

MIDWEEK INVOCABIT

Text: Revelation 19:6-9; St. Luke 22:1-23

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Our reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke this evening, details the institution of the new Covenant and its celebration with what we call Holy Communion, or the Mass, showing us that the LORD's Supper is no small thing. Neither is it a last minute afterthought of our LORD JESUS. He says with utmost earnestness, "*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*" JESUS had given this whole matter great thought. It had long been on His heart and on His mind. JESUS was about to give to His disciples, and through them, to His Bride, the Church, a gift that would mystify the brightest and best minds of men.

JESUS picked up the Bread and gave thanks. He broke it and handed it over to them. "*This is My Body,*" He said, "*which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.*" And after they had eaten, in the same manner also, He took the Cup and said: "*This Cup is the new covenant in My Blood, which is shed for you.*"

Now, either JESUS meant exactly what He said that night, or He proposed to His Church a mystery—a mystery which has remained unsolved to this day.

The Bride of Christ has always understood Her Husband, JESUS, to have always spoken nothing less than the absolute truth and in that solemn moment which occurred so shortly before His sacrificial death, JESUS was not hiding His teaching in figures of speech or parables. Rather, He was establishing His own everlasting Covenant, informing His heirs what He would bequeath to them with His death. He was telling them that this Inheritance He was leaving them was not just for one moment or one night; it was to last until the end of this age: "*Do this,*" He said, "*in remembrance of Me.*"

And so His Bride obeys—week after week, year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium, His people have gathered together around His table. His pastors, standing in His stead and by His own command, have done what JESUS directed them to do. They have spoken over the bread His Words of promise. They have spoken over His Cup His Words of life. And devotedly following the will of JESUS, His faithful people have received this consecrated bread and wine, believing it to be nothing less than what the LORD JESUS has declared it to be: His Body, given for them. His Blood, poured out as a new covenant with them.

There are three vantage points from which we may ponder the LORD's Table then. We can view this Holy Supper from the past, that is, from its origin, from its institution by the LORD of the Church on the very night in which He was betrayed, before He went forth giving His Body into death, and shedding His Blood upon the Cross, and thus establishing a new covenant,

His covenant of grace and forgiveness. Considering this Gift from this vantage point, it is a Table of remembrance.

We can also view the LORD's Table from our present context, from our own experience, as we approach the LORD's Table in a land far away and years distant from that first Table. Even so, we find it to be—to our surprise and delight—the very same Table, because it bears the very same gifts, given by our very same LORD. The LORD's Body and Blood from way back then, He gives to us right here and right now.

In this way we may feel ourselves to be much like the Israelites as we journey through this wilderness of sin and despair, looking forward to our arrival in the land promised to our fathers, even as the Manna which is our Lord's Body feeds us while we are given to drink from the Cup of CHRIST's grace. Thus, it is a Table that sustains and strengthens us for our pilgrimage as we eat the miraculous nourishment from Heaven afforded to us by CHRIST's Flesh and Blood.

Perhaps most wonderful of all, we can view this Table from the future, which is where our first reading comes in. For the LORD's Supper, rooted in the past and filling the present, nevertheless mysteriously points towards the future: *“Blessed are those who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!”* the angel told John to write. For the Lamb will have His Marriage Supper, when His Bride, the Church, gathered at last from the four corners of the earth and from every age—from the sixth day of creation to the great and final Day when He returns on the clouds of Heaven—will sit down together with Him at a Feast that has no end. It will be Her wedding Banquet!

There, and then, CHRIST will rejoice over His Bride with singing and confess before His FATHER, before the angels and all the creation, even before the demons and Satan himself, that She is His beloved Bride for whom He suffered and died and rose again, and for whom He had come again in glory to usher Her into the Day that knows no night.

Of that amazing Banquet, that wondrous Supper, we are given a foretaste here, at this Table, as we celebrate in the here and now this glorious Gift as often as we come to it. What CHRIST gives to us at this Table—His precious Body and Blood—the very ransom price He offered for us—assures us that we will have a place at that eternal Table where we will celebrate the never-ending Wedding Feast.

Thus, the Table of remembrance, the Table of CHRIST's presence with us today, the Table of the Church's future, they are not three Tables, but one Table. All three are wrapped up together by CHRIST and given as a gift to His beloved Bride right in the here and now.

Who, then, what man or woman could ever have conceived of such a gift? Who could have dreamt of such a gift? Only our Heavenly Father and His beloved Son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST! Only God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, could gather into one, His yesterday and our today, in order to give us a share in His forever.

All this means, then, that we live our lives oriented toward the age to come and all that shall be.

Having already had a teasing foretaste of that new bright future in the Body and Blood of JESUS in His Supper, we must not let that foretaste lie abandoned behind us when we return to our homes from CHRIST's Table, for in so doing, we betray the very gift of the Table itself! You see, we get to carry God's future—where all is love, and love is all—out with us into the world around us, to our friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

Think of how that renews all of us! Husbands and wives, children and parents, old and young, all of us! As believing Christians, we live in this world looking forward to the world to come; the world that will be when JESUS CHRIST returns. St. Paul tells us, *“Therefore, if anyone is in CHRIST, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through JESUS CHRIST, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in CHRIST reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”* What a precious gift!

Of course, it is true that at times we miserably fail at living in this new life. We forget to live for the age to come and slide back into our old ways. And so we thank our SAVIOR all the more for this wondrous Supper, for beyond all its other gifts, it abundantly graces us with forgiveness!

So, as we can see, JESUS thought of everything, and in this amazing Banquet He offers to us everything He is, all He has, and all that will be, as His beloved Bride! Indeed, let us *“Hasten as a bride to meet Him, and with loving rev'rence greet Him!”* to receive from Him what He suffered, died, and rose again to give us, the forgiveness of our sins.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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