



June 3, 2018 Mk. 14: 12-16, 22-26 & Ex 24: 3-8

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [Communion Call](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. [Ron. The Eucharist as God's Touch](#)  
[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

It is unlikely that the disciples had even a faint glimpse of what was going to happen at that last supper. The confusion and fear of what might be coming down on them must have totally overtaken their listening abilities that night. But later on, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who reminded them of all that Jesus said and did, they slowly came to realize what really happened that fateful night. Now through their witness we too can be part of this covenant of pouring out of God's love on all creation. Take some time this week to sit quietly and reflect on this great farewell gift that Jesus brings us from God.

Mk. 14: 12 On the first day of the Feast of **Unleavened Bread**, when it was customary to sacrifice the **Passover lamb**, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the **Passover**?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a **man carrying a jar of water** will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the **owner of the house** he enters, "The Teacher asks: Where is my **guest room**, where I may

eat the **Passover** with my disciples?" 15 He will show you a large **upper room**, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the **Passover**.

22 While they were **eating**, Jesus took **bread**, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my **body**."

23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and **offered** it to them, and they all **drank** from it. 24 This is my **blood** of the **covenant**, which is **poured out** for many," he said to them. 25 I tell you the truth, I will not **drink** again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I **drink** it anew in the **kingdom of God**." 26 When they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the **Mount of Olives**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** It has been said that we all are tomorrow's food. How is my life becoming nourishment for others?

**PRAYER:** Passover Lamb Jesus, you offer your total being of body and blood to nourish me as I grope towards my own death and resurrection. I come to the table of offering each time with just a glimpse of the enormous gift that this is for my well-being. I am drawn like a moth to a flame as I willingly let you transform my being into yours. Help me to sink down ever deeper into this essential covenant you have made with me. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**UNLEAVENED BREAD:** At that first Passover time was critical, and eating on the run didn't leave time for letting dough rise: therefore the need for unleavened bread.

*Have you ever "ate on the run" because of a crisis in your life? If so, what do you remember about that time that could help you understand this passage better?*

**PASSOVER/ LAMB:** The Passover lamb, whose blood smeared on the door posts of the people, spared those fleeing Pharaoh's wrath.

*What makes the Passover a fitting time for Jesus to give us the Eucharist?*

**MAN CARRYING A JAR OF WATER:** It would be very unusual for a man to carry a water jar as that was a woman's task in those times.

*How did this enable the disciples to cooperate with Jesus' request without causing suspicion? What would Jesus do today to set up that same 'undercover' task?*

**OWNER OF THE HOUSE:** It appears that Jesus must have gone ahead and set everything up with the owner of the house.

*If you were the owner of a house today would you be brave enough to cooperate with Jesus if it meant the same risk?*

**GUEST/UPPER ROOM:** A guest /upper room would be a place big enough for a triclinium (see information and picture below) for a gathering of people. Such a room often hosted the early church's gatherings for prayer and worship before anything such as a church came to be.

*Where would you look to find such a place today? Do you have such a place?*

**EATING/ DRINK:** To eat and drink with someone implies total acceptance of the person.

*What offers that same welcome and acceptance in today's society? What gatherings to you have that you carefully select the guest lists?*

**OFFERED:** When we offer someone something or ourselves we freely choose to impose a limit on ourselves. We also make ourselves vulnerable to having our offering rejected.

*How do you discern what is a free offering compared to a bargain for something?*

**BODY/BLOOD:** The body and blood of a living being is their total essence in the world of space and time.

*How does receiving Christ's body and blood release us from the constraints of being in the world of space and time?*

**COVENANT:** A covenant is a promise made between two parties.

*When you receive the Eucharist do you experience participating in God's covenant?*

**POURED OUT:** To pour out implies a liberal emptying into something.

*How is receiving the Eucharist emptying God's being into your being?*

**KINGDOM OF GOD:** The Kingdom of God is that reality where all is what God intends it to be.

*How does sharing in the Eucharist helping you to be part of this reality here and now?*

**SUNG A HYMN:** We are told that the disciples went out singing a hymn as they went to the Mount of Olives.

*Does this clue us into Mark's agenda and set us up for a worship experience?*

**MOUNT OF OLIVES:** The Mount of Olives was a place to raise olive trees and usually contained a press to make oil.

*What makes this a perfect place to set in motion what is to come next?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mk. 14:12 // Lk. 22: 7-11; Mt. 26: 17-19, 26-29;

Mk. 14:22 // Lk. 22: 19ff / 1 Cor. 2:23 ff;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Ex. 24: 3-8; [Ps. 116: 12-18](#); Heb. 9: 11-15; Mk. 14: 12-16, 22-26;

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Sm. 15:34-16:13; [Ps 20](#); 2 Cor. 5: 6-17; Mk. 4: 26-34;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

[That Last Supper Memory](#) became the galvanizing core of the future gatherings of his followers. At each of those millenniums of mystical meals they observed the Memory of how he gave away himself...body, blood and spirit to all. The captivating energy within that Sacred Memory shouts, "Remember, so you also can give away yourself in love." Ed Hays

In the homily for Corpus Christi in Fr. Beck's collection listed below, he says: "The cup is the symbol of accepting the call to risk. It is the cup of commitment to a call with consequences. It is a cup of courage, not to falter when the difficulties arise." Read the entire homily for a deep drink from his cup of words.

Eucharist is presence encountering presence--mutuality, vulnerability. There is nothing to prove, to protect, or to sell. It feels so empty, naked, and harmless, that all you can do is be present. The Eucharist is telling us that God is the food and all we have to do is provide the hunger. Somehow we have to make sure that each day we are hungry, that there's room inside of us for another presence. If you are filled with your own opinions, ideas, righteousness, superiority, or sufficiency, you are a world unto yourself and there is no room for "another." Despite all our attempts to define who is worthy and who is not worthy to receive communion, our only ticket or prerequisite for coming to Eucharist is hunger. And most often sinners are hungrier than "saints. Richard Rohr

The table is one of the most intimate places in our lives. It is there that we give ourselves to one another. When we say, "Take some more, let me serve you another plate, let me pour you another glass, don't be shy, enjoy it," we say a lot more than our words express. We invite our friends to become part of our lives. We want them to be nurtured by the same food and drink that nurture us. We desire communion. That is why a refusal to eat and drink what a host offers is so offensive. It feels like a rejection of an invitation to intimacy. Strange as it may sound, the table is the place where we want to become food for one another. Every breakfast, lunch, or dinner can become a time of growing communion with one another. Henri Nouwen

The reign of God isn't a place where God is. It's that realm where all of us live together under God and within God's overwhelming love. We enter into that realm of God, or reign of God, and we live differently. We begin to live as God lived through Jesus.

Bp. Thomas Gumbleton



The Gospels all describe Jesus and his disciples as reclining at table to eat the Last Supper. This had become the traditional way to eat the Passover meal because in Roman society all free men ate in a reclined position. The furnished upper room in Jerusalem probably looked a lot like this replica of a dining room, or *triclinium* (Latin for “three couches”), from Pompeii. Food was served on the U-shaped table while diners relaxed on cushions around three sides, lying propped up on one arm, with their heads near the center.

The feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) comes to us following the feast of the Trinity. In the early church, one of the first things the people did was to gather around the table with bread and wine and Jesus instructed them to do the night before he died. Thomas Aquinas composed the office for this feast in 1246. It brings to mind all the previous promises of God feeding the people (Is. 25:6; 65:13-14; Ps. 78:19; 81:16). It resembles Elisha feeding 100 people in 2 Kings 4:42-44. Going back still farther we remember the people

in the desert with Moses being given the Manna to sustain them (Ex. 16:4). God seems to be always on the lookout for our well being. We celebrate this confidence in the feast known as Corpus Christi. St. Juliana was a saint who in her prayer life first thought of the idea. Then St. Thomas Aquinas wrote all of the prayers and the hymns that we use on the feast. And it developed as a procession feast and wasn't just something where people came together in church and celebrated Mass as we do this morning. No, it was what you might call an action feast and they acted on the truth of the Blessed Sacrament. And so they carried the Blessed Sacrament around their whole village; through the town, wherever they lived, their homes, their workplaces and so on, to dramatize the conviction they had that God journeys with us wherever we go. God is always with us and we have the Blessed Sacrament as the clear sacramental sign of God's presence. They would carry the tools of their craft with them. They would visit all of the special places they wanted God to be with them; hospitals or places where there were sick people, or places where there were hungry people and so on. God was journeying with them in their everyday life. And that's a part of the feast that we need to think about -- how God is with us.

In any poetic context, the sign of bread is that of nourishment, life sustained. But the life that is given here is more than ordinary life. In this discourse, Jesus is elaborating a deeper meaning for the sign of bread. We speak of the breaking of the bread. The bread is broken for one reason—to share it. To distribute it among others. The Supper is a meal, with many present. In the miracle of the loaves there were even more present. In the miracle of the loaves, Jesus shows the people the God who sustains us. This is because they were in a desert place, and were fed. It was natural, then, to think of the Israelite people in the desert, fed by the manna. John's Gospel works this connection vigorously. The lesson is insistent: the manna was the staff of life in the tenuous conditions of the desert sojourn. It was temporary. It served its purpose, but it melted away before the day was out. It was the epitome of transient goods, and in this it well represented the daily blessings of a benevolent God. But Jesus uses this very ephemeral quality to make a point: This bread is forever. That is, the life it gives will be forever. Fr. Robert Beck

Our God, not only unfolding himself in each one of us as bread, but also giving us of his inner life to sustain and enfold us into the Oneness of His Spirit.

Remember the thrilling and interesting insight of Jacob Brownowski in his book “Ascent of Man.” How God raised the level of consciousness of primitive nomadic peoples to bread and wheat as symbol of the nurturing life of God. The symbolism of bread that comes down to us through the ancestors of Jesus. Deep in the misty past of a Melchizedek who heralded bread and a priestly people. The symbolism Jesus raises to that of sacrament, his life, the very life of God. “On the same night he was betrayed, he took bread and thanked ‘God...broke it and said, “This is my body”...The life we already possess, to unfold and to be enfolded.

Centuries of secularism have failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence...To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions. People may not understand what that 'something more' is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life. Alexander Schmemmann

The table represents the unknown yearning of every human heart for communion with the “something more” that infuses all that exists. Pg. 110 Homan, Daniel, OSB & Pratt, Lonni Collins. [Radical Hospitality](#). Brewster, MA. Paraclete Press. 2002.

Now chew on this mystery! “Take this,” “eat and drink this”—not alone, but together “until I return,” and you will have the heart of the message, a “new covenant” of indwelling love that is not grounded in worthiness in any form, but merely in a willingness to participate and trust. Your drinking and eating is your agreement to “do what I can to make up in my own body all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body the church” (Colossians 1:24). *We should hold ourselves apart from this meal only if we are not really sure we are willing and ready to do this!* (Which might mean that many of us should not participate!) It is an act of radical solidarity and responsibility much more than a “prize for the perfect” as Pope Francis says

The Eucharist is an encounter of the heart, knowing Presence through our available presence. In the Eucharist, we move beyond mere words and thinking with the rational mind and go to that place where we don’t talk about the Mystery anymore; we begin to chew on it. Jesus did not say, “Think about this more” or “stare at this;” he said, “Eat this!” It was to be an action. Richard Rohr

"Not long ago I took my older daughter to a talk given by a nutritionist, sponsored by the local girls’ running group. She said something that has stuck with me as I’ve been planning our meals: if you don’t get the food your body needs, you’ll crave the wrong things like sugar and salt and fat. Eat right, she said, and the cravings will disappear.... In light of all this, I have approached the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with new eyes. The Eucharist is our food for eternal life. I think of this not as something out there in the distant future, but rather as a way of living in the here and now. Lacking this food, our spirit reaches out for wrong cravings: power and wealth and honors and all the rest. With this food, we become more and more capable of living eternal life. We become what we eat, though in the way opposite to eating. Instead of the food becoming part of us, we become part of the Body of Christ. We become what we eat." -- Tim Muldoon

His body is food for the life of the world and the world is larger than the church. Jesus came into the world to be eaten up by the world. For this reason, he was born in a manger, a feeding-trough, a place where animals come to eat, and it's for this reason that he eventually ends up on a table, an altar, to be eaten by human beings. Jesus came not to defend himself, the church, or the faith, but as nourishment for the planet. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

I wonder if every table is really an altar. Both our Eucharistic and daily nourishment comes to us because of someone's sweat and blood. John McHugh

Gandhi said, “There are so many hungry people in the world that God could only come into the world in the form of food.

Mk. 14: 22–25: Churches recite the words of the Last Supper as the Eucharist (Gk for “giving thanks”); it is also referred to in various Christian traditions as “Holy Communion” or “The Lord’s Supper.” It is treated here as a real meal, as also in 1 Cor 11.20–32. A different early Eucharist is found in the early Christian document Did. 9.1–10.15, which is more typical of Jewish meal prayers (m. Ber. 7.1–5) and theology, but the one here became dominant in the Christian tradition. Christians over the centuries have disagreed about whether Christ is literally or symbolically present in the bread and wine, whether the wine is to be consumed by priests alone while the congregation consumes bread only, whether alcoholic wine is used, or wafer or a loaf of bread is used. Various denominations have also differed about the meaning of this practice: whether, for instance, it participates in Jesus’ sacrifice of his life on the cross, or is a memorial of that event. The language of consuming Jesus’ body and blood is perhaps deliberately shocking, since consumption of animal blood is forbidden for Jews (Lev 17.10–11). 22: Bread, in keeping with Passover, this should be unleavened bread (Heb “ma tzah”). 24: The covenant is ratified by Jesus’ blood just as Moses ratified the Sinai covenant with blood (Ex 24.1–8; Zech 9.11). Mark’s language suggests a covenant renewal rather than a new covenant. Matthew explicitly adds “for the forgiveness of sins” (cf. 1 Cor 15.3; Heb 9.11–22; 1 Pet 1.18–19). 25: On the messiah’s future banquet, cf. Isa 25.6, taken up also at Qumran (1QM 2.11–22; cf. 1 En. 10.18–19). 14.26–31: Pg. 90. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

As the conditioning to selfishness and domination of others is incrementally neutralized by the evocative power of the eucharistic ritual and other transformative practices, the “still small voice” of our fleshly organism can be heard clearer and clearer. We come to discover that we were perfect bodies all along, a perfect mirror of the material LIFE that enlivens the universe, now increasingly cleansed of the deformities ... the insanities of our delusional, paranoid, egomaniacal culture. We no longer look on our companions in life with anything but compassion for the suffering and anxiety that we continue to heap on one another under the delusion of the need to acquire existence in competition with others. We assume the burden of assuring that no one suffers injustice or rejection. We come to recognize our material organism for the “divine” thing it really is and has been all along. We no longer make the mistake about where “God” is to be found, or what he looks like. We discover that the face of God we have been searching for is our own. Tony Equale

#### **ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.88-90. To order contact [Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs. 85-88.