

Nisan 14 ~ The Last Supper

Part 1: The Betrothal of the Bride and the Lamb



**Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by Jan van Eyck
from the Ghent Altarpiece, 1432**

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷ *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

⁸ *it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” —
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

⁹ *And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Rev 19:6-9)*

Why bring up the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb in an essay about Holy Thursday and the Last Supper? Because the marriage of Jesus Christ and His Church is the “end game” of all the events that occurred on Nisan 14, the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden, the betrayal of Judas, Jesus’ arrest, His interrogation by the High Priest, Herod, and Pilate, the scourging at the pillar, the carrying of the cross, His crucifixion and death, and His burial. All of these events were folded into Jesus’ Passover and into the mystery that is the Last Supper carried forward through time and eternity in the Mass for this end—that the bride be “clothed with fine linen, bright and pure;” made ready for her Bridegroom.

On that mystical day we know that we, His bride, will be like Him for we shall see Him with unveiled (*apocalypsis*) face:

Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1John 3:2, emphasis added)

All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2Cor 3:18, emphasis added)

“We shall be like Him,” John the Beloved tells us. “All of us...are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory as from the Lord...” Saint Paul says encouraging his flock in Corinth. We, the Bride, are going to be like God! Where have I heard that before? That’s right—in the Garden of Eden.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" (Gen 3:1-5, emphasis added)

These are two very different "like Gods" aren't there? Satan offers humanity to choose his way, to become *like god without God*, while God the Father offers His Son so that we might become *like God with God*. There are also two different trees: there is the tree of the Garden of Eden whose fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil will liken us to the *man-god* who has set himself to be the measure of all things, and then there is the Tree of Life, the Cross, whose fruit is the *God-man*, Jesus Christ, for when we eat of this fruit, His Body and Blood, we are transformed into His image from glory to glory.

So we see that the Passover of Christ is far more expansive than the Passover of the Jews as recorded in Exodus. The Passover of Christ reaches all the way back to the beginning, to Genesis, and the Fall of humanity. It is even prophesized in Genesis that this would be so in the passage known as the *protoevangelium* (the first Gospel):

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen 3:13-15)

We will see this scripture fulfilled on *Nisan 14*, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Preparation Day before the Feast of Passover on *Nisan 15*. But it is also fulfilled daily in Catholic Church throughout the world in the Mass and in the Divine Liturgy of the Churches of the East. Christ undoes the work that Satan did that day in Eden:

⁸ *He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* (1John 3:8)

And in destroying the works of Satan Christ opens up again the opportunity to become *like God* through the participation in His divine nature:

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and **become partakers of the divine nature.*** (1Peter 1:3-4, emphasis added)

How does God share His divine nature with us? We participate in Christ, fully God and fully man, through His Church and through His sacraments, most especially in the Eucharist. This is explicitly made clear in the very liturgy of the Mass itself in both the *Novus Ordo* Mass and the traditional Tridentine Mass:

"By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." (from the *Novus Ordo* Mass of Pope Paul VI)



Immaculate by Antonio Ciseri. Chiesa del Sacro Cuore (Church of the Sacred Heart, Florence.

The Latin Vulgate of Saint Jerome translated Gen 3:15 as: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.* Mary is the New Eve and the Mother of the Church. She, with her Son and His Bride crush the head of the serpent.

“O God, Who in creating man didst exalt his nature very wonderfully and yet more wonderfully didst establish it anew; by the Mystery signified in the mingling of this water and wine, grant us to have part in the Godhead of Him Who hath deigned to become a partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God. World without end. Amen.” (from the Tridentine Mass)



Both liturgies make available through faith this mystery of water and wine and of participating in the divine nature, to becoming *like God with God*, through which the Church is transfigured into His Bride:

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?”¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev 7:13-14)

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶ *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:25-27)*

Water, wine, bread, and flesh and blood—these were and are the corporal instruments of Christ’s Passover by which He defeated Satan and death, and paid the “bride price” through which he brought us out, delivered us, redeemed us, and made us His people, His Bride. In the command He gave during His Last Supper to His disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me,” He left His Church the single liturgical mystery not only of His Passover and burial, but also of the completion of His betrothal to His Church in the paying of the bride price for our salvation. These mysteries are *re-presented* in every Mass in the “real time” of *kairos*, not as historical events nor as events yet to come, but as existent realities of God’s Kingdom to be experienced in the sacramental now. This is what we will be exploring as we enter into the Pascal Mystery of *Nisan 14*. We will learn that the Last Supper did not end when Jesus and His apostles left the Upper Room, but continued until it was *finished* on the cross. One, continuous Betrothal Feast (*Eyrusin*) between the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church, in which Jesus served Himself as the Passover Lamb so that we might abide in Him forever.