

## Eucharistic and life

Dear youths, go to meet Jesus the Saviour! Love, adore him in the Eucharist! He is present in the Holy Mass, where the sacrifice of the Cross is sacramentally present. He comes to us in Holy Communion and remains in the tabernacles of our churches, because he is our friend, everybody's friend, particularly your friend, youths, who are so much in need of trust and love. (...) After so much violence and oppression, the world needs youths capable of "building bridges" to join and to reconcile; after the culture of man without vocation, such women and men are needed as believe in life and welcome it as a call that comes from Above, from God who calls because he loves; after a climate of suspicion and mistrust, that pollutes human relationships, only courageous youths, with mind and heart open to sublime and generous ideals, can restore life and human relationship to beauty and truth.

*John Paul II*

### Final prayer

Lord Jesus,  
we prostrate joyfully  
in adoration before your holy altar.  
With you, Jesus  
everything is meritorious of eternal life,  
everything is light that enlightens the life,  
everything helps to go continue our journey,  
everything is sweetness ... even sorrow!  
You an abundant source of the purest joy.  
A joy that we start to taste down here,  
in this valley of tears, and that will reach its fullness  
when you disclose your glory to us:  
the joy of the beatific vision will replace that of faith.  
Lord Jesus,  
you, living bread that has come down from heaven are  
enough for us.  
We need nobody else.  
You are our life.  
You are our joy, You are our all.  
We entrust ourselves to you: our consolation,  
our joy, our peace.

*(Paul VI)*

cards of formation



*“This is my body  
which is for you”*

1 Cor 11, 23

Towards the re-discovery  
of the mystery of the Eucharist.

3

To begin...



*It is not easy to place the Eucharist at the centre! It is not easy to accept the message of the Eucharist in all its strength.*

*The texts of the New Testament often refer to the incomprehension that the Eucharist meets in those whom it is meant for. The first New Testament document on the Eucharist denounces the flawed way with which it was celebrated by the Christians in Corinth. Luke narrates that during the last Supper the disciples disputed about who among them was the greatest. In John chapter 6 we come across the misunderstanding of behalf of some persons who listened to the words of Jesus, "This language is hard, who can understand it?"*

*In the Eucharist the love of God manifests itself in its purest and most upsetting forms and encounters a man who feels lost before things which are immensely greater than he.*

*The Eucharist is half of a long journey. Humbly to confess our limits or even simply our uncertainties and difficulties is the first step to be taken in order to re-discover the inexhaustible richness of this mystery.*

(Card. Carlo Maria Martini)

## Riflettere

*From the Encyclical "Ecclesia de Eucharistia", by John Paul II.*

The account continues, in the Synoptic Gospels, with Jesus' charge to the disciples to *prepare carefully the "large upper room"* needed for the Passover meal (cf. *Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12*) and with the narration of the institution of the Eucharist. Reflecting at least in part the *Jewish rites* of the Passover meal leading up to the singing of the Hallel (cf. *Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26*), the story presents with sobriety and solemnity, even in the variants of the different traditions, the words spoken by Christ over the bread and wine, which he made into concrete expressions of the handing over of his body and the shedding of his blood. All these details are recorded by the Evangelists in the light of a praxis of the "breaking of the bread" already well-established in the early Church. But certainly from the time of Jesus on, the event of Holy Thursday has shown visible traces of a liturgical "sensitivity" shaped by Old Testament tradition and open to being reshaped in Christian celebrations in a way consonant with the new content of Easter.

## EUCCHARISTIC DICTIONARY

### Blood

In the Exodus 24, 3-11, we find the description of the rites of the Covenant, in which the component of blood is always present: "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you, entailing all this stipulations". The rite of the covenant is then followed by a banquet that is strictly connected with the rite of the blood whose natural conclusion it is. To understand well the value of the "blood" in the rites, we must know that in the Hebrew culture the blood symbolises the soul, life. It has also another symbolic value: it means to acknowledge that God has an exclusive power on life, he is the only owner of life. This means that the true meaning of the pouring of blood at the feet of the altar is not an "offering" to God; we can't offer God what does already belongs to him, but we can renounce to blood (life) and acknowledge that it belongs to God.

## To meditate

From *the Mystagogical Catechesis, 4,1*, by Cyril of Jerusalem

The night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and he said, *‘Take and eat, this is my body’*. He then took the cup and said, *‘Take and drink: this is my blood’* (see **1 Cor. 11,23-25**). Therefore, if he himself, speaking of the bread, has openly declared: *‘This is my body’*, who will ever dare doubting from now onward? If he himself he himself states: *This is my blood*, who can still hesitate or say that it is not his blood? It is, therefore, with a full certainty that we share the body and the blood of Christ. In fact, the body is given to you under the species of bread, and the blood is given to you under the species of wine, so that you, by sharing the body and blood of Christ, you may become one body and one blood with him. This is how we become bearers of Christ, since his body and his blood diffuse themselves in our members, Thus, according to Peter, we become *sharers of the divine nature* (**2Pt. 1,4**). Speaking with the Jews, once Christ said: *If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and do not drink his blood, you have no life in you.* (**Jn 6,53**). But they did not listen to these words with the ear of the spirit, and went away scandalised, thinking that the Lord had invited them to a normal meal. In the Old testament there were already the bread of proposition. Now there is no more space for the bread of the old covenant. In the new covenant there is the bread from heaven and the cup of salvation (see **Psalm 115,4**) that sanctify the soul and the body. In fact as the bread is in tune with the body, similarly the Word harmonises itself with the soul. Therefore, do not focus your attention on bread and on wine, just as it meant only them, because, according to the statement of the master it deals with the body and with the blood. Let your faith help you for what the perception of senses suggest you. Do not judge reality from its taste, its savour, but from faith. What you have learnt gives you this certainty: what appears to be bread, is not bread, though it tastes as bread, it is the body of Christ; and the wine you receive is not wine, though the palate tastes it as wine: it is the blood of Christ David once said in a Psalm: *... oil to make their faces glow; and bread to make them sturdy of heart* (**Psalm 104, 15**). Then, make your heart sturdy by eating this spiritual bread and make the face of your soul to glow. May you, with uncovered face and purity of conscience, reflect the glory of the Lord like a mirror.

## The Word of God

*From the Gospel according to Luke: 22, 7-20*

“The day of unleavened bread came round, on which the Passover had to be sacrificed, and he sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and make the preparation for us to eat the Passover’. They asked him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare it?’” He said to them, ‘Look, as you go into the city, you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water: follow him into the house he enters and tell the owner of the house, “The master says this to you: Where is the room for me to eat the Passover with my disciples?”. The man will show you a large upper room furnished with couches. Make the preparations there. They set off and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover.

When the time came, he took his place at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.’ Then taking a cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and share it among you, because from now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the kingdom of God comes’.

Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me’. He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you.’”

## REFLECTION

Thanks to the Eucharist, the Christian is truly what he eats! Our participation in the body and blood of Christ tends to this: to transform us into what we eat.

*(St. Leo the Great)*

## Self formation

### The Passover of Christ

On the day of the unleavened bread, Jesus sent two of his disciples to prepare the Passover (Lk 22, 7-13). On that day (14th of the month of Nisan), previous to the evening of the Paschal Banquet, the Israelites took their lambs to the courtyard of the temple and immolated it before the priest, who collected the blood and poured it near the feet of the altar of the holocausts. This is why Luke states that on that day the “Passover had to be immolated”, namely the Paschal lamb, and that Jesus, with his twelve, had “to eat the Passover”, that is to consume the lamb according to the fixed rite.

The expressions of the evangelist “to prepare the Passover, to eat the Passover” do not leave any doubt on the fact that Jesus wanted to celebrate truly the Judaic Paschal rite.

In the narration of Luke we can individuate several elements of this rite, which, however, Jesus enriches and opens to new perspectives (Lk 22).

**Lk 22, 14-19:** When the time came, he took his place at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.’ Then taking a cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and share it among you, because from now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the kingdom of God comes’. Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body ...’.

Jesus, therefore, has fulfilled the initial blessing on the cup and has added a prophecy on “the fruit of the vine”. The cup, in this case, as afterwards for the Eucharist, seems to be only one, from which all of them drink, contrary to the Hebrew custom of drinking each from one’s own cup.

Drinking from the same cup may be seen as a deep symbol of everybody’s participation both in the passion of Christ and in the eschatological banquet, according to the words themselves of the Master (*Mt. 20, 22-23; 26, 29*).

Then Jesus by blessing, breaking and distributing the unleavened bread at the beginning of supper properly called, makes of it the sacrament of his body. Similarly, after supper (*Lk 22,20; 1 Cor. 11,25*), that is after consuming the Paschal lamb, “renders thanks” on the chalice and makes of it the sacrament of his blood- This cup is the third of the Paschal supper, and it is called “the cup of blessing”.

Matthew (26,30) and Mark (14,26) remember at the end the singing of the Psalms that formed the *Hallel*.

In the quoted text, Jesus himself explains the meaning of putting together old and new rites: He, who had eaten the Paschal lamb every year, now affirms that he will no longer consume this Passover until it will be brought to fulfilment “in the kingdom of God”.

The Passover, that reaches its fulfilment in the kingdom of God, is the Eucharist that the Church celebrates and that the Risen Christ presides. At the same time, being the kingdom of God an already inaugurated reality that has “still to come”, the fulfilment of the old Passover will be had in the eschatological banquet, of which the Eucharistic banquet is an anticipation and a prophecy.

The eschatological perspective is underlined by Matthew and by Mark, who, after the Institution of the Eucharist quote the words of Jesus, “I shall never again drink the fruit of the vine”. Jesus and his disciples will drink, one day, a “new” Paschal wine, namely they will participate in the banquet of the kingdom of God, where all will be in a perfect and reciprocal communion, in the new earth and under new heavens. (Mt.26)

Mt. 26, 29: “From now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father (see: Mk 14, 25).



## EUCCHARISTIC DICTIONARY

### Sacrifice

The word sacrifice, so much repeated in the Canon of Mass and is attributed also to the death of Jesus on the cross, corresponds to the spontaneous religiosity of every people and its origin gets lost in the night of times. The Latin word “sacrificium”, means to fulfil a sacred action, but more recent authors reject this explanation and see in the sacrifice a gift made to God. The action that seems to destroy the gift (immolation) has in reality the purpose of making it enter the possession of God. The Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church, being the Church the body of Christ (CCC 1368); he for us, we with him -the head and the members- and just as his donation happens for us, similarly we can connect with him our life, our sufferings and our work.