

Summary of July 15

This week we spent time prayerfully considering the Thirteenth Chapter of St. John's Gospel which takes place at the Mystical Supper. Christ will soon "pass over" to the Father through the upcoming events of His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. The saving work of Jesus will inaugurate a new Exodus for the people of God and liberate us from sin, selfishness and Satan (see Catechism of the Catholic Church #1340).

This is why the Eastern Churches refer to the feast of Jesus' death and resurrection traditionally as "Pascha" or "Passover" rather than Easter. The Synoptic Gospels affirm this was during the Passover meal and offer its article on this question.

The English word *Easter*, according to the *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, comes from the Anglo-Saxon "*Eastre*," the name of the Teutonic goddess of dawn and spring. When the pagan Germanic peoples were evangelized, they retained the use of the title of this pre-Christian, spring festival because the feast of the Resurrection coincided with it. Thus *Easter* carries the connotation of the season of the rising sun and new life in Spring. Since the Greeks, Latins and Armenians were evangelized before Christianity's spread to Anglo-Saxon lands, these Churches [along with the Slavic Churches who are daughters to the Church of Constantinople] use the more historic title of the feast of the Resurrection -*Pascha* which comes from the Aramaic word for *Passover*. In the New Testament St. Paul uses the Greek word *Pascha* to refer to Jesus who is our Passover Lamb (cf. 1 Cor 5:7). The Orthodox Study Bible explains, "Originally *Pascha* designated the Jewish Passover: now, it is the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ. Christ is the Lamb of God whose sacrifice delivers the faithful from death, as the sacrifice of the passover lamb delivered the ancient Jews from slavery and death in Egypt (Ex. 12; 13; 1 Cor. 5:7, 8)." Thus, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "*Passover remains a Christian theme of observance*" (CCC #1170).

The passage states, "Jesus loved them to the end." This refers to His death on the cross. Thus, the Passover and our Lord's Final Sacrifice on the Cross serves as a backdrop for the Last Supper and this entire section we have now entered (Chaps 14-17).

It is interesting that in our last chapter Mary the sister of Lazarus showed an extreme act of humility to our Lord by anointing His feet with costly fragrant oil and then wiping it with her hair. Now this week Jesus, who is known to the Disciples as their Master and Rabbi, does an equally meaningful act of humility in washing His own disciples feet in order to give them a profound example. What is demonstrated in both of these examples is the importance of humility and the love of God and the love of neighbor.

We participate in Christ's death through Baptism (read Rom 6:3 and the OSB note). But Confession is sometimes piously called "Second Baptism" for those who undergo profound experiences of contrition and -by God's mercy- are even granted a "gift of tears." This is sometimes known as the "Baptism in Tears."

When Jesus says, "he who receives whomever I send, receives me..." He referring to His disciples/apostles. The word "apostle" means "one whom is sent." The Apostles and the Hierarchy of the Church are those who are officially ordained and sent by Christ into the world to (1) preach His truth and (2) bring His love into the world. We are all called to incarnate Christ's love (to make it palpable) to others. As Christ told His Apostles in Mt 28: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (19-20). We are all called to share Christ's love and truth but those in the hierarchy are ordained to authoritatively teach it.

The statement in 13:18 "he who ate my bread..." is a quotation from Ps 40:10 LXX where the Psalmist laments the treachery of his trusted companion, who ate at his table as a friend only to betray him as a foe. The one "whom Jesus loved" is identified in Christian Tradition as the Apostle John. "Lying close" is a reference to the ancient practice when festal meals were eaten, of not sitting, but in eating in a reclining position on cushions spread around a short table.

At 13:26-30 notice that Judas receives the Holy Bread, the Body of Christ and then immediately goes out and betrays Him. This is a lesson for all of us. We can receive Holy Communion unto life and remission of sins or we can receive it unto our own condemnation if we take it for granted and not for its true purpose to unite us more closely to God. When Jesus adds, "Do more quickly," according to St. John Chrysostom this "is not the expression of one commanding, nor advising, but of one reproaching, and showing him that He wanted to correct him, but that since he was incorrigible He let him go."

Finally it is precisely when Christ accepts His suffering at the hands of evil men that He shows us the dimensions of God's love for the world (Rom 5:8, Jn 3:16). Lev 19:18 commanded the love of neighbor but Jesus Christ takes it to a supernatural level by His own example. Love one another... as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends (Jn 15:12-13).

**Your brother,
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