

Palm/Passion Sunday + 24 March 2024 + Isa 50:4-7 + Phil 2:6-11 + Mk 14-15

All through Lent, we have been walking through Salvation history, especially the Covenants that God made with the great Patriarchs of the Old Testament. We examined how all of these were preparations for the New and Eternal Covenant in Jesus Christ, and how we enter into this New Covenant in the Sacraments. We said last week though, that before Jesus could share His divine life with us, He first had to walk the way of the Cross on our behalf—His passion and death—that we have just proclaimed.

Obviously, there is so much we could say about the Lord's passion. But the one aspect of this account that I would like to briefly meditate upon today is the reality that the Last Supper and the Cross is one extended event; the single most important event in human history. Think about it; if Jesus simply got up from the Last Supper and went on with His life until His death later on, then His saying that the bread and wine are His body and blood, given up for us as a New Covenant, doesn't make sense. It would be an unfulfilled prophecy. On the other hand, if there were no Last Supper, if Jesus went right from Bethany to the Cross, then we would have so many unanswered questions. Namely, why? Yes, Jesus had predicted that He would suffer and be killed, but *why*? What is the meaning of the Cross?

Which is why the Last Supper, the passion and death of Jesus—just like the whole of the Bible—needs to be read together, as a beautiful, often shocking, but life-changing whole. And there is very important detail in our Gospel today that lends support to this fact; (more details in the book given at Christmas) where, at the Last Supper, after taking the cup and giving it to His disciples, Jesus says: *Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.* Why would Jesus draw attention to this? The only legitimate answer is that the Passover of Jesus is unfinished at the Last Supper: something is lacking that must be done, before the Kingdom may come.

If we then fast-forward to the passion, Jesus is offered *wine drugged with myrrh*—a sedative for what must have been unthinkable pain—but He refuses. Only after He is crucified, we hear that Jesus drinks from a *sponge soaked with wine*, cries out, and breathes *His last*. At last, Jesus has drunk from the vine, meaning, the Kingdom of God *has finally come*, the Passover is complete! Which is why, as we said last week, John heard Jesus cry out on the Cross: *it is finished!* It is consummated! God's plan of salvation is complete!

The Last Supper has been fulfilled, and the Cross has been explained: Jesus has given His Body, for you. Jesus poured out His blood as the New and Eternal Covenant. This is such an important event that as Catholics we enter into it every day in an unbloody, that is, *Sacramental way*. The Mass is the Last Supper and the Cross; it is the way by which we offer and receive this saving sacrifice of Christ, which was offered only once in time, but is eternally offered to the Father. While the Kingdom of God has now come, it is still playing out in time, even in our lives today, and it will ever grow, until He comes again.