

*Hoc est corpus meum. 'This is my body'.* The writing was on the wall. Jesus had antagonised the authorities again and again. The last straw was to have stormed into the Temple and to have thrown out all the money changers and all those selling animals for sacrifice. Jesus knew his time was up, Jesus knew that that very night the High Priest and the Saducees, in league with the Roman occupying force, would make their move. The outcome was inevitable. *This is my body.* Jesus was offering Himself.

What is more, this is the night the Passover lambs are sacrificed. This is the night blood will be daubed on the doorposts. This is the night children of Israel pass over from slavery to freedom. Jesus shares the Passover with his disciples. The age old ritual is followed, songs and psalms are sung, prayers are pronounced. And then something completely new happens. Jesus takes some bread, says the blessing, breaks it and gives it to them. *'Take it', he says, 'this is my body'.*

Jesus is the new Passover. Jesus is deliberately associating himself with the sacrifice that delivers Israel from evil, the sacrifice that brings prisoners freedom. *Ecce Agnus Dei, .....* 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb'.

To share in the Eucharist, to share in the supper of the Lamb, is the most wonderful privilege and joy. As we gather round the altar we are there with the disciples in the Upper Room. We are with Jesus as he offers himself on the Cross. We are with Jesus as he enters not just something made by man's hands but the sanctuary of heaven itself. *'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.'* The Eucharist is a sharing in the life of God Himself.

And because the Eucharist is our sharing in the life of God, it is also our commissioning to live the life of God in today's world. We are to become within ourselves the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. We are to become true ministers of the gospel trying to bring peace and reconciliation wherever we go. Nothing should frighten us. We have passed over from darkness to light. We are the Body of Christ.

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