is Jesus Christ, the seed of the son of Abraham, the Son of David." Jesus Christ is the one in and through whom God fulfills that oath he swore to Abraham. Where did he swear it? On Moriah, where the temple was later built and where Christ, the New Temple was later destroyed and rebuilt three days afterwards. It talks about this oath and then it goes on to talk about the priesthood of Melchizedek. In chapter 7, the first ten verses, it describes how Abraham met Melchizedek. It talks about the meaning of his name. He's the king of righteousness, that's what Melchizedek means in Hebrew. He is the King of Salem, which means peace, shalom. He is the priest of God Most High and he blessed Abraham, so he was superior to Abraham. Everything is mentioned about the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek except one thing, the bread and the wine.

Now we are going to ask a question. Is that because the bread and the wine was the only thing that was unimportant about Melchizedek and Abraham meeting, or is it because the importance of the bread and the wine is so great but so obvious that it goes without saying? Let's study the next few chapters, just briefly look at those and see whether or not you think that the writer understands Melchizedek's priesthood in relationship to the bread and the wine that he gave Abraham. I think it is. I think it's significant.

For one thing we already saw back in Hebrews 5, verses 5 and 6 where God has sworn an oath to Jesus Christ. He says, "Thou art my Son. Today have I begotten thee." And he also says in another place, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." To be God's Son is like the same thing as being a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Remember way back in the Old Testament before the Golden Calf, fathers were high priests and firstborn sons were priests under their authority. This seemed to be the natural family pattern of Melchizedek. This is how the ancient Jews as well as the ancient Church Fathers understood it.

Jesus Christ is not a Levite so Old Testament Jews might be tempted to say, "Well, he can't be a priest, then." But Hebrews is talking all about the wilderness generation under Moses and how they committed idolatry and rebelled against God and how God sent all these punishments. The first rebellion was the Golden Calf, and the first punishment was to take the priesthood away from the firstborn, which had been theirs for centuries, and to give it to the Levites temporarily. What the writer of Hebrews is suggesting is that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is righteous enough to restore the original pattern of the father-son family

priesthood, because this is a divine family that God, through Christ, is adopting us into through the sacrifice of Christ.

He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The word "order" does not mean order like the Dominican Order. It means after the manner of Melchizedek's priesthood. The writer goes on to make a big, sharp contrast between the Levitical priests who continue to offer these animals in sacrifice. They had to offer. They had to kill. They had to sacrifice millions of sheep, millions of goats and millions of cattle with millions of gallons of blood running down through the temple. Why? It was all after and because of the Golden Calf, whereas before all of that, you had a father and a son and a clean priesthood that Melchizedek represents. "After the manner of Melchizedek" suggests that Melchizedek's manner of priestly sacrifice was bread and wine. This is how all the early Fathers understood this, as well.

Now, it says in Hebrews 7 in verse 18, "On the one hand a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God." And it was not without an oath and it talks about how God swore this oath, and the oath that has been talked about is the oath that was sworn by God on Moriah where Christ was slain. Verse 22: This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; whereas Jesus is one. There's the single priesthood, and he lives forever up in heaven. But he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues a priest forever. Consequently, he is able for all times to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

"For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily." In other words to kill and to have blood shed continuously. "...first for his own sins and then for those of the people. He did this once for all when he offered up himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests." That is the Levitical law that was given after the Golden Calf, "...but the word of the oath which came later than the law appoints a son who has been made perfect forever."

Now there's a lot here I realize we can't cover, and it's very deep; but there's going to be enough here to really feed our souls if we pay close attention. Now the point in what we are saying is this. We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. Notice that the Lamb is the one enthroned in Revelation. The Lamb and the firstborn Son of the Passover is the priest who ministers in a sanctuary, the heavenly sanctuary. He is a minister in a sanctuary. It isn't complete. He is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary and the true tabernacle which is set up not by man but by the Lord. "For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Hence it is necessary for this priest to have something to offer."

I read that a hundred times before the obvious meaning hit me like a brick in the face. He is a priest in heaven ministering now in the sanctuary and he's got something to offer and he's continually offering it. He's just not bleeding and dying and suffering any more. He's not killing any more animals, but he's continually offering the once and for all sacrifice which is himself; but it's a continual sacrifice. It's a perpetual offering. He's not dying, but he's still offering. That's exactly what the Catholic Church teaches about the Mass.

I didn't understand that. Then I read some basic catechisms and I understood it, but I still didn't believe it until I studied and restudied and prayerfully re-restudied Hebrews until I saw that Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son, which is the theme in the Book of Hebrews. He's a much greater priest than the Levites. They replaced the sinful firstborn sons until the true and righteous firstborn Son of God would come.

Before we had an Old Covenant family on earth. Now we've got a New Covenant family in heaven, our divine family. The Trinity's life is our family life and it comes to us through God's firstborn Son who was like Melchizedek in being a son-priest. But the bread and the wine that Christ offers is not earthly bread and wine but heavenly bread, heavenly wine in the sense that it's the body and blood of Christ. He is still to this day and forever a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle is now in heaven which the Lord has set up. And every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices and that is why God appointed his own Son to be High Priest, to offer gifts and sacrifices. And what are they? To offer himself and all of us in union with him.

The sacrifice isn't over. Oh, baby, it's just begun! And we're going to be doing it forever in and through and with Christ. Not bloody animal sacrifices but our hearts and our souls and our bodies in union with the One whose body and blood, soul and divinity are perfect and pure — the only acceptable sacrifice which makes our otherwise unacceptable sacrifices perfectly acceptable. "Holy and righteous," Paul says. He goes on talking about the superiority of the New Covenant that Christ established. Now that phrase, "New Covenant," is kind of an odd phrase. And this really is unfortunate because we've heard the phrase New Covenant hundreds and thousands of times. So we are insulated, almost like filters have been planted in our ears so we don't hear the significance, the spectacular meaning of the phrase New Covenant. Why? Because it's only said once in the entire Old Testament, Jeremiah 31, which is what the writer of Hebrews in the rest of chapter 8 quotes from, a huge, extended quote from Jeremiah 31. "The days will come says the Lord when I will establish a New Covenant with the House of Israel." Verse 9, "Not like the covenant I made with your fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. That covenant, they broke." When? At the Golden Calf. The covenant that he made with them out of Egypt they broke at the Golden Calf.

This New Covenant will not be like the Golden Calf in the Mosaic covenant which was broken because they were the firstborn sons who were supposed to be serving as priests and were. See for instance in Exodus 24, but in Exodus 32 they all lost it and the Levites got it because the Levites had swords by which they slew three thousand of the idolaters, presumably many firstborn priests were among the victims.

It won't be like that covenant because this firstborn Son won't break it, and that's what makes it new. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people." Verse 13, and in speaking of the New Covenant he treats the first as obsolete and what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Old Testament only uses "New Covenant" one time. Jesus in the gospels only uses the phrase "New Covenant" one time. When? At Passover time. Where? In the Upper Room. Why? To institute the Eucharist.

Now, do you see a connection? In other words, the writer of Hebrews has focused upon the key phrase, "New Covenant." He's made a mountain out of a molehill, if you're judging by numerical usage: one time in the Old Testament. Not how many, it's how significant it is. Jesus only used the phrase, "New Covenant" one time, when he transformed the Old Testament covenant of Moses, the Passover Covenant by offering himself as the unblemished Lamb and the firstborn Son and the Priest and the King and the Victim and all of it wrapped up in one. That is the New Covenant.

And so he goes on in Hebrews 9 to talk about the superiority. Back in the Old Testament, verse 9, we read, "According to this Old Testament arrangement, gifts and sacrifices were offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper. What is the contrast implied? Back then sacrifices were offered which couldn't perfect the worshipper's conscience, implying that in the New Covenant, what? Sacrifices are offered which do perfect the conscience of the worshipper.

That's what the Eucharist does. It cleanses our soul. It wipes away all venial sin. These Old Testament sacrifices, verse 10, deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, baptisms, in the Greek, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. Do you know when the real Reformation came? Not in 1517. The real reformation came in the Upper Room when the Eucharist was instituted, when the Catholic Church was formed. The time of reformation wiped away the weak ineffective Old Testament sacrifices. To do away with all sacrifices altogether? No. To initiate a new sacrifice which has intrinsic power to cleanse our consciences.

Verse 11, now, "The one Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things that have come. Then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with human hands, that is not of this creation, he entered once and for all into the holy place, that is heaven, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption." He took his own blood up there. He's not bleeding in the sense that he's suffering and dying, but he's up there as a Lamb looking as though he's been slain, offering his own blood. That's a Eucharistic Passover sacrifice and that's why the entire structure of Revelation is a Passover liturgy.

And it goes on to talk about the Old Testament's weakness in comparison with the New Testament's power. "For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls or with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify your conscience?" The body was cleansed externally in the Old Testament sacrifices, but with Christ's Passover sacrifice which he continues to administer up in the heavenly sanctuary, our consciences are cleansed as we offer and receive that down here below on earth.

"Therefore," verse 15 says, "he is the mediator of a New Covenant." He only said that word covenant one time. "This cup is the blood of the New Covenant," when he instituted the Eucharist. That fulfilled Jeremiah 31. That's when he offered what appeared to be bread and wine. That's when he became a new Melchizedek, feeding the new children of Abraham so that through Abraham's seed, Jesus, all the nations of the world, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Something which God had sworn but had not performed until Christ, the son of Abraham, was sacrificed on Moriah on the peak called Calvary.

And he began it in the Upper Room when he instituted the Eucharist which goes on and on and on here on earth and in heaven above forever and ever. He is the mediator of this new, everlasting covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance which goes back to the promise that God gave to Abraham. Verse 24, "For Christ has entered not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf to offer himself repeatedly as the High Priest enters the holy place yielding with blood not his own. He offers Himself repeatedly not like the Old Testament priest who took in blood that wasn't his own. He offers Himself repeatedly with His own blood without any death and suffering, an unbloody sacrifice, but one that belongs and pertains to the Lamb of God. For then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world, but as it is, He appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

So what do we conclude from this? He's abolished the Old Testament and he's established the New Testament. We have a sacrifice in heaven that is perpetual and effectual. Turn with me now to Hebrews 10 and here is where we will draw our conclusions. Verse 19, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus..." It's because of that Eucharist and because of Christ the High Priest offering Himself that I've got confidence to draw near to the presence of God. That's how John could do it. That's why the scroll's seals could be broken open.

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living language He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, His flesh and blood. When were they offered? His body and blood were offered when He instituted the New Covenant in the Upper Room. "And since we have a great High Priest over the family of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean, a reference to Baptism, from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to stir up one another in love and good works." Amen! Let's do it.

If Jesus Christ who is our master creator gave Himself up for us, we have got to learn how to treat other people as though they are more important than we are. Let's figure out new ways to stir each other up to love and good works. The Bible study that starts this fall — get involved in it and encourage others to feed upon the Bread of Life, the holy Word of God. Think of other ways, too, that you can serve and love in this community to show people we really are the Body of Christ. Let's stir each other up, but not provoking anger, but provoking love and good works. Not neglecting to meet together as has become the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day draw near.

Verse 26 is often misunderstood, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but only a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." What's he mean? Does he mean in some generic sense that if you guys deliberately sin, there's no longer a sacrifice for you? You're dead. You're going to be burned alive. If we interpret it in the general sense, I'm afraid that's what it means. But let's not interpret it out of context. What is the sin he's deliberately referring to? Well, what's the preceding verse? "Don't neglect to meet together as has become the habit of some."

The Lord's day, from the earliest times, was the regular meeting for the people of God. Even the Romans tell us that early on Sunday morning they would get together. They would sing hymns worshipping Christ as God. And then we are told that they would take an oath. The Latin word is sacramentum. They would take an oath sacrament and swear not to sin. All right. What does it mean? It means if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth — what truth? — the truth of Christ's sacrifice which is represented in the Eucharist on Sunday.

People who don't meet together on the Lord's day are repudiating the only sacrifice that will work for their sins. The sinning deliberately refers to deliberately sinning by not going to Mass. We don't know anybody who has committed that sin, do we? All American Catholics go to Mass every week. It hasn't become the habit of some Catholics not to go to the Eucharist, has it? God help us if we don't attend weekly liturgy as has become the habit of some. We're sinning against the most beautiful laws that God has delivered to humanity, that there is a once and for all powerful sacrifice, God be praised! And we renew that sacrifice every time we draw near to the Eucharistic banquet.

It goes on, verse 29, "How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the men who spurn the Son of God?" Notice, "They profane the blood of the covenant." Now that phrase is only used by Jesus once when he instituted the Eucharist of the New Covenant. "This cup is the blood of the New Covenant." And you profane the blood of the covenant when you neglect the Eucharist, when you miss Mass, when you say, "It's not that important. I've got better things to do."

We've got to go there. We've got to be there, but we've got to prepare to be there and we've got to be there with hearts and minds, with soul and body. We've got to be there with the help of the Holy Spirit. We've got to offer up ourselves in union with Christ because we are members of his mystical body and that body is what's being sacrificed continually. If we don't, we profane the blood of the covenant by which we've been sanctified and outrage the Spirit of grace, but if we do, what will happen?

Turn with me to Hebrews 13, verse 9, "Don't be led away by diverse and strange teachings for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not merely by foods, like the Old Testament elders which have not benefited their adherence." Verse 10, "We have an altar." If there's no sacrifice, there's no need for an altar. We have an altar; therefore, we have a sacrifice, Christ Himself. "We have an altar from which those who serve the sanctuary," the tent, the Old Testament priests — " have no right to eat for the bodies of those animals, those whose blood is brought in the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp." It goes on to talk about how Jesus left the camp and suffered.

So we should, too. Verse 14, "For here we have no lasting city." The earthly Jerusalem is not our city, the heavenly Jerusalem is. And it goes on. "Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God." We still sacrifice; "that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name." "Now may the God of peace," verse 20, "who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight." It is the blood of the covenant that we receive in the Eucharist with souls made right with God by which we are enabled to do His will, by which God works in us that which is pleasing in His sight.

Conclusion

The meal of Melchizedek is the bread and the wine, but it's so much more. We go beyond the appearances of bread and wine to the reality of the Son of God and His body and His blood and the soul and divinity. By that one sacrifice we've got confidence. By that one sacrifice we've got forgiveness and by that one sacrifice we've got power to do the will of God.

Let's ask the Lord to renew for us our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Eucharist. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Father in heaven, we ask that you would renew that devotion, increase our understanding, magnify our zeal and give to us, O Lord, a spirit of constancy so that we will not neglect the Mass, the sacrifice of the New Covenant. We will not outrage the spirit of grace nor profane the blood of the covenant. We will appreciate and correspond to and cooperate with all that you have done and given to us to grow up as your sons and daughters. Your New Covenant family, O Lord, is the most treasured possession in the cosmos and we cling fast to it now and ask that you would hold fast to us and never let us go and hear us as we pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thank you very much.

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