



## The Bride in the Jewish Wedding Tradition

### Part II: *Eyrusin* (The Betrothal)

~ Then He took the cup, and after He gave thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt 26: 26-28/MEV)

The, *Eyrusin*, or betrothal ceremony in the traditional Jewish wedding was very much like the actual wedding ceremony except that the betrothed couple did not live with each other nor did they consummate their relationship, yet in all other respects they were considered married. The reason for the delay was to make sure that the bride-to-be was not already pregnant with another man’s child. The Bible records one such couple that had celebrated their *Eyrusin* ceremony, had been living apart, but then the bridegroom discovered that his betrothed was pregnant. This would have been scandalous!

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; <sup>19</sup> and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; <sup>21</sup> she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman’u-el”  
(which means, God with us).

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1:18-24/RSVCE)

Mary was indeed pregnant, but not with another man’s son, but with the eternally begotten Son of the heavenly Father. Let us continue now with our discussion of the *Eyrusin* ceremony.

Prior to the betrothal ceremony the couple would separately take a ritual immersion in water (*mikveh*) symbolizing spiritual purification. Sometime after the *mikveh* the public *Eyrusin* ceremony would be held. The couple would stand under the *huppah* or canopy, which represented the future home that the groom and bride would share together. The ceremony itself consisted of both the bridegroom and bride-to-be making vows, exchanging rings, and sealing the arrangement with a cup of wine at the betrothal feast.

After the betrothal ceremony the groom and bride would return to their respective homes for a period of about one year, but not less than nine months. During this time the groom would spend the year preparing a house for his bride and future children after their marriage. Often, this might be a structure built onto his father’s house. The bride spent her time preparing her beautiful wedding dress. For both the bridegroom and bride the time after the *Eyrusin* ceremony was a time of preparation, prayer, and sanctification.

### The *Eyrusin Mikveh*

In Part 1 of “The Bride in the Jewish Wedding Tradition,” I discussed how a ritual cleansing, a *mikveh*, was performed by both the bridegroom and the bride (separately, of course) after the *Shiddukhin*. I compared the *mikveh* of the *Shiddukhin* to

Christian baptism. Is there anything comparable in the *Eyrusin*, that is, the betrothal of Jesus Christ to His Bride, the Church, in the New Testament? Yes, it occurs during the Last Supper in the “Upper Room,” which like the *huppah*, is a symbol of the future Kingdom home shared by the Bridegroom and the Bride. We would expect that if the Last Supper was an *Eyrusin* ceremony, that it too would begin with a *mikveh*.

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup> And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. (John 13:1-5/RSVCE)*

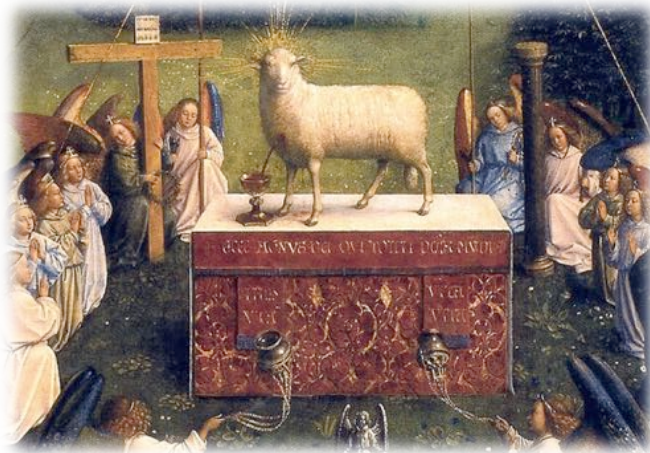


In this case, there was no need for the Bridegroom to take the *mikveh*, as He was the spotless Lamb of God (1Peter 1:19). However, the Bride was and is in need of cleansing and it is her Bridegroom that washes her in the water of the Word (Eph 5:26), and with His blood (Rev 7:14). This, our Lord did on *Nisan 14* and He continues to do for His Church, the Bride, at Mass and Divine Liturgy (please see my essay, “Nisan 14: The Last Supper”).

### The Lamb of God

The *Eyrusin* feast could be quite elaborate, but in the context of the Last Supper it must be remembered that this was also Jesus’ Passover *Seder* with His apostles. The Hebrew Scriptures prescribe what was to be eaten during the Passover meal and it is patterned after the original Passover when the Angel of Death struck down the first born of the Egyptians.

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> “This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup> Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household.... <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old; you shall take it from the sheep or from the goats; <sup>6</sup> and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs in the evening. <sup>7</sup> Then they shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat them. <sup>8</sup> They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.... <sup>11</sup> In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover. <sup>12</sup> For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. <sup>13</sup> The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exo 12:1-3, 5-8, 11-13/RSVCE)*



Lamb was and continues to be served at every Passover *Seder*, so you might expect that it was also served at the Last Supper, but it was not. Jesus’ Last Supper/Passover *Seder/Eyrusin* banquet did not serve lamb. Why? The practical answer for this question is simply that there were no lambs available yet since the Last Supper occurred on *Nisan 14*, the day before the Passover (*Nisan 15*), and the lambs would not have been slaughtered until later that day, or Good Friday (remember the Jewish day begins at sunset and ends at sunset the next day). The other reason why lamb was not served is much more significant, that is, Jesus Himself would be the lamb served at the Last Supper; Jesus was the main course.

*<sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." (Matt 26:26/RSVCE)*

Jesus fulfilled the Exodus requirements of the Passover meal which instructed that the flesh was to be eaten with the unleavened bread (Exo 12:8) for the bread that Jesus served them was His flesh in the appearance of bread (As St. Thomas Aquinas would explain the bread was *essentially* the body, soul, and divinity of Christ and *accidentally* bread). The Eucharist bread is not a symbol, but truly Christ flesh as evident from the passage from John chapter 6:

*<sup>52</sup> The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?"  
<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eat my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.  
<sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup> These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. (John 6:52-59/NABRE)*

The Eucharist also fulfills Christ promise that He would never abandon or forsake us:

*And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. (Matt 28:20/NABRE)*

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples just before He departed from them and ascended into heaven. It would appear that His ascension is in contradiction to His promise to be always with them, but it is not for He is with us Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist.

### **The Blood of the Lamb**

Thus far, in our discussion of the Eucharist we have only discussed the Eucharistic specie of the bread, but what of the wine? During the *Eyrusin* ceremony the bridegroom and the bride would both share a cup of wine and so we would expect that if the Passover that Jesus shared with His disciples was also a betrothal ceremony they would share a cup of wine. As it turns out there are four cups of wine are drunk during the Passover *Seder* (see my essay, *Nisan 14: The Last Supper*).

([http://kevindcmahon.com/Faith/Behold%20the%20Bridegroom/pdf%20folder/Nisan%2014\\_%20Last%20Supper2.pdf](http://kevindcmahon.com/Faith/Behold%20the%20Bridegroom/pdf%20folder/Nisan%2014_%20Last%20Supper2.pdf)).



I believe that the fourth and final cup was the betrothal cup, as I will discuss momentarily, but let us continue with our discussion of the Eucharist.

The third cup of wine that was shared at the Last Supper was in fact the wine Jesus shared with His disciples after He spoke:

*<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt 26:27-28)*

Catholics and Orthodox believe that this wine is Christ's Blood, just as the bread Jesus shared with His disciples was His body. Of course the Jews objected to this because they were prohibited to even drink the blood of an animal, let alone human blood.

*<sup>11</sup>For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.... <sup>14</sup>"For the life of every creature is the blood of it...."(Lev 17:11, 14)*

Blood is for atonement and it is through the Bridegroom's blood that we are sealed unto a New Covenant, not the Old that had been sealed by the blood of bulls (Heb 10:1-10).

*<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. <sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,*

*"Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me;*

*<sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book."*

*<sup>8</sup> When he said above, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, "Lo, I have come to do thy will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10: 4-10)*

Blood is the life of the flesh. If we eat our Bridegroom's flesh and drink His blood in the Eucharist, then He becomes our life so that we might say as Saint Paul said, "*it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...*" (Gal 2:20). Really? I don't act like Christ and often the Church, the Bride, does not seem all that Christ like. Yet, the Apostle John tells us,

*<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1John 3:2)*

Some might read this scripture and say to them self, "Well, that must be speaking of the 'sweet by and by when we meet Him on that beautiful shore.'" However, John makes it clear that he is speaking of the here and the now for just a little bit later in this epistle he says:

*<sup>16</sup> So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup> In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. (4:16-17)*

What an amazing statement: "**... as He is so are we in this world.**" This statement is so important that the next section of these series of essays on the Bride of the Lamb are dedicated to exploring this deeper. Let me just say here and now that this is the goal of the Christian's life in the Church, the Bride, that is to be "as He is" in this world and in this time. We are called to be "holy and without blemish," saints. And if this seems to great an expectation then let me remind all of us that God has provided everything to us to make this a reality in our lives:

*<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> 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. (2Peter 1:3-4)*

We become partakers of the divine nature when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, as we read moments ago in the Gospel of John:

*<sup>55</sup> For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup> He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. (John 6:55-56)*

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament of abiding in Him; it is the sacrament of His incarnation within us, and in our participation in His divine nature. This is the great gift that the Bridegroom left His Bride so that He might be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20).

### **I Go To Prepare A Place For You**

At the beginning of this essay I wrote:

After the betrothal ceremony the groom and bride would return to their respective homes for a period of about one year, but not less than nine months. During this time the groom would spend the year preparing a house for his bride and future children after their marriage. Often, this might be a structure built onto his father's house. The bride spent her time preparing her beautiful wedding dress.

Lending further credence to the idea that Jesus meant the Last Supper to be both a Passover *Seder* and an *Eyrusin* ceremony is that Jesus refers to the tradition of the bridegroom and the bride being separated from one another for a period of time.

*<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. (John 14:1-3)*

We celebrate the occurrence of Jesus leaving us on the Feast of the Ascension, which is recorded in the Book of Acts:

*When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup> When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven." <sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. (Acts 1:6-12)*



The angels confirmed what Jesus had told them at the Last Supper, "I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." What is being described by Jesus in John 14 and by Luke in Acts 1 is the third and final part of a traditional Jewish wedding, that is, the *Nissuin*, or Marriage Ceremony, which begins with the Bridegroom returning to carry away His Bride. We will discuss this in the next essay.

### **The Fourth Cup**

I mentioned earlier that during the traditional Passover *Seder* four cups of wine were served to family and guests. Each cup of wine was symbolic of the various elements of the miraculous deliverance that God provided to Israel as recorded in Exodus.

The order in which they were drunk during the Passover were as follows:

1. The *Kiddush* cup
2. The *Haggadah* cup
3. The *Ge'ullah* cup
4. The *Zebah Todah* cup

Each of these cups, according to *Midrashic* tradition, represented the four different aspect of deliverance that the Lord God of Israel provided for His people as explained in the Book of Exodus:

*<sup>6</sup>Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment,'<sup>7</sup> and I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians (Exo 6:6-7)*

Here we see the four deliverances and their association with each cup of wine:

The *Kiddush* cup: I will bring you out...

The *Haggadah* cup: I will deliver you from their bondage...

The *Ge'ullah* cup: I will redeem you...

The *Zebah Todah*: I will take you for my people....

Beautiful! All of these deliverances God achieve for the People of Israel with the Passover. And all of these deliverances Jesus Christ achieved for the Church, His Bride, in His Passover on Nisan 14, which began with the Last Supper, His Passover *Seder* and Betrothal Feast with His nascent Bride. Those theologians that recognize that four cups of wine were served at the Last Supper mostly agree that the Sacrament of Christ's Blood would have been the third, or *Ge'ullah* (redemption) cup. I am proposing is that the *Zebah Todah*, or "I will take you for my people" cup was the *Eryusin* betrothal cup, however, there is no evidence that this cup was drunk during the Last Supper. If that is true, then the Passover *Seder* did not officially end when Jesus and His apostles left the Upper Room as it could only end with the drinking of the fourth cup of wine and the singing of the *Birkat ha-Shir* (a song of thanksgiving). The Gospel of Matthew, however, only records the singing of this song, but not the drinking of the fourth cup.

*<sup>30</sup>And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matt 26:30)*

Jesus does, however, mention the fourth cup when He is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

*<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup>He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." <sup>39</sup>He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matt 26:30)*

What was this cup that Jesus prayed He might not have to drink? The cup that Jesus would drink was the cup of His Passion, the *ketubah*; the price He would pay for the Church whom He would take for His people, His Bride. Christ's Passion would begin here with the Agony in the Garden in the conflict between His divine and human wills. It would escalate with the interrogation of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and then with Herod and Pilate. Jesus would be beaten, scourged, made to wear a crown of thorns, humiliated, judged as a common criminal, made to carry His cross, and then crucified. His Passion, and His Passover and *Eryusin* ended when He drank the fourth cup, the betrothal cup on the cross.



<sup>28</sup> After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst."<sup>29</sup> There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth.<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. (John 19:28-30)

In the *Eyrusin* ceremony it is not just the bridegroom that drinks the cup of wine, it is also the bride who must share the cup with her bridegroom. Jesus made this clear to His disciples that they would drink from the cup from which He would drink.

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.<sup>21</sup> And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."<sup>22</sup> But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."<sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." (Matt 20:20-23)

The sons of Zeb'edee, the Apostles James and John, did indeed drink from the cup of suffering. Both suffered for the sake of the Gospel. Ultimately, James suffered martyrdom and John was exiled to the Island of Patmos. To be betrothed to the bridegroom is to participate in His suffering.

Christians in the West have pretty much forgotten this fundamental truth of the Gospel. The value of suffering was a staple of my life lessons growing up with my Cowboy-Master Sargent-Catholic father, but suffering was only valuable when it participated in Christ's suffering and endured with intentionality. "Offer it up," my father exhorted me as I bit down on his leather belt while he dug a quarter-inch deep planter's wart out of the bottom of my foot with a knife he called, *Lucky*. He couldn't quote "scripture and verse" to prove his theology of suffering, he didn't have to; it was something that had been passed down through Catholic culture for millennia. For my father, and for millions of Catholics before him, good could come from suffering, it was a privilege not to be wasted.

But that was then, and this is now and it seems like a very long time ago that I've heard a homily on the merit of suffering. So I going to make up for lost time and allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves.

<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his **sufferings**, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:10)

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!"<sup>16</sup> it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we **suffer** with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom 8:14-17)

<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also **suffer** for his sake,<sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine. (Phil 1:29-30)

<sup>12</sup> If we **suffer**, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. (2Tim 2:12/Douay-Rheims)

<sup>2</sup> And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall **suffer** persecution. (2Tim 3:12/Douay-Rheims)

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2)

And from our blessed Lord's own mouth:

<sup>23</sup> And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."<sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. (Luke 9:23)

Here then is the merit and mystery of suffering:

*<sup>24</sup> Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church. (Col 1:24)*

What could possibly be “wanting of the sufferings of Christ?” Is it possible that Christ, the Bridegroom, left room in His salvific suffering so that His Bride might share in His glorious triumph over the devil, his minion, and even over our own fallen human nature (1John 3:8)? I do not know, but I do know that His Bride will suffer especially at the “end of the age.”

*<sup>3</sup> As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”....*

*<sup>9</sup> “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But he who endures to the end will be saved....*

*<sup>15</sup> “So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place... <sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (Matt 24; 3, 9-13, 15-22)*

*<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months; <sup>6</sup> it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. <sup>9</sup> If any one has an ear, let him hear:*

*<sup>10</sup> If any one is to be taken captive,  
to captivity he goes;  
if any one slays with the sword,  
with the sword must he be slain.*

*Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. (Rev 13:5-10)*

This is the teaching of the Catholic Church which she explicitly states in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

**675** Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

**677** The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.

The Church, in taking up her cross and following her Bridegroom in crucifixion, endures the shame and the suffering for the joy set before her. We know that if we die with our Bridegroom, we shall reign with him (2Tim 2:11-12) as His Bride.

*<sup>6</sup> 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.*

*<sup>7</sup> 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;*

*<sup>8</sup> it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” —for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Rev 19:6-8)*

### **The Mass as Passover Seder and Eyrusin Celebration**

If what I have been suggesting in this essay is correct, then the Last Supper did not end when Jesus and His apostles left the Upper Room; the Last Supper ended with the fourth and final cup, which Jesus drank on the cross. It would be most appropriate then to understand the Mass (and Divine Liturgy in the East) as a re-*presentation* not only of the events that occurred in the Upper Room, but also in the Garden of Gethsemane, House of Caiaphas, Herod’s Court, with Pilate in the *Praetorium* where Jesus was scourged and crowned with thorns, and then crucified on Calvary. The Mass makes present again the graces given to the Church for us through the events of the Upper Room and our Lord’s Passion, the price He paid for His bride. It was for this reason that the Mass was called the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because it is the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Somewhere along the way it has become reduced to a glorified “Agape Meal” and the Eucharist merely a symbol of our unity (one bread one body...). It is, however, so much more than this. Christ paid the *ketubah*, the bride price, with His Body and Blood, and then He gives us this same Body and Blood as *true food* and *true drink* that we might abide in Him, be conformed to His image, made splendid without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (Eph 5:27).

The Mass is, or at least as it is in the Tridentine Mass, also a reminder that as Christ’s bride we are to “watch” and “prepare” for the His return when He will carry us away, *Nissuin*, to the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb. We read earlier of Christ’s ascension in Acts and how two men clothed in white addressed Jesus’ Apostles saying,

*“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”*

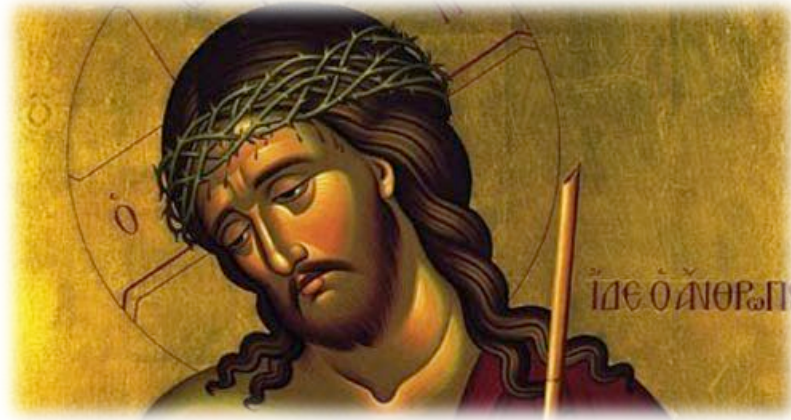
The men clothed in white were describing the return of the Bridegroom much as Jesus described to His disciples when He told them the parable of The Virgins.

*“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he replied, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Matt 25:1-13)*

The Mass is the center of Catholic life. Should it not be both the time and place where we as individual believers and the Body of Christ be the most watchful of the Bridegroom’s return? It is for this reason that the Church of the West and East always prayed facing towards the East, *ad Orientem*, that is until the *Novus Ordo* Mass was introduced in 1969. As Saint John of Damascus observed:

*And when He was received again into Heaven He was borne towards the East, and thus His apostles worship Him, and thus He will come again in the way in which they beheld Him going towards Heaven; as the Lord Himself said, As the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. So, then, in expectation of His coming we worship towards the East. But this tradition of the apostles is unwritten. For much that has been handed down to us by tradition is unwritten. (Saint John of Damascus, 675-749)*

And as we remain watchful let us make also prepare for our Bridegroom's return through the graces made available to us at the Mass and the Divine Liturgy. It is at the Liturgy of the Catechumens where the Bride is washed in the water of the Word (Eph 5:26), and it is during the Mass of the Faithful where she washes her robes in the Blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14).



**The Eastern Catholic/Orthodox Icon: Behold the Bridegroom**

*Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight,  
And blessed is that servant whom He shall find  
watching,  
And again, unworthy is the servant whom He shall  
find heedless.  
Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed  
down with sleep,  
Lest you be given up to death, and lest you be shut out  
of the Kingdom.  
But rouse yourself crying: Holy, Holy, Holy, art Thou,  
our God,  
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.*

*~ Troparion of Bridegroom Matins*