

Fed by the Lamb

The Passover Fulfilled

By the blood of the lamb, the Israelites were set free.

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God instructed them to sacrifice a lamb that was male, in its prime, and without blemish. They were to put its blood on their doorposts and then eat the lamb in a special meal. That night, in every house that was not marked by the blood of the lamb, the first born son died. The Israelites were finally allowed to leave Egypt and journey to the Promised Land. Through the blood of the lamb, the Israelites were brought from slavery to freedom, from death to life. (Exodus 12)

Jesus is the true lamb of God, whose blood sets us free.

These events in Exodus became known as the Passover. All of this was intended by God to point forward to Jesus, who would be the true "Lamb of God." (John 1:29, Rev. 5:6) Jesus purposefully chose Passover as the time he would offer his life for us on the cross. He too is male, in the prime of life, and without blemish. By his sacrifice, we are freed from slavery to sin. By his blood, death is defeated and eternal life is made possible for us all.

Passover was commemorated each year with a sacred meal.

God commanded the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb each year on the anniversary of Passover. Each family eats the lamb in a sacred meal, calling to mind how God saved their ancestors and remained faithful to his promises. By this eating and drinking, they physically express their covenant relationship with God: how God has said to them, "You are mine," and how they respond, "I am yours."

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave us a new sacred meal.

He chose the Passover meal as the setting for his final evening with the apostles. He took the unleavened bread and said to the apostles, "Take and eat; this is my body." He took the cup of wine and said, "Drink; this is my blood of the covenant." (Matt 26:26-28) The apostles would begin to understand the Lord's mysterious words from the previous Passover, when he spoke of becoming one with him by eating his body and drinking his blood. (John 6:51-58)

We celebrate this sacred meal every Sunday.

Jesus instructed his followers to continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper in his memory (Luke 22:19), and this is what Catholics do each Sunday as we celebrate the Eucharist, giving thanks for the sacrifice that Jesus offered for our salvation. Just as Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb, the Eucharist is the fulfillment of the Passover meal. By our participation in this sacred meal, we physically express our covenant relationship with Jesus. He says to each of us, "You are mine," and we respond, "I am yours."

Like the Israelites, we also are fed by the Lamb of God.

The Passover meal would not be complete without eating the lamb. In this new Passover meal, we also receive the true Lamb of God. If we are spiritually prepared, we can become one with Jesus in both body and soul in Holy Communion. In a beautiful and mysterious way, we are fed with the Lamb of God.

