PASCHAL MEAL

PARISH OF ST JOSEPH
MORNINGSIDE
THE PASCHAL MEAL

Introduction

Commentator

This evening we remind ourselves of the root of our Christian Faith. For more than 3000 years the Jewish people - our spiritual forebears – have celebrated the Passover Feast in thanksgiving for God bringing them from a life of slavery in the land of Egypt to a new life of freedom with Him.

As Christians we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself a Jew, came to fulfil the Old Testament. He is the Paschal lamb whose blood saves us from the slavery of sin and death.

On the night before He died, Jesus used the setting of the Paschal meal to institute the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Tonight as we follow the order of the Paschal Meal, and enter into the great thanksgiving of our forebears we recall the many reasons Christians have to be thankful to God for making us His people of the New Covenant.

One Bread, One Body

One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.

Gentile or Jew, servant or free,
Woman or man, no more.

Chorus

Many the gifts, many the works,
one in the Lord of all.

Chorus

Grain for the fields,
Scattered and grown, gathered to one, for all.

Chorus

Father Brett

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and have mercy on you. May the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace.

All

Amen.

Please help yourself to dessert and enjoy the rest of the evening.
Gracious is the Lord and righteous
Our God is full of compassion.
The Lord preserves the simple-hearted
When I was brought low, he saved me.
My heart, be at peace once more,
For the Lord has granted you full deliverance.
You have rescued me from death,
My eyes from weeping,
My feet from stumbling.
I shall walk in the presence of the Lord

In the land of the living
I was sure I should be swept away;
My distress was bitter.
In my alarm I cried,
How faithless are all my fellow-creatures!
How can I repay the Lord
For all his benefits to me?
I shall lift up the cup of salvation
And call on the Lord by name.
I shall pay my vows to the Lord
In the presence of all his people.
A precious thing in the Lord’s sight
Is the death of those who are loyal to him.

Indeed, Lord, I am your slave,
I am your slave, your slave-girl’s son;
You have loosed my bonds.
To you I shall bring a thanks-offering
And call on the Lord by name.
I shall pay my vows to the Lord
In the presence of all his people,
In the courts of the Lord’s house,
In the midst of you, Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord

(All finish the wine.)

The Father of the Feast then concludes with a blessing

Reading

Exodus 12: 1-8

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt. This month is to be for you the first of the months; you are to make it the first month of the year. Say to the whole community of Israel: On the tenth day of this month let each man procure a lamb or kid for his family, one for each household, but if a household is too small for one lamb or kid, then taking into account the number of persons, the man and his nearest neighbour may take one between them. They are to share the cost according to the amount each person eats. Your animal, taken either from the sheep or the goats, must be without blemish, a yearling male. Have it in safe keeping until the fourteenth day of this month, and then all the assembled community of Israel must slaughter the animals between dusk and dark. They must take some of the blood and smear it on the doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat the flesh. On that night they must eat flesh roasted on fire; they must eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
Commentator
The Search for Leaven

The first part of the Jewish Ritual is the Search for leaven. The Jews eat only unleavened bread over this period in memory of the haste with which they had to leave Egypt. They did not even have time to let the bread rise. St. Paul gives us the Christian meaning of searching for and clearing out every last piece of leaven.

Reading
1 Corinthians 5: 7-8

Get rid of the old leaven and then you will be a new batch of unleavened dough. Indeed you already are, because Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. So we who observe the festival must not use the old leaven, the leaven of depravity and wickedness, but only the unleavened bread which is sincerity and truth.

Commentator
The Lighting of the Festival Candles

Light is a symbol of God. To remind us of this the Mother of the house lights seven candles.

Mother

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe; who has given us the light of the Sabbath and the Light of the Festivals to show forth Your Light.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe; Who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this Season.

May our gathering be Consecrated, O God, by the light of your countenance shining upon us in blessing and bringing us peace.

Commentator
The Elijah Scene

Traditionally a place has been prepared which none has yet occupied. The empty seat is an expression of our awareness that someone is still missing. It is a reminder of the night which is still to come: the night of the final liberation during which Elijah pre-figures Jesus, whose second coming has always been expected.

(At this stage, a cup of wine would be poured for Elijah and the door is opened so that he may come in. In many homes people go out onto the street to search for Elijah.)

Elijah has not come; Christ has not yet come again. Why is this? There is still much work for us to do, to bring justice and freedom for all.

(The door would then be closed and the Father of the house would proclaim: "Next Year in Jerusalem!")

St Matthew tells us in his Gospel: ‘and when they had sung a hymn they went to the Mount of Olives. This hymn was very likely Psalm 116 which we will say together after pouring the fourth glass of wine—the cup of Melchisedech.

PSALM 116

I love the Lord, for he has heard me
And listened to my prayer;
He has given me a hearing
And all my days I shall cry to him.
The cords of death bound me,
Sheol held me in its grip.
Anguish and torment held me fast;
Then I invoked the Lord by name,
Lord, deliver me, I pray
Commentator

And so we find ourselves in the upper room at The Last Supper – this was the last Passover meal to look forward to, for on the following day it was to be fulfilled by the new sacrifice of the Lamb of God – a substitution of the new bread for the old.

At this point the youngest child looks for the hidden piece of unleavened bread (the Afikomen) and takes it to the Father. He breaks it and passes the two portions to the left and right. Each breaks off a small piece to eat and passes the remainder on.

The Third Cup
(Cup of Benediction)

For the Jewish people, the celebration of this Passover meal every year recalls their escape from Egypt and their liberation from slavery. The idea is that a past event can be remembered in such a way that it becomes present again and can be participated in. As we have seen, the Eucharist is very similar to the Passover meal.

This idea of making a memorial can be helpful in understanding our Eucharist. The Eucharist is a memorial, a ritual re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice of himself for us—the great act of liberation for us. The Eucharist as a ritual makes present for us the reality of Christ’s dying as well as God’s response to that, the Resurrection, and invites us to participate in that event. We must never lose the sense that we participate in the saving event of Christ’s death and resurrection through our participation in the meal we eat.

(The third cup of wine or grape juice is poured out for each person)

Father

Blessed are you, Lord God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. We give you thanks, O Lord our God. That you have caused us to take possession of a good and large land.

(All finish the wine)

As followers of Your son, Jesus, We ask this peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our beloved country and in our war-torn world.

The First Cup
(The first cup of wine or grape juice is poured out for each person)

Mother stands, holds up the glass and prays...

Blessed are you, Lord God, King of the Universe Creator of the fruit of the vine. You have chosen us from among all people; you have exalted us above all Nations. In love you have given us, Lord our God, Seasons for gladness, Holy days and times for rejoicing. Blessed are you Lord, who sanctified Israel and the Festivals

(All sip the wine or grape juice)

Commentator

After drinking the Father rises and washes his hands. It is possible that at this point our Lord arose and washed the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper.

Reading: John 13: 3-5

Jesus, well aware that the Father had entrusted everything to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from the supper table, took off his outer garment and, taking a towel, tied it round him. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel.
Commentator
In response to the challenge to be people of service let us sing together:

Here I Am Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky.
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling
in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people
in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone.
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them
Whom shall I send?

Chorus
I, the Lord of wind and flame.
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Hymn
Shine, Jesus, Shine

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness shining
Jesus, light of the world shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me.Shine on me.

Shine, Jesus shine
Fill this land
With the father's glory
Blaze, spirit blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river flow,
Flood the nations
With grace and mercy
Send forth your word, Lord
And let, there be light.

Commentator
Paschal Meal

Father

This is the Paschal Lamb which our forefathers sacrificed to the Lord in memory of that night when the Holy One passed over the houses of our Fathers in Egypt.

(The meal is now served)

Commentator

(During this part of the meal the family may talk. As the meal draws to a close the tables are cleared leaving just the candles and the wine cups)
But His heart was hard. God sent ten plagues against the Egyptians, but Pharaoh would not relent and release the people. The final plague was the killing of the first-born of the Egyptians.

Commentator
(Everyone takes a piece of matzos and spreads some Haroseth on it and eats it.)

Fifth Child

Why is this night different from all other nights? On other nights we do not dip the eggs in salty water, but on this night we do dip them, why?

Father

This is to remind us of the parting of the Red Sea through which the Israelites passed to safety and the coming together again of the waters that drowned the Egyptians.

(All dip your eggs in the salt water and eat.)

The Second Cup
(The Cup of Salvation)

(The second cup of wine or grape juice is poured out for each person)

Father

Blessed are you, Lord, God, King of the Universe, who redeemed us and our parents from Egypt, and caused us to keep this night, to eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs. In like manner O Lord, our God, may we reach other appointed times, rejoicing in the rebuilding of your city and happy in your service. And we shall thank you with a new song for our redemption and for our deliverance.

(The second cup of wine or grape juice is drunk)

Commentator

Eating Of The Ritual Foods

(Mother rises, takes some of the bitter herbs, dips them in salt water and prays)

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth. As we thank you for this food we pray that we shall ever give thanks for all your many blessings, O Lord.

(Mother sits down and all eat of the bitter herbs after dipping them in the salt water)

Commentator

These herbs remind us of the suffering of the Jews in Egypt and also of the bitterness of our own sin and our rejection of God. They remind us of the constant struggle of our lives against evil and for good.

Father

(Uncovers and holds up the unleavened bread)

Blessed are you Lord our God; You have given us solemn days for joy. Festivals for gladness and this feast of the unleavened bread the feast of our freedom.

(The middle Matzos is divided into two: the larger section is set aside for the Afikomen)

This is the bread of oppression which our Fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God’s will to redeem us from all evil and from servitude.
Youngest Child

Father, why is this night different from all other nights?

Father

My child, this night is different for this reason. You remember the Israelites had been settled in Egypt for 430 years. The Egyptians ill-treated our Fathers; they gave them no peace and inflicted harsh slavery upon them. But they called upon God, our Father, and He heard their voice and saw their misery, their toil and their oppression and He brought them out of the Land of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm with great signs and wonders. This was a night of vigil as our people waited for the Lord to bring them out of slavery. It is the Lord’s night. This night is different from all other nights because the Holy One passed over the houses of the children of Israel but killed all the first-born of the Egyptians.

Second Child

On all other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread; but why on this night do we eat only unleavened bread?

Father

My child, it is because there was no time for the dough of the Israelites in Egypt to become leavened before the Holy One revealed Himself to them and saved them.

Third Child

On all other nights we eat herbs of any kind. On this night why do we eat only bitter herbs?

Father

My child, they are eaten to remind us that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our people. As it is written: ‘And they embittered their lives with hard labour, with mortar and bricks and every kind of labour in the field: all the work they made them do was rigorous’. We eat the bitter herbs as a reminder.

Reading

Exodus 5: 1-9

After this, Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and told him, ‘These are the words of the Lord the God of Israel: Let my people go so that they may keep a pilgrim-feast in my honour in the wilderness. Who is the Lord,’ said Pharaoh, ‘that I should listen to him and let Israel go? I do not acknowledge the Lord: and I tell you I will not let Israel go.’ They replied, ‘The God of the Hebrews confronted us. Now we request leave to go three days’ journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifice to the Lord our God, or else he may attack us with pestilence or sword. But the Egyptian king answered, ‘What do you mean, Moses and Aaron, by distracting the people from their work? Back to your labours! Your people already outnumber the native Egyptians; yet you would have them stop working! Pharaoh issued orders that same day to the people’s slave-masters and their foremen not to supply the people with the straw used in making bricks, as they had done hitherto. ‘Let them go and collect their own straw, but see that they produce the same tally of bricks as before, on no account reduce it. They are lazy and that is why they are clamouring to go and offer sacrifice to their God. Keep these men hard at work’. Take no notice of their lies.’

Mother

(Stands and spreads some Haroseth on the Matzos)

Fourth Child

What is the meaning of Haroseth?

Mother

The Haroseth remind us how difficult it was for the Israelites to gather straw and make the bricks. The Haroseth represents the mortar laid between the stones with which our people built the store-cities for Pharaoh. God heard the cries of the oppressed people and sent Moses and Aaron to plead with Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free.
But His heart was hard. God sent ten plagues against the Egyptians, but Pharaoh would not relent and release the people. The final plague was the killing of the first-born of the Egyptians.

Commentator

(Everyone takes a piece of matzos and spreads some Haroseth on it and eats it.)

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