

## **THIS IS MY BODY**

1. This is my body, broken for you,  
bringing you wholeness, making you free.  
Take it and eat it, and when you do,  
do it in love for me.

3. Back to my Father soon I shall go.  
Do not forget me; then you will see  
I am still with you, and you will know  
you're very close to me.

5. Love one another - I have loved you,  
and I have shown you how to be free;  
serve one another, and when you do,  
do it in love for me.

2. This is my blood poured out for you,  
bringing forgiveness, making you free  
Take it and drink it, and when you do,  
do it in love for me.

4. Filled with my Spirit, how you will grow!  
You are my branches ; I am the tree  
If you are faithful, others will know  
you are alive in me.

## **THE NIGHT BEFORE OUR SAVIOUR DIED**

1) The night before our Saviour died,  
he took a loaf of bread.  
He blessed it broke it, gave it to  
his friends beside him, and he said:  
"Take this and eat it, do,  
my body now for you" (2)

2) And taking then a cup of wine,  
he offered thanks again,  
and gave it to his friends to drink  
in mem'ry of his coming pain.  
"This is my blood," he said,  
"for you it will be shed." (2)

3) And so sisters and brothers meet,  
remembering the night  
on which our Saviour gave himself  
to be our food, to be our light  
to be our unity,  
the bread of charity. (2)

4) Lord, send your Spirit into us  
And make us one, we pray.  
Make us your body and your blood,  
your presence in the world today.  
Take us and share us, do,  
your body now for you. (2)

5) Lord Jesus, present in our meal,  
be with us all the day,  
in all the people that we meet,  
In everything we do or say.  
And our life will be yours,  
and your life will be ours. (2)

## **HOLY THURSDAY**

### **READINGS FOR THE MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

**(followed by reflections on Service / Priesthood / Eucharist)**

A reading from the book of Exodus

12:1-8. 11-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month is to be the first of all the others for you, the first month of your year. Speak to the whole community of Israel and say, "On the tenth day of this month each man must take an animal from the flock, one for each family: one animal for each household. If the household is too small to eat the animal, a man must join with his neighbour, the nearest to his house, as the number of persons requires. You must take into account what each can eat in deciding the number for the animal. It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year old; you may take it from either sheep or goats. You must keep it till the fourteenth day of the month when the whole assembly of the community of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings. Some of the blood must then be taken and put on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten. That night, the flesh is to be eaten, roasted over the fire; it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. You shall eat it like this: with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand. You shall eat it hastily;

it is a passover in honour of the Lord. That night, I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, man and beast alike, and I shall deal out punishment to all the gods of Egypt, I am the Lord. The blood shall serve to mark the houses that you live in. When I see the blood I will pass over you and you shall escape the destroying plague when I strike the land of Egypt. This day is to be a day of remembrance for you, and you must celebrate it as a feast in the Lord's honour. For all generations you are to declare it a day of festival, for ever."

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Ps.115:12-13. 15-18. R. cf. I Cor 10:16

**R) The blessing-cup that we bless  
is a communion with the blood of Christ.**

How can I repay the Lord  
for his goodness to me?  
The cup of salvation I will raise;  
I will call on the Lord's name. (R)

O precious in the eyes of the Lord  
is the death of his faithful.  
Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;  
you have loosened my bonds. (R)

A thanksgiving sacrifice I make:  
I will call on the Lord's name.  
My vows to the Lord I will fulfil  
before all his people. (R)

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

11:23-26

This is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!**  
**I give you a new commandment:**  
**love one another just as I have loved you, says the Lord.**  
**Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!**

Jn 13:34

The Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

13:1-15

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.

They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.' 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you are.'

When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand' he said 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

1) Brother, sister let me serve you.  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant too.

2) We are pilgrims on a journey,  
And companions on the road;  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.

3) I will hold the Christ light for you  
In the night time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear.

4) I will weep when you are weeping;  
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

5) When we sing to God in heaven  
We shall find such harmony,  
Born of all we've known together  
Of Christ's love and agony.

6) Brother, sister let me serve you.  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant too.

## The Paradox of Divine Humility and Loving Service

(A paradox is when seeming conflicts & opposites are reconciled at a higher level in a way that we may intuit but only partially understand)

'Which of you, who had a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal at once"? Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper ready; fasten your belt and wait on me while I eat and drink. You yourself can eat and drink afterwards"? Must he be grateful to the servant for obeying orders? So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty.'" (Luke 17: 7-10).

'See that you have your belts done up and your lamps lit. Be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Amen I say to you, he will do up his belt, sit them down at table and wait on them. (Luke 12: 36-38)

So no one among human beings should exult: everything belongs to you, whether, Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or the present or the future – all belongs to you; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. (1 Cor 3: 21-22)

From *The Holy Thursday Revolution* by Beatrice Bruteau

### The Two Showings of Holy Thursday

That is the background, the context of the teaching that Jesus practiced by word and deed. Now we come to the two great showings of Holy Thursday. The first is the footwashing. Remember the definition of domination, that it is nonreciprocal. Footwashing is a good way to show a relationship that is nonreciprocal. Servants wash the feet of their lords—in all sorts of ways, literally and, even more so, figuratively, as we have seen. Very often both parties are invested in preserving the arrangement. In certain ways we like to have lords over us. It relieves us from taking the ultimate responsibility; we have someone to turn to, someone else to make the decisions. We enjoy looking up to great people, gaining our little glow from being associated with them without having to face the risks they face, and so on. Remember the argument the Grand Inquisitor gave Jesus when he turned up again in Spain in the sixteenth century, started preaching freedom and equality again, and was promptly picked up by the police and thrown into prison. "We've taken the responsibility for them, we carry the burden and relieve them. People don't *want* your dreadful freedom!"

The story of the footwashing is told as though Jesus' disciples are in this mood. They are followers and believers and worshipers, and they like it that way. Jesus doesn't. He shows them an image. He

leaves his place at table, takes off his coat, rolls up his sleeves, gets a long towel that he ties around his waist, takes a jug of water and a basin, and begins to wash the feet of his disciples. This is unbelievably shocking. The master is acting like a servant. Peter pulls his feet away and admonishes Jesus: "Lord!" (calling him back to his proper role: you're supposed to be the lord) "You shall never wash my feet!" Notice the paradox: the servant is telling the master what he can't do! But Jesus, undeterred, tells Peter firmly, "If you can't consent to this, then you can't participate in what I'm about." That's how important it is. Somehow this gesture carries the weight of the whole program. If your position, your perceptions, your feelings, your way of life, are such that this behavior is incompatible with them, then you haven't got the insight into the kingdom. Come on, Peter, don't tell me you don't understand it at all, that you don't see that it has to come to this.

What was Peter so afraid of? Was it that he *did* see all the implications? Did he see that the whole world was being turned upside down? Did he know that if he consented to this, nothing could ever be anything like the way it had been? (That is, if he held true to it.) Did he suddenly get the picture of the Temple crumbling to pieces all around him? If the Lord washes my feet, how shall we be governed? Whom shall we honor and how? How can we run the world unless some have power and others obey? How will this affect families? Businesses? It's too disorienting. I would have to readjust all my relationships, all my values, all my attitudes. . . .

Nevertheless, Peter reluctantly consents, and Jesus goes on around the circle and resumes his place at table. "Now, then," he says, "do you understand what I have done? You've been calling me lord and master, and in the old system that was correct. We've been living in a world organized in terms of lords and servants. What I have just shown you is what I think of lordship. When the 'lord' acts as a 'servant,' then being a 'lord' or a 'servant' doesn't mean anything anymore. 'Lords and servants' is not a good way for us to think of our relationships. What I have done is destroy that whole concept. It's been a kind of 'Temple' for us, in which we have worshiped, done business, understood all our activities and relations. That's why you're so upset. It's very fundamental. I've just destroyed that 'Temple.' But I'm going to build a new one. Or better, *grow* a new one.

"I will no longer call you servants but friends. There is to be no distance between us. You are entirely in my confidence. Everything I have heard from my Father I have told you. I have not kept anything back, and I have not claimed any privilege. We are friends, all equal. Everything I have done you can do as well. You can do more, and I

hope you will. Sharing my life with you has been my love for you. No one can have greater love than this, to be willing to give your whole life to your friends. Do you see how it is? That a friend's life lives inside you? and you live in your friend? It's that kind of love. That's the kind of love we have with the Father. The Father is in me and I am in the Father, I am in you and you are in me; the Father is in you and you are in the Father; you are in each other.

"Let me show you another sign to make this clear. Here is bread, the fundamental food, our body. If I break it, so, and give it to you, saying 'This is my body, my life, eat it, receive it into yourself and live by it,' can you perceive how this is really true? What seemed to be outside you and someone else has now come inside you. You have eaten it and it will become you. What was *my* body will be *your* body. Do you see? My life is given to nourish your life, to make you live more fully.

"Let us do it with the wine, too. This is the cup of joy, of blessing, of salvation. Let me give it to you, saying, 'This is my very life, my soul, poured out for you. Drink it and live!' It is a single cup; share it among you. It is a common life among us all. Now, you must do the same thing. I have given you the example. You also share your lives with one another, feed each other with your very bodies and souls, lay down your lives for each other, dwell in one another.

"And do you see what has happened? We have come together in our sharing, in our indwelling, in such a way that we form a new living being composed of us as its limbs and organs. *This is the kingdom of God*, this is the salvation of Israel, and not of Israel only, but of the whole world. If people everywhere could live like this, give themselves into each other this way, it would take away the sins of the whole world."<sup>4</sup>

### REFLECTION ON PRIESTHOOD & EUCHARIST

With regard to priesthood, our Christian framework provides us with a remarkably challenging and enriching vision. As St Peter wrote, every Christian, male or female, is a member of the royal priesthood, the prophetic & holy people of God. We are all called to offer the spiritual sacrifices that Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God. In the framework of Christ, there is, as St Paul wrote, no distinction between male and female. We are all one Person in Christ. This broad inclusive framework means that every quality, energy or attribute of the Holy Spirit is available to anyone, because we are not referring here to gender qualities but to divine qualities.

So the sacrifice that God is inviting is, first of all, the gift of ourselves. As St Paul wrote: *I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (i.e. selves) as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom*

12: 1-2). The fruit that God is seeking, in us and for us, is for us to have life and have it to the full i.e. to reach spiritual and human maturity. It is to receive the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness & self-control as fruits of the Spirit. The practical sacrifices are part of this too. They are the day to day things that love calls us to do, the works of compassion, care, truth and justice.

This, together with our failings, sins, & weaknesses, is what we bring to God in the Eucharist. Then by a mysterious alchemy of the Spirit, from out of this blessed poverty and emptiness our healing, transformation and growth is wrought by God. By this process, we become what we receive. If simple, plain, lifeless bread and wine can become Body and Blood of Christ, how much more do we become Body and Blood of Christ! Jesus didn't institute the Eucharist for us to be staring at it but for us to receive Christ and become Christ. We are part of the self of Christ as St Paul wrote: *he cannot disown his own self* (1 Tim 2:13). So, in the Eucharist, the Paschal Mystery, the pattern of death and resurrection of the Christ is not something happening out there, apart from us. It is happening in us and in our lives, and in union with Christ, we are the sacrifice that is being offered (cfr Colossians 1:24-21).

The Eucharist is the ritual, liturgical expression of this mystery of Christ's death and resurrection that is happening continually in our lives. So the ministerial or ordained priesthood is only as such to be of service to the Body of Christ, the Church. This service is primarily liturgical. It takes place when the community gathers for prayer and worship, especially the Eucharist. It represents Christ in his priesthood. Indeed there is only Christ, he is the only priest. (DMA).

## THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

### O BREAD OF HEAVEN:

O Bread of heaven, beneath this veil thou dost my very God conceal;  
my Jesus, dearest treasure, hail; I love thee and adoring kneel;  
each loving soul by thee is fed with **thine own self in form of bread.**

O food of life, thou who dost give the pledge of immortality;  
I live; no, 'tis not I that live; God gives me life, God lives in me:  
he feeds my soul, he guides my ways, and every grief with joy repays.

O bond of love, that dost unite the servant to his living Lord;  
could I dare live, and not requite such love - then death were meet reward:  
I cannot live unless to prove some love for such unmeasured love.

Beloved Lord in heaven above, there, Jesus, thou awaitest me;  
to gaze on thee with changeless love, yes, thus I hope, thus shall it be:  
for how can he deny me heaven who here on earth himself hath given?

## SWEET SACRAMENT DIVINE

Sweet Sacrament divine, hid in thy earthly home,  
lo! round thy lowly shrine,  
with suppliant hearts we come;  
Jesus, to thee our voice we raise,  
in songs of love and heartfelt praise,  
sweet sacrament divine.

Sweet sacrament of peace,  
dear home of every heart,  
where restless yearnings cease,  
and sorrows all depart,  
there in thine ear all trustfully  
we tell our tale of misery,  
sweet sacrament of peace.

Sweet sacrament of rest,  
Ark from the ocean's roar,  
within thy shelter blest  
soon may we reach the shore,  
save us, for still the tempest raves;  
save, lest we sink beneath the waves  
sweet sacrament of rest.

Sweet sacrament divine, earth's light and jubilee,  
**in thy far depths doth shine**  
**thy Godhead's majesty;**  
sweet light, so shine on us, we pray,  
that earthly joys may fade away,  
sweet sacrament divine.

### **“IN THY FAR DEPTHS DOTH SHINE THY GODHEAD'S MAJESTY”**

In the far depths of everything is the Divine creative energy (the Word/the Christ – John 1:1). Everything has come from this source and it holds all things together (Col 1:17). When we eat our toast or sip our wine we may be conscious of their origin, the wheat fields, the vineyards etc. It is a limited one-dimensional kind of knowledge. That is their ordinary reality for us. To unlock the deeper mystery of reality we need to look beyond the empirical. It is only by faith that we can “see” this deeper mystery. Only by aligning all the windows of perception, as invited by faith, can the full reality be recognised. Only by seeing bread and wine as Jesus saw them can they be bearers of his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Our relationships constitute who we are and what we are. Putting bread and wine in the right matrix of relationships changes their reality (invocation of the Holy Spirit - words of Jesus at the Last Supper – Jesus, Divine Energy/Word made flesh – creation – from the Father). Though in the form of God the Christ empties himself into human form (Phil 2:6) and even into the “form of bread (& wine)” (St Alphonsus). So when we receive Holy Communion we relate directly to the Divine Christ who sits us down at table and waits on us! When the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist is unavailable to us we can still relate directly to Christ because he literally is our life (Col 3:4). (DMA)