

Blood and Sacrifice

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Exodus 24:3-8 - Ratification of the covenant
- ▶ Hebrews 9:11-15 - The sacrifice of Jesus
- ▶ Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 - Passover preparation

The church celebrates the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ today with three readings about blood, sacrifices, and covenants. The first reading re-tells the story of Moses using the blood of young bulls to symbolically seal the covenant between the Israelites and God after God gave them the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. The Letter to the Hebrews declares that Jesus' sacrifice is more effective than the blood of goats and bulls in sanctifying us. Finally, Jesus' words at the Last Supper reveal a new understanding—that Jesus will take the place of animals in Jewish worship by offering himself up to death for us.

Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover supper. It took place on the day that Jews traditionally sacrificed and ate a lamb in remembrance of the night when God "passed over" the houses of the Israelites.

On that night in Egypt, following Moses' instructions, each Israelite family sacrificed a lamb and used its blood to mark their door posts. That same night, the firstborn of all the Egyptians were killed, but death passed over the Israelites, and they followed Moses to freedom through the parted waters of the Red Sea. The Passover supper included a ritual of breaking and sharing unleavened bread (which is why the bread we use for Communion is unleavened) and sharing wine together.

When Jesus and the disciples shared their Passover meal they were following all of the Jewish traditions. What made that particular Passover meal differ-

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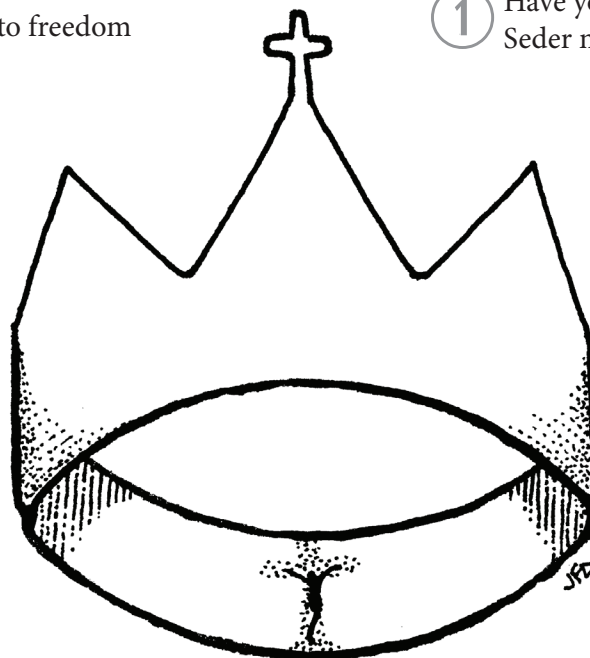
“How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?”

Sheepish Question:
How do I treat Christ's life as real food?

ent was that Jesus declared that the bread they were eating was his body and the wine they drank was his blood, the “blood of the covenant.” From then on, the Passover supper became a remembrance both of how God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and how Jesus saves us by showing us how to live and die.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Have you ever been to a Passover or Seder meal? What was your experience of it? What did you learn about our Jewish history?
- 2 What does the Eucharist mean to you? How does it feed you spiritually?



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