



**Contributed by Father Tim Uniac, C.R.**

Father Tim was ordained in 1986. Over the years Father Tim has served in parish ministry as both Assistant Pastor and Pastor. For a number of years, he worked full time in youth ministry. He has served his Religious Community as Vocation Director and as Vicar Provincial. He also served his Community internationally as the Vicar General, residing in Rome for six years. Currently he serves as the Provincial Superior of the Ontario-Kentucky Province of the Congregation of the Resurrection.

**BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST**  
**June 6, 2021**

**GATHERING TIME** *(10-15 Minutes)*

**Introduction to the Word:**

COVID-19 has not only changed the way religious rituals are celebrated, but it has also impacted how our families celebrate family rituals. The ability for families to gather in large numbers to celebrate important milestones in their lives has been severely limited. What I miss most is when my family gathers around a meal. These gatherings are times to share our lives and our stories with one another, to celebrate who we are as a family. A virtual gathering just does not satisfy, just as I am sure that many do not find virtual Mass satisfies the need to physically gather as a family of believers, to tell our stories, and celebrate who we are as believers. Never before has the hunger for Eucharist been so evident on such a global scale. And so, we pray that one day soon our churches will once again have more than 15% capacity in attendance celebrating Mass together as one body of believers.

What I find most hopeful in all of this is that people are telling me they are praying that the Eucharist will once again become more readily available, not simply for themselves, but for everyone. Their prayers are not solely focussed upon their own need for Eucharist, but they are truly praying for the needs of others – a very unselfish approach to prayer!

**Warm-up Activity** *(about 8-10 minutes):*

Spend some time reflecting upon the theological concept of transubstantiation. It is during the liturgical feast of the Body and Blood of Christ when the truth of transubstantiation is celebrated. Simply put, transubstantiation is when the elements of bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ during consecration at Mass, while at the same time the appearance of bread and wine still remains. Does this concept allow you to look beyond the appearance of bread and wine and see the actual body and blood of Christ, or is this a challenge for you?

## The Table of the Word

### **THEME: Covenant**

Theologian and author, Richard McBrien, in his book *Catholicism* defines covenant as “*The bond, contract, or testament between God and Israel in the Old Testament, and between God and the whole human community in the New Testament, established by the blood of Christ*” (p. 1237). McBrien refers to the Old Testament covenant as the ‘Sinai Covenant,’ for it is here that the Ten Commandments were made known. For the Israelites their response to the covenant is to keep the Ten Commandments as a reflection of their willingness to do the will of God. The willingness of the Israelites to do the will of God will bring them blessings and deliverance. What is interesting to note is the covenant was accepted by the Israelites corporately as a nation of God’s chosen people. It was not a series of individual responses; they responded with one voice (Exodus 24:3).

**Leader:** We turn to the God whose providence nourishes and sustains us, as we seek the mercy and forgiveness of God.

For the times we have ignored or doubted God’s covenant with us, **Lord, have mercy.**  
For the times we have failed to delight in the supper of the Lamb, **Christ, have mercy.**  
For the times we have doubted eternal life to come, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Let us pray** (together)

*Faithful God, whose everlasting covenant with us  
is sealed with the blood of Christ,  
be present in our midst,  
for all that you command us we will do.  
In the book of the covenant, speak to our hearts,  
and by the blood of the covenant, purify our consciences.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME** (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God, we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering word, and that God is present in the word proclaimed. This is the word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the small Christian community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God’s Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

### **FIRST READING** (Exodus 24:3-8)

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offering and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the Lord. Moses took half of

the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

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

## **SECOND READING** (Hebrews 9:11-15)

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent – not made with hands, that is, not of this creation – he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

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

## **GOSPEL** (Mark 14:12-16, 22-26)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, the disciples said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you, follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

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

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Lectio Divina** means “sacred prayer through sacred reading.” It was a popular form of prayer in the early Church. This word proclaimed today is God's own word, God's way of speaking to you today through God's own Spirit. So take a few moments to be quiet, allowing this word you have just heard to touch you or soak into you as you reflect quietly on the three readings. Is there a word or thought that somehow attracts you or has your interest? If so, simply identify it and describe it in a few words.

## COMMENTARY:

**Exodus.** This passage offers us a detailed account of the sacrifice offered by Moses, a messy sacrifice to be sure as Moses “dashed” the blood of the sacrifice on the people of Israel. It is of note that this passage—recounting the sacrifice offered by Moses to God because of the covenant—follows the story of the Ten Commandments and the giving of the law. In the account of the Ten Commandments, the Israelite people acknowledge that they are in a covenant relationship with God – a covenant proposed by God and accepted by the people of Israel. The Ten Commandments reveal the implications of what it means to belong to God through a covenant. It is also interesting to note that the word “covenant” appears over 300 times in the Old Testament when God interacts with various people, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. What does this mean in terms of the reading today from Exodus? The Exodus account shows us that covenants are intended to be renewed, renewed in the sense that the Israelites are being reminded about the implications of having accepted the covenant from God.

**Hebrews.** This passage helps to highlight the difference between the offering of sacrifice found in the Old Testament, and the offering of sacrifice in the New Testament. Today's passage introduces us to the covenant that Jesus established, no longer a covenant calling for animal sacrifice. In the earlier verses of Chapter 9 in Hebrews, we hear about worship and ritual from the Old Testament. This leads to today's revelation, beginning in verse 11, where the New Testament sacrifice is a result of what Jesus did at the Last Supper and on the cross. No longer is it a sacrifice of “something else” for others (Old Testament), but is now a sacrifice of “Jesus' own self” for all people (New Testament).

**Mark.** Here we have the familiar account of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. This new sacrifice, the Eucharist, is revealed as a sacrifice of thanksgiving by which we are saved. That the events of the Last Supper took place on the day of Passover, the day on which it was customary to sacrifice the paschal lamb, serves as a connection between the Old and New Testaments. We now have the “New Passover” where we are invited to share in this new meal of the body and blood of Christ. To share in this new meal is to now share in Jesus' life, and to accept the call to bear witness to the Paschal Mystery, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

**Exodus 24:3-8**      *“See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you”*

Through the ritual action of dashing the people with the blood of sacrifice, the Israelites participate in the renewal of the covenant with God. The overtones with Eucharist that this Old Testament ritual evokes are striking. In the Eucharist, as the blood of Christ is poured out and shared, we too renew our covenant with God. Each time we celebrate Eucharist we renew our relationship with God.

1. Why is it necessary to constantly renew our covenant relationship with God?
2. What graces and blessings are made available to us through our continual renewal of covenant through the Eucharist?

**Hebrews 9:11-15**      *“Christ is the mediator of a new covenant”*

As we saw in this passage from Hebrews there is a movement in the covenant relationship with God from a sacrifice of “something” to a sacrifice of “someone,” namely Jesus. This is a significant leap for God, to say the least, to move from animal sacrifice to the sacrifice of Jesus.

1. What does this reality say to you about our covenant relationship with God?
2. Why do you think God found it necessary to offer Jesus in sacrifice rather than simply continue animal sacrifice?

**Mark 14:12-16, 22-26**      *“This is my Blood of the covenant”*

As we speak about the “New Passover” in the Eucharist we hear the invitation to bear witness to the Paschal Mystery.

1. While it might be a challenge for us (and there is perhaps no right or wrong answer), how do we bear witness to the passion of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the ascension of Jesus?

**CARING-PRAYING TIME:** (15-20 minutes)

1. **Word of the Week:** *“Those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance”*
2. **Suggestion for the Week:**

Spend some time this week reflecting upon your covenant relationship with God.

If you were to write your own covenant, what would be included?

What would you commit yourself to do in this covenant?

What would you hope this covenant would achieve for you personally?

3. **Intercessions:** (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

**Leader:**      As we worship the living God, let us lift up our voices in prayer through Christ, the high priest and mediator of the new covenant.

That all the people of God, treasuring the book of the covenant, may live in peace by obeying the Lord’s Words and ordinances, we pray to the Lord ...

That all the peoples of earth, redeemed by the blood of the covenant, may reverence each other as children of the one God who has chosen them, we pray to the Lord ...

That those who have defiled themselves by espousing prejudice or racism may allow the blood of Christ to purify their consciences and hearts, we pray to the Lord ...

That those who are graced with the gift of Eucharist, the broken bread and the cup of blessing, may offer their lives as a living sacrifice of praise to God and service to all, we pray to the Lord ...

That by the death of Christ that redeems them, the faithful departed may receive the promised eternal inheritance, we pray to the Lord ...

### **How can we help you in prayer this week?**

**Let us pray** (together)

*Behold, O God, your people gathered here around your Holy Word.*

*Purify us through the Word so that we may worship you,  
the living God, so that, at the supper of the Lamb,  
we may delight in the foretaste of the eternal feast  
in the heavenly Jerusalem.*

*We offer this prayer through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one,**

**OUR FATHER ...**

**Celebrating the Word**, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (Celebrating the Word was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: **website:** [www.resurrectionists.ca](http://www.resurrectionists.ca). **Email:** [provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca](mailto:provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca)  
The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).