

Contexts

Mark's Gospel

- Composed between 65-70 CE
- Generally accepted as the first Gospel written.
- Authorship is unclear but possibly written by John Mark, the companion of Peter in Rome.
- Begins with the ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness, then the Baptism of Jesus, then Jesus battling the forces of evil in the wilderness.
- First action of Jesus is to establish a community to establish the kingdom of God.
- Major work of this community is the work of healing and restoring God's right order, as opposed to the order of Rome, or the order established by the scribes and Pharisees, or religious and cultural norms of the time.
- Cleansing & healing stories restore people to their proper (rightful) place in the Kingdom and in human society (no longer outcasts, despised, unclean, etc).
- The right order of God's kingdom shatters and goes beyond the human and religious limitations placed on some of God's beloved sons and daughters.
- There is a characteristic starkness in Mark's Gospel – it is the shortest of the 4 canonical Gospels.
- Often the story is told by contrast – who is truly blind: the blind beggar or the seeing disciples, etc.

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 – things to notice

- Mark's account of the Last Supper
- Told in characteristic stark style – no washing of feet, etc.
- Begins with preparation for the Passover meal – references to the Jewish commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt.
- 'On the first day of Unleavened Bread...' – very confusing reference .
- Note that Jesus is in charge of the arrangements but sends the disciples to do the work of preparation. Mark, uncharacteristically includes a lot of detail here, but no one seems to know quite why.
- At table, Jesus takes the role of host and 'father' of the family as he and his disciples eat the meal.
- The traditional Passover meal was a celebration of communion with all Jews, past and present. It was also a celebration of remembering what God had done for them in delivering them from slavery in Egypt and leading them into the promised land.
- BUT, 'and while they were eating, he took some bread....' In the formal Passover meal bread was eaten first and the rest of the meal followed. Wine (3 cups) were consumed towards the end of the meal. Mark's pattern of events may mean that this was not actually a Passover meal at all.
- Note Jesus' reference to the 'blood of the covenant' (again, a reference back to Moses and the blood of the covenant – cf First Reading for today's Feast - & also found in Matthew) whereas Luke & John speak of the 'new covenant of (made in/by) my blood'.
- 'Blood' represent life and the life force. In the Old Testament, the people are allowed to sacrifice animals (but not humans) providing that the blood was properly disposed of.
- In the first reading Moses uses the blood of the sacrificed animals to consecrate the altar and the people. The blood represents God's life binding the two together in a 'communion covenant'.

- 'I shall not drink any more wine until I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.'
A reference to the Messianic banquet. What Jesus does here is connected to the future as well as being in the present.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on for the Trinity Sunday ?

Our return to the Ordinary Time of the Church year is marked by three feasts: Pentecost (2 Sundays ago), Trinity (last Sunday) and the Body and Blood of Christ (today).

These feasts celebrate our faith in God (Trinity) and the enduring presence of Christ in the Church and the world through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and the Eucharist (Body & Blood of Christ).

The Body & Blood of Christ in the Eucharist is the tangible symbol and reminder of the presence of Jesus in the church.

We are the people of the Covenant made in the blood of Christ.

Note the use of food to convey the presence of Christ. Eating and drinking are fundamental to human existence. We use food and drink to nourish our bodies and cheer our spirits; to create a sense of community out of a gathering of people; to celebrate important events (both happy and sad) and in our day-to-day lives.

That evokes all sorts of thoughts about nourishment, celebration, being in communion with others, preparation and service.

Reflection

Today's feast celebrates the enduring sign of Christ's presence with us in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist.

The Church always uses celebrations not simply to commemorate something in the past, but as a lens to look at the meaning of the celebration in the present. That is part of the 'incarnational' pattern of the Church – enfleshing the mysteries we celebrate.

Our feast today also celebrates Christ's presence with us in the community of the Church. The Eucharist is our sacrament of communion, not only with Christ and God, but also with all those called into the Christian community. Our communion binds us to one another in a sacred union of mind and heart with Jesus.

The word 'communion' means to share in common. In Holy Communion what we share in common with God and each other is Jesus Christ present in the Bread and the Wine. Another meaning of 'communion' is to be of one mind and heart. It is the Holy Spirit who keeps us in communion of mind and heart with God, with Christ and with each other.

We are very used to talking about the Real Presence of Jesus being in the Blessed Sacrament. But the real presence of Christ is also in the community when it gathers in his name to feast on the Word of Scripture, to recall what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper (not only the words over bread and wine, but also the washing of the feet), when it shares the food of the Eucharist together, when it goes out and continues to break and pour out that food in acts of loving kindness, in soothing and nourishing words which brings others to life.

The Eucharist is not an object to be looked at, but an action to be done so that the living presence of Jesus continues to touch and heal.

Maybe we need to think more deeply about the real presence of Jesus being in real, living human beings. Bread and Wine have no eyes to gaze with love, no face with which to smile, no mouth to speak soothing words, no arms to hold the grieving and the sick, or to lend a hand, no ears to hear the pain. But we do.

We are nourished and fed with the life of Christ so that we may be Christ in the world. Together we become the Body of Christ alive and active in our world. That is what energises us to work to transform the injustices and limitations of the world around us. We transform them with the vision (mind) and love (heart) of God so that every person may live, breathe, eat and drink of all the good things God gives us: nature, knowledge, understanding, technology, food, medicine, compassion, justice, goodness, love, peace, forgiveness, encouragement and hope.

So we become the Eucharist that feeds those around us with the nourishment of respect, love, breadth of heart and vision, compassion, hope and forgiveness which enables them to grow in their likeness of God and live their human lives well.

'May we become what we receive' - (St Augustine)