

Mass of the Lord's Supper

April 9, 2020

According to the Gospel of Saint John, the supper Jesus shares with his disciples on the night before he dies takes place before the Feast of Passover. Even if it was not a Passover Meal, it certainly took place in the context of Passover, with the death of Jesus on the Cross taking place at the hour the lambs were being slaughtered in the temple for the Passover Meal. It was John after all who has proclaimed Jesus in the very first chapter of the gospel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

For centuries this eight day celebration of Passover by the children of Israel, has been kept as a memorial of that seminal event in the formation of Israel as God's people; that is the liberation from bondage and oppression in Egypt. One of the popular songs of Passover has the Hebrew refrain "*Dayenu*" meaning, it would be enough. Had God brought us out of Egypt and not divided the sea for us *Dayenu*, it would be enough. Had God divided the Red Sea and not permitted us to cross on dry land, *Dayenu*, it would be enough. Had God permitted us to cross the sea on dry land and not sustain us in the desert, *Dayenu*, it would have been enough. Had God sustained us for 40 years in the desert and not fed us with manna, *Dayenu*, it would have been enough. This goes on for several more verses until it ends with: Had God sent us prophets and not made us a holy people, *Dayenu*, it would have been enough." This song attests to the lavish faithfulness and love of God for his people. His love and mercy cannot be limited or contained. When it comes to saving his people it is never enough."

Tonight we begin the Christian Passover, the Paschal triduum, in which we commemorate an even greater liberation, for the first one was not enough. The one we commemorate these three days is the liberation from the bondage of sin and death. Though God's people may have been content with his saving actions in the past, God was not content. He desired to love more, to free more, to have mercy more. For God the Exodus and all his mighty deeds of the past was not enough, a far greater liberation was needed. This time not by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, but a pierced hand and scourged arm. What we begin tonight is the seminal event of our Christian faith, the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We commemorate how it was not enough for God until he became man and through this new Adam liberates humanity not by power and might but by

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suffering and death in a total act of sacrificial love. The cross proclaims that it was not enough until God gave himself completely in his only son, after exhausting every other act of love possible. He could not be content until he loved to the end, to death on a cross.

Like the children of Israel, we too have a ritual meal which makes present this salvific event. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, we are nourished by Him and with Him, Jesus Christ the true bread that came down from heaven and by drinking of the chalice of salvation the very doorposts of our hearts are marked and cleaned with His precious blood. But as Pope Benedict reminds us the Eucharist is far more than just a meal; it has cost a death to provide it and the majesty death is present in it. In the Eucharist, we share with Christ in His sacrifice, in His love to the end, and we cannot be content until we live out the commandment he gave us at that supper. "Love one another as I have loved you." It is not enough to receive Christ in the Eucharist yet fail to love and serve our brothers and sisters. We cannot be content, nor is God content, until we like Christ plumb the depths of this commandment and love to the end. Only then is it enough.