

The Consecration – (Part 3 of The Eucharistic Prayer) – Jesus' Words & Jesus' Real Presence

We have come now to the very center, the absolute crux of the entire Catholic Mass. The priest has just called down the Holy Spirit upon the material gifts of bread and wine at the Epiclesis, and now the priest is about to say the very words Jesus said at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the night before he died on Good Friday about 2,000 years ago in the city of Jerusalem. At this time during Jesus' last supper, the Jewish faithful were celebrating their yearly pilgrimage and most high feast of the Passover. They were faithfully following God's command to celebrate the Passover every single year, to commemorate God saving his people from slavery in Egypt and bringing them to freedom through the Passover miracle. One essential part of this ancient Passover ritual for the Jewish people was to sacrifice a lamb, and then to all take part in eating the lamb with their family during a ritual Passover meal. Jesus even says to his apostles when he asks them to find a room that, "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). Also, Jesus commands his apostles to prepare for this Passover meal, and it occurs through a somewhat miraculous and providential command where a seeming stranger opens their house for a room to eat this together (Mark 14:1, and Mark 14:12-16), for example, "The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover (Mark 14:16)."

Ok, so we know it is an official Jewish Passover meal, and we know that Jesus is eating it with his twelve apostles. Now, the question becomes, where is the presence of the lamb? Why is Jesus eating this Passover with his apostles, and each person is not eating it with their families (Jesus with Mary and the apostles with their families)? In fact, we don't get any explanation of these things, but the Gospel writers go right into the most important part of what happens during this Passover meal. Jesus seems to stop everything, get everyone's attention, and declare – "Take this bread. Eat of it. This is my body, which will be given up for you." The bread is Jesus' body? It is given up for us? But Jesus also includes, "Do this in memory of me." And the same with the wine right afterwards. "Take this wine. Drink of it. This is the wine of the new and eternal covenant. Do this in memory of me." (...these are *not the exact words to help me summarize here*) Jesus is doing something new and something that changes everything about the Jewish Passover and about what his apostles are meant to do in the future, in this new covenant (Luke 22:20) and this new church that Jesus is creating starting with his apostles (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus establishes a new ritual Passover meal. There is no physical lamb because Jesus is the lamb of God, and he is about to be sacrificed for our sins on the Cross! They are not eating with their families because Jesus is instituting the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of life within Jesus' New Church! When we come to Mass, Jesus' very love on the Cross for us, and Jesus' power from His resurrection comes to us most fully in the Eucharist. When the Catholic priest says these words that Jesus said during the last supper, we are indeed following his command to "Do this in memory of me." May we rejoice in this truth today on Easter Sunday! May we rest in Jesus' love for us poured out in the Eucharist and into our souls! Jesus' entire being, his body, blood, soul, and divinity becomes truly present under the form of bread and wine, and we are now able to receive him and be in full communion with the infinite God become man. Our savior, our bridegroom, our creator, our father, our divine physician, and our companion along the way. He has died for us. He has risen for us. Let us receive Him in the new Passover, the Mass. Jesus has risen and is truly present in the Eucharist today! Amen.