

2020

## **Synod Theme: The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper** – 1 Cor. 11:23 –

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***For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."***

What does the Lord's Supper mean? The early church remembered that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night of the Passover meal (Luke 22:13-20). The Passover Story; In Exodus 12, we have the story of the Passover, which was to be celebrated with thankfulness and solemnity each year 'for the generations to come' (Exodus 12:14, 42). The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years, since Joseph had been appointed its governor (see Genesis chapters 41 – 47). Now they numbered around 600,000 men, besides women and children, and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, would not let them return home. Moses and Aaron had pleaded with him to let them go, but he refused. God sent plagues, but Pharaoh's heart remained hard. Now came the most painful plague of all; the death of every firstborn son and animal in every Egyptian household. The Lord would, however, 'pass over' the homes of the Israelite families.

In preparation for this plague, the Lord instructed Moses in detail. That month would become the first month of the Israelite year. On the tenth day each Israelite household was to select a one-year-old lamb (or kid) without defect; on the fourteenth day the animal would be slaughtered at twilight, roasted that evening, and eaten with bitter herbs and with bread made without yeast. All Israelites were to mark their homes by smearing the blood of these animals on the lintel and the doorposts. This is how the

Israelite homes would be recognized and passed over, while the Egyptian firstborn sons and animals died.

In fear, Pharaoh now drove the Israelites out of Egypt. Their dramatic journey into Sinai is recorded in Exodus 12 – 14. They left Egypt not just as the Israelites, but as God's covenant people.

To understand the 'new Covenant' we must understand the first Covenant. For as we remember our Lord's death in the holy communion service, we find ourselves in a long trajectory of grace, reaching forward from ancient times – from the Israelites' exodus, and their delivery from slavery.

**The Last Supper** – Christ's disciples had been with him for three years, yet, they still did not understand his mission – that he had been born to die. As they ate together on that Thursday evening, the eternal Son of God was able to show them why he had come, in terms they would eventually recognize.

The disciples knew their history, and celebrated the Passover every year; they had done so with Jesus at least twice already, but the connection with his death had not dawned on them. Now, as Jesus knows his betrayal is only a few hours away, he holds up the Passover bread, and then the wine, and declares 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood'. He is saying, 'Look, this is what I mean, I have come to deliver you from slavery. Don't you understand?' It is no coincidence that Jesus' final meal with his disciples took place during the Jewish feast of the Passover.

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper in our Churches today, we look back to that Thursday evening in Jerusalem, and we look further back, as Jesus and his disciples did, to the events of the Passover. It is true that there is mystery here, but mystery is not the same as mystification. It is a mystery

which is meant to be understood. It was God who arranged for the betrayal of Jesus to be on Passover night’.

The Israelites, brought out of bondage, were the people of God. That is the context in which God gives them the Ten Commandments, opening with the words, ‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me’. He was not just giving them laws to be obeyed, but establishing his covenant with them, the covenant described in the New Testament as ‘the old covenant’.

As Christ holds up the bread and the wine, he is announcing a ‘new covenant’.

This new covenant is what lies behind the Apostle Paul’s statement that ‘if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone; the new has come’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus, ‘You who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ’ (Ephesians 2:13). To be ‘brought near’ is a technical phrase meaning to be brought into the covenant. This new covenant would also draw in those who were not Jews, but Gentiles, and in due time the gospel would spread to every continent. The fulfillment of that new covenant in our lives is described by Paul in one of the richest phrases in the New Testament, ‘union with Christ’. We have died with him and he lives in us by his Holy Spirit. By his death we are welcomed into fellowship and into friendship with the Son of God.

Just as Passover celebrates deliverance from sin by Christ’s death; Christians pose several different possibilities for what Christ meant when he said, “This is my body (i) some believe that the bread and wine actually become Christ’s physical body and blood – (transubstantiation). (ii) Others believe that the bread and wine remained unchanged, but Christ is spiritually

present with the bread and wine. (iii) Still others believe that the bread and wine symbolize Christ's body and blood.

Christians generally agree, however, that participating in the Lord's Supper is an important element in the Christian faith and that Christ's presence strengthens us spiritually.

### **What is the new covenant?**

In the old covenant, people could approach God only through the priests and the sacrificial system. Jesus' death on the Cross ushered in the new covenant or agreement between God and Christians. Now all people can personally approach God and communicate with Him through prayers. The people of Israel first entered into this agreement after their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 24) and it was designed to point to the day when Jesus Christ would come.

The new covenant completes, rather than replaces the old covenant, fulfilling everything the old covenant looked forward to (Jeremiah 31:31 – 34). Eating the bread and drinking the wine shows that we are remembering Christ's death for us and renewing our commitment to serve Him. For eating the bread (body) and drinking the wine (blood of Jesus) symbolize that we became one with Jesus.

Jesus said, "Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me..." How do we remember Christ in the Lord's Supper? By thinking about what He did i.e his sacrificial death in the place of us sinners and why he did it. He died the painful death so that we might live and live eternally. Every time we gather at the Lord's Table to celebrate Holy Communion, we remember that Christ rescued us from slavery of sin and provided us with eternal life (John 10:28).

Paul gives specific instructions on how the Lord's Supper should be observed:

(i) We should take the Lord's Supper thoughtfully because we are proclaiming that Christ died for our sins. (ii) We should take it worthily, with due reverence and respect (1 Cor.11:27) (iii) We should examine ourselves for any unconfessed sin or resentful attitude (1 Cor.11:28). (iv) We should be considerate of others (1 cor. 11:33) waiting until everyone is there and then eating in orderly and unified manner.

We must not take the Supper in unworthy manner. Here we refer to church members who will rush into the Lord's Supper without thinking of its meaning. Those who do so are guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord; instead of honouring His sacrifice, they are sharing in the guilt of those who crucified Christ. In reality, no one is worthy to take the Lord's Supper. We are all sinners saved by grace. This is why we should prepare ourselves for Communion through healthy introspection confession of sins, and resolution of differences with others. These actions remove the barriers that affect our relationship with Christ and with other believers. Awareness of your sin should not keep you away from the Communion but should drive you to participate in it.

*The following articles of faith give more enlightenment on the Lord's Supper:  
Article 26 & 28 – Book of Common Prayer page 380 –*

### **XXVIII of the Lord's Supper**

THE Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but it is repugnant, to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper Is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

In 1662 prayer book, the prayer of humble access explains all our expectations as we partake in the Lord's Supper. Let us say the prayer together, kneeling; p 178 of Hymns Ancient and Modern and The Book of Common Prayer.

*We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies, We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table, But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.*

**XXVL of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament.**

ALTHOUGH in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet, forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry both in hearing the Word of God, and in the receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that enquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgement be deposed.

The Lord's Supper is the service of the church and all other services like marriage, ordination, consecration, dedication, burial and even baptism and so on, are usually tagged to the Lord's Supper.

From the beginning of the Christian church, the members have seen it as the central act of their worship, because it was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ during the Passover feast before His passion. He was the Host at the Feast, and the victim. His Flesh was the bread and his Blood was the wine. He further commanded His disciples to do it in remembrance of Him. John Parr commenting on the Lord's Supper writes:

Even those for whom it is not so frequent often regard it as being precious and special. Down the centuries much ink, and even blood, have been split over its interpretation, but at its heart it symbolizes the generosity of the God of life towards the world, His willingness to share Himself with human beings in order to nourish us with His grace (Guidelines to the Bible May – August, 1994; p.118) ... Liberation theology sees God's purpose for His creation in terms of communion with God and among people. In the base communities, Holy Communion is not just a religious service: it symbolizes and demonstrates God's purpose for the world, as a sacrament of salvation. Holy Communion is both a gift and a task: liberation theology insists that we cannot enjoy it and at the same time live in the world, with all its divisions, untouched (Guidelines to the Bible, May – August, 1994; p.118).

“Holy Communion is symbolized not only by the sharing of bread and wine in the Eucharist, but also by the fair distribution of money and resources (see Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37) (Guidelines to the Bible, May-August, 1994; p.119).

**How often?** Right from the beginning of the Christian church, the Lord's Supper was usually celebrated everyday (cf. Acts 2:46), but by the time of St. Paul as recorded in Acts 20:7, it had become a weekly affair. Today, the frequency of celebration is never the same. The Latin Church and some Anglican Churches celebrate the Lord's Supper everyday, while some



other Churches in order to avoid familiarity which can breed contempt celebrate it weekly or monthly.

The constitution of the Diocese of Ilesa, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) chapter 16 section (v) ...a,b,c,d, mention among others that a person to be elected to the Parish Church Council must be a communicating communicant i.e. the person who is in union with Christ:

- a) The Electorate shall comprise of all subscribing members who have attained the age of eighteen and who are baptized and not under any law of suspension, and who pay not less than the amount fixed for that congregation as the Church Dues.
- b) The names of all members of the electorate shall be placed on an electoral roll marked "A".
- c) Any member whose name is entitled to be included in the electoral roll and whose name is absent or has been removed from the roll or is otherwise not inserted in the Register shall appeal first to the vicar and if he fails to obtain satisfaction, may appeal to the Bishop in regard thereto and the Bishop's decision shall be final.
- d) A person shall qualify for election if he is (aa) subscribing member; (bb) of a minimum age of eighteen; and (cc) a confirmed member and practicing Communicant who has neither been excommunicated nor has placed himself in such a position as might make him liable to suspension from Holy Communion.

**Names of the Lord's Supper:** There are at least ten names used for the Holy Communion. The earliest seems to be the Breaking of Bread (cf. Acts 2:42-46 and Acts 20:7). The Name Eucharist seems to be the most

popular in the Primitive Church. Henry Wanshrough writing on the Eucharist in one of the articles on the School of Prayer writes:

‘Efcharisto’, says the little girl in Greece as you hand her a sweet: ‘Thank you’. ‘Efcharisto’, says the girl at the check-out counter casually as you hand her the money. The Eucharist is all about thanks (and modern Greeks pronounce the ancient u as f).

When Jesus sat at His Last Supper with His disciples for the Passover meal, the thanksgiving was about liberation. A name response to a question from the youngest member of the party, the father of the household, explained the meaning of the meal, and all its unusual elements, in terms of thanks for the deliverance from Egypt, and for all the mighty works God did for His people in the desert of Sinai. It was a recital of God’s glorious interventions for His people ... The great prayer of the Eucharist is still a hymn of thanks for the great deeds of God (Daylight May – August, 1994; p.123).

The name Sacrifice or The Sacrifice reminds us of the one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice of our Lord, which demands our own sacrifice.

**THE OBLATION**: This name reminds us of the lifting up of our Lord on the cross. During the service the elements are lifted up. He will draw all men unto Himself (John 12:32).

**THE HOLY COMMUNION:** St.. Paul in 1 Cor.10:16, used the word Communion. The Lord's Supper is an expression of our unity which is in Christ.

**THE LORD'S SUPPER:** This name is appropriate for the Eucharist because it was instituted at Supper time (cf. 1 Cor.11:20); Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-19).

**THE MASS:** This is the common name for the Eucharist in the Latin Church. It comes from the word Missa. The word missa comes from the Latin word MISSIO (dismissal) which comes from Mitto, mittere, missa, missum. Missa then means be dismissed or you are dismissed. Missa comes later on to be used for the Mass of the Catechumens (Missa Catechumenorum) and the Mass of the Faithful (Missa Fidelium).

**THE LITURGY:** This name comes from the Greek word leitourgia which means public service. The word service is always used synonymously with worship. Hence, the Eucharist is seen as service.

**THE SACRAMENT:** Which comes from the Latin word sacramentum and Greek mysterion was not used originally for the Holy Communion. But nowadays when the Holy Communion is regarded as the service of the Church the word Sacrament is used for the Holy Communion.

**VIATICUM:** The name viaticum is used for the Holy Communion when administered to the dying as directed by the council of Nicaea of A.D.325. It is worth mentioning that the names synaxis, Agenda and Mystagogia are occasionally used for the Eucharist.

**THE CONTENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:** There is one basic fact that all Eucharistic Services of different denominations can be divided into two main parts, which are the Missa Catechumenorum (Mass of the Catechumens) and Missa Fidelium (Mass of the Faithful). The New Liturgy of the Province of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

**CONCLUSION:** Let us view some passages from Daylight meditations for 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1994 and 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1994 and words for Today, 1994. Henry Wansbrough writes:

A meal is always a festive occasion. It may be the family meeting together. It may be friends joining up again. It may be a welcome to a passing acquaintance. It may be a sweetener in a business deal.. But a meal without a smile, a meal without any joining of hearts is a monster. In a society without police or hotels, this was even more the case: friends relied on friends to help them and provide safety on their journey. The horror of Judas' betrayal was that he had just shared same dish, the expression of fraternity. In a world without telephones and little post, meeting together brought an added excitement ...

Whatever the details, the essence of the Eucharist is sharing in Christ as one family at Christ's own meal. It is the expression and the nourishment of unity. Most importantly, it is the expression that our unity is in Christ. It is not because we particularly like each other, that we live near each other, or that we share the same interests

or tendencies. But our unity is Christ, and as I look at another person across the church, our bond is Christ. (Daylight; May-August, 1994; p.124).

Love was the distinctive mark of the early Church (cf Acts 2:43-45; Acts 4:33f), and that love was rekindled by the regular communion of members at the Lord's Table. Unfortunately, that love has waned in the so-called Western world and in Africa today. Mary Cotes writing on the fading love of the Ephesians Church in Revelation 2:1-7, calls all Christians to order and especially those of us who call on the Name of the Lord in Nigeria. She starts by narrating the story of a hero who rode into a town, seeking revenge on the two men who murdered his brother. The first he avenged when he beat him up in the saloon bar, humiliating him in the public. The second, he shot dead in a thrilling mountain battle. The sheriff's daughter, young, attractive and marriageable, fell instantly in love with him, and the whole town acclaimed him the victor.

She continues: Cowboy films represent in caricature the images upon which western society is built (and even Nigeria too). Male aggression, competitiveness and individualism are seen as seductive virtues, and there is little room for mercy or forgiveness. These values are even reflected in the church, where 'good' leaders are often thought to be the men who appear the most invincible.

In God's sight, the 'one who conquers' is not the one who shows the greatest lust for power, nor even the one who shows the greatest zeal for truth. It is the one who loves. This is what the Church of Ephesus needs to learn. Perhaps, we should learn it too. It might turn our cowboy mentality upside down (Words for Today 1994; p.179).

**Your Bishop & Friend,**  
+ *Olubayo Ilesa.*