

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Maundy Thursday — March 28, 2024

“And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’”

– Mark 14:22 –

The disciples were probably expecting a very different meal when they gathered in that upper room; they wanted a King, but Jesus acted as a servant. He spoke of death, betrayal, and denial. Peter, as usual, made great claims of his love for Jesus and his willingness to even die. Jesus told him that he would, that very evening, deny Him three times. Jesus knew Judas was the betrayer, and was clearly in control as He told Judas to do the task quickly. The disciples were confused by the words of Jesus, and became agitated as the vision they had of a kingdom began to fall apart before their eyes. Even though He knew He was just hours from betrayal, denial, and abandonment, He comforted them. He promised the Holy Spirit who would help them continue His work after His death. He established a new covenant with His people, one of life, hope and remembrance.

It was the Passover meal, but Jesus chose to use the most ordinary elements as the sign of His new covenant. Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and shared it with His disciples. Then He took wine, blessed it and passed the cup around the table to all the disciples. Every culture has some form of bread that is a staple food source, and wine was commonplace on ancient dinner tables. Jesus chose the ordinary things for the sacramental meal that He gave to His Church. Jesus used the ordinary food of the people and yet, this ordinary meal of bread and wine is something extraordinary, because it is shared with all Christians in every time and in every place.

When we are at the table receiving the bread and wine, we are at the table with those first disciples who received it on the night Jesus was betrayed. When we take the bread and wine, we are taking it with our friends who live in other places. The meal is a foretaste of the feast to come; every time we share it, we escape time and space and enter into the holy presence of God. The common elements of this special meal are made remarkable by the words spoken over them. There for an instant at the table of our Lord, we are in eternity with our Father at that banquet He has promised!

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