

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ!

Imagine that **you were alive 2000 years ago ...**

and that **you were there** when **the Romans** did that to Jesus,
nailed him to a Cross where He hung until He died.

And later that night you went home and described to your family what you saw.
How would you have described it?

Well, if you were a **Jew**,
you would have told them that you saw a **very bloody execution**.

And yet today, we **Catholic Christians** look upon Jesus on the Cross and
we describe what we see as ... the supreme sacrifice of all time!

So, how does a bloody execution in the eyes of a Jew ...
become a sacrifice in the eyes of a Christian?

Recall that **the Jews** were very familiar with sacrifice.

For them, **sacrifices** took place

- within the **walls of Jerusalem**
- within **the Temple**
- on **an altar**
- at the hands of a **Priest**.

But what happened to Jesus took place

- outside the walls of Jerusalem
- far from the Temple
- where there was **no altar present**
- and **no Priests**.

So again ... how did a bloody execution come to be called a sacrifice?

A **key to unlocking this mystery** comes in **St. Paul's 1st Letter** to the **Corinthians**.
In **1st Cor. 5: 7** we read, "*Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.*"

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Paul was given great insight into what we call the
Paschal Mystery ... a Mystery that extends before and after Jesus' death on Calvary.

You see, in order to see Jesus' death on the Cross as a sacrifice ...
you have to take into account what happened the night before ...
when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his Apostles.

That Last Supper just happened to be the highest feast of the year, the Passover!

Mark described this in **our Gospel** today, “*On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go to prepare for you to eat the Passover?’”*

So **this Last Supper** that **Jesus** had with his Apostles was the most holy meal of the year when **the Passover Lamb** was sacrificed and **his flesh** was eaten in a **holy meal**.

And it was here that **Jesus** made a significant change to the course of the meal.

Mark records that, “*He took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them and said, ‘Take it; this is my Body.’”*

“*Then **He** took a **cup**, gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank from it. He said to them, ‘this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.*”

Wow! Those words and those actions were never part of the Passover Meal that **Moses** and **the Jews** had been celebrating for 1200 years.

What Jesus did at that **Passover**, was fulfill the Old Covenant with Moses ... and transform it into a New Covenant with Himself ... **memorializing it ...** not with the blood of an animal ... but with His own Blood.

This established a New Passover sacrifice ...

- Not a Passover with the flesh and blood of a lamb
- But a Passover with the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God!

We heard **reference to this** in our **Second Reading** from **Hebrews**:
“*Christ came as high priest ... not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.*”

The **Original Passover** involved the **sacrifice of lambs**, whose **blood** was sprinkled and whose **flesh** was eaten.

The **New Passover** involved the **sacrifice of the Lamb of God**, whose **blood** would be shed and whose **flesh** would be eaten.

What’s important to see is that **the Passover** didn’t end on Holy Thursday.

No, it didn’t end until the next day!

The Passover Sacrifice that was begun in the Upper Room ... at the **Last Supper ...** on **Holy Thursday ...** was consummated with Jesus’ death on the Cross on Good Friday.

Recall the last words of Christ as He hung upon the Cross.

Right before He died He said, “*I thirst*”.

Scripture says that someone soaked a sponge in wine and put it up to Him on a reed.

And after he drank, He said, “*It is finished.*”

What do you think He was referring to when He said, “*It is finished.*”

To understand this you need to know of **something unusual** that took place at **the Last Supper**.

As a **Jew**, you would know that **the Passover Meal** involved **4 cups of wine**.

But during the Last Supper, **Jesus only drank from 3 cups** ... stopping after He drank from the 3rd Cup ... the **Cup of Blessing** ... that He changed into his Blood.

Mark records this in our **Gospel** today with **Jesus saying** ...

*Amen, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine
until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*

Mark notes, “*After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*”

Mark is pointing out that **Jesus never drank** the **4th cup of wine** at the **Last Supper** **which means that the Passover was not completed there!**

Where was it completed? **On the Cross!**

That’s why **Jesus said**, “*I thirst.*”

That’s why **he drank the wine**, the **fruit of the vine**, they put to Him on a reed.

That’s why **He said**, “*It is finished.*”

What was finished?

The Sacrifice of the New and Eternal Passover ...

Not the Old Passover memorialized in the **blood of lambs** ...

but the New Passover memorialized in the **Blood of the Lamb of God!**

This is what makes **the death of Jesus on Calvary** a **sacrifice**.

The Romans didn’t take His life on **Good Friday**
if He’d already given it freely on **Holy Thursday**.

Recall how Jesus said to the Twelve, “Take and eat ... take and drink ...

this is **my Body** that will be given up for you ...

this is **my Blood** that will be poured out for you.”

How does a bloody execution become a sacrifice?

You must see it in **the light of what Jesus did on Holy Thursday.**

**Jesus wasn't the hapless victim of Roman brutality ...
Jesus was the victim of Divine love.**

They didn't take His life ... if He'd already given His life!

Jesus gave His life for the life of the world.

So, His death on the Cross was a Sacrifice ...

a Sacrifice that began on Thursday in the **Upper Room ... and was
consummated on ... the Altar of the Cross ... by Jesus the **Eternal High Priest!****

And **in the process of establishing the New Passover,**

He memorialized His great sacrifice of love ...

by giving us His Body and Blood to share in a Holy Meal.

Through **the power of His Holy Spirit** and the **hands of the Priest**

we're able to celebrate the new Covenant over and over again ...

and in doing so we are able to receive His Body and Blood over and over again.

And **that's what we celebrate today** ... *Corpus Christi* ...

The Memorial of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ...

ever available to us in the Holy Eucharist.

How blessed we are!

How loved we are!

This is why we call **our Worship** ... **the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**

Why? Because like **all the worship events of the Old Testament** ...

something was sacrificed ... something died ...

In the **New Covenant** it was **Jesus**, the Son of God, who was sacrificed and died.

Hence, **Paul's insight:** "*Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.*"

And as was pointed out in Hebrews, His was an eternal sacrifice!

This means that **Jesus' Sacrifice** is ever-present to the Father in heaven.

So you see, **we're not re-sacrificing Jesus** at every Mass.

What we're doing is tapping into and participating in ... His Eternal Sacrifice
Jesus isn't suffering, bleeding, dying ... His once for all sacrifice is eternal.

You can't repeat something that never ended!

Let's rejoice in **the supreme love** that God has for us ...
and faithfully celebrate **the Memorial** of **His great sacrifice of Love** .
in **the Eucharist!**

This is **what Jesus** commanded us to do **when** He said, "*Do this in memory of Me.*"

So, let's **prepare ourselves** to worthily receive ...
the Eucharist ... Corpus Christi ... the Body of Christ
regularly and often ... with all reverence and gratitude.