

Holy Thursday-2024 "The Holy Eucharist: From Upper Room to Calvary"

Today Let's begin with a question. Where did Jesus institute the Holy Eucharist? A) In the Upper Room in Sion or b) On Mount Calvary? In your mind, the answer would be in the Upper Room, and that answer is correct also. But then, what sacrifice did Jesus offer on Mount Calvary? Isn't it the Holy Sacrifice as well? To make sure that our answer is correct, we need to understand the way how Jesus and his disciples celebrated the paschal feast and before that, the background in which people of Israel celebrated Passover, their most important feast. Let's begin from the Upper Room.

The people of Israel celebrated the paschal feast in remembrance of their deliverance from the slavery in Egypt, as commanded by God to Moses. Nissan 14 is the day of feast, but the preparations begin 4 days before. Cfr-They brought the lamb for sacrifice to be inspected and approved as 'without defect'. Roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, 4 cups of wine and cleansing water were parts of the Passover meal. As they enter the Festival Hall, the servant washes the feet of others and makes them enter. Everything is prepared around the table, with one empty chair® representing 'Messiah', they believed Messiah is 'present'. Why 4 cups of wine; 1) Cup of blessing or sanctification 2) Cup of forgiveness 3) Cup of Thanksgiving 4) Cup of Consummation/suffering/salvation. (Child asking, what is special about this night? Why do we eat a special meal today? The father of the house tells the story from starting from Abraham). Once completed, the father would say: *Tetelestai* (= it is completed) the paschal feast is completed.

Jesus' Last Supper in the upper Room had some changes. 1) 13 gathered, but did *not keep empty chair*, knowing Jesus is the Messiah. (Peter- You are the son of the living God) (R-John; L-Judas). Jesus does the washing of feet, the work of the lowest grade. *This is the first meaning of Eucharist: to be humble to the lowest grade.* The master of masters becomes the servant of the servants. Again, Book of Leviticus; Moses washes Aron

and sons to elevate them to priestly order. This indicates, *Jesus makes his disciples enter into the order of priesthood*, by washing their feet. While Peter objects, Jesus responds: 'one who is bathed need only washing of feet: = one who is baptized needs only the priesthood'.

2) They *did not have the roasted lamb*, knowing "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" being present with them, did not require another lamb to be killed. Jesus takes the bread and says: 'take and eat, this is my body'. By doing so, Jesus was becoming the 'unblemished lamb'. He took the cup, (3rd) of thanksgiving; "take and drink" Mk 14:25: "I won't drink this unless I drink it in the Kingdom". Remember, he needs to drink one more cup-the 4th, but he says, 'I will not'. In a very unusual way, the Passover feast is broken, un-completed.

The next scene is Getsemani, where Jesus prays, "Father, take away this cup from me if possible" - he is referring to the 4th cup; cup of suffering; but his prayer is not answered. While on the cross, he said: I thirst; they gave him vinegar- sour wine, he tasted it and said: *Tetelestai* = It is finished. After drinking the 4th cup, he said, "the Passover is completed".

Now, let's get back to our question: where did he begin and where did he complete his sacrifice? He started the Eucharist in the upper room and completed it on Mount Calvary. Friends, Eucharist is the only gift for which Jesus suffered so very much. (He was born into a manger-to become Euch; he received flagellation to become Euch; his side was pierced, and he shed all his blood to become Euch.; blessed mother stayed at the foot of the cross with unimaginable sorrow- to make him Eucharist.) Please, know that each time you participate in the Holy Euch. for half or 1 hour, you will complete this sacrifice only on mount Calvary of your life, joyfully and gratefully drinking the last drop of the cup of suffering with all pains of your life, offering into God's hand saying- *Tetelestai*= It is completed, thus each one of us will complete our Holy Sacrifice. Amen! Fr James Chitteth cfic