



NEW COMMANDMENT, NEW COVENANT

(JOHN 13:31-35)

Marble relief of the Last Supper, on the altar of the Basilica di Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, Rome

In the Gospel according to John, there is no account of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper as we find in the versions of the Synoptic writers Mark, Matthew and Luke. The Eucharistic text is that of the feeding of the crowds. At John's Last Supper scene, the symbolic act is the washing of the disciples' feet.

In the other accounts, Jesus talks about the new covenant. Part of the covenant ritual was the imposing of commandments and, in our Gospel text today, Jesus tells the disciples that he is giving them a new commandment, which suggests the idea of a new covenant. This instruction will demand a great deal of those who accept the new relationship with God – it is to love one another, just as Jesus has loved them – but the message is directed also at those reading or listening to the Gospel.

God will be glorified in the crucifixion of Jesus, where God's love for the world will be finally revealed and Jesus will leave his disciples in the form that they have known him up to now. However, their being his disciples will continue, and the sign of this will be their love for one another. This will be the best witness to those among whom they live. ■

REFLECT

Easter is the time when we are invited to reflect on our actual relationship with the risen Jesus. For the rest of the Church's year, we are presented with Jesus' ministry and can draw lessons from that, but the Gospel of John can be more difficult, as it makes demands on us personally. At the Paschal vigil, we are asked to declare what we believe, and this can be a rather simple thing to do, to answer some questions. But when we are told that our relationship with Jesus will require some personal examination of ourselves, and possibly subsequent

change, this can be a lot more demanding, even threatening. This is not a matter of how we behave, but of the person we are, our attitude to Jesus and to each other.

During the Last Supper in John's account, Jesus says to those at table with him, "I call you friends." In one of the themes of the fourth Gospel, this means that his disciples' training is complete, and today's reading represents an important step in that process – the giving of the new commandment, which is a sign of the new covenant between God, Jesus and the disciples. If we are to be true disciples,

then we have to take this teaching of Jesus seriously.

The history of the Church can make it difficult for people to accept the message of Jesus. We have the persecution and burning of those whose opinions do not square with official doctrine; there are religious wars and bitter divisions between Christian denominations. Perhaps we might reflect on what witness we ourselves are giving today and that Jesus is not giving us advice, but a commandment. ■

LEARN

There is no institution of the Eucharist in John's account of the Last Supper.

Jesus' self-giving is expressed there in his washing of the disciples' feet.

The giving of the new commandment forms part of the making of the new covenant.

It is the disciples' relationship with one another which will be the most effective sign of their belief in Jesus.

DO

Are you at odds with any other disciple in your community? Think about what you can do to sort it out, in light of the teaching of Jesus.

SAY

By this love, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

(see John 13:35)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O sing a new song to the Lord,
for he has worked wonders;
in the sight of the nations
he has shown his deliverance, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery
within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in
Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much
fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 14:21-27

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul and Barnabas went back through
Lystra and Iconium to Antioch. They put
fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging
them to persevere in the faith. "We all have
to experience many hardships" they said
"before we enter the kingdom of God." In
each of these churches they appointed elders,
and with prayer and fasting they commended
them to the Lord in whom they had come to
believe.

They passed through Pisidia and reached
Pamphylia. Then after proclaiming the word
at Perga they went down to Attalia and from
there sailed for Antioch, where they had
originally been commended to the grace of
God for the work they had now completed.

On their arrival they assembled the church
and gave an account of all that God had done
with them, and how he had opened the door
of faith to the pagans.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 144

Response:

I will bless your name for ever, O God my
King.

or

Alleluia!

- The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures. (R.)
- All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their
blessing.
They shall speak of the glory of your reign
and declare your might, O God,
to make known to men your mighty deeds
and the glorious splendour of your reign.
(R.)
- Yours is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule lasts from age to age. (R.)

SECOND READING

Apocalypse 21:1-5

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth;
the first heaven and the first earth had
disappeared now, and there was no longer
any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new
Jerusalem, coming down from God out of
heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for
her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call
from the throne, "You see this city? Here God
lives among men. He will make his home
among them; they shall be his people, and he
will be their God; his name is God-with-them.
He will wipe away all tears from their eyes;
there will be no more death, and no more
mourning or sadness. The world of the past
has gone."

Then the One sitting on the throne spoke:
"Now I am making the whole of creation
new."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment:
love one another, just as I have loved you."

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 13:31-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

When Judas had gone Jesus said:

"Now has the Son of Man been glorified,
and in him God has been glorified.

If God has been glorified in him,
God will in turn glorify him in himself,
and will glorify him very soon.

My little children,
I shall not be with you much longer.

I give you a new commandment:
love one another;

just as I have loved you,

you also must love one another.

By this love you have for one another,
everyone will know that you are my
disciples."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who by the wonderful exchange
effected in this sacrifice
have made us partakers of the one supreme
Godhead,
grant, we pray,
that, as we have come to know your truth,
we may make it ours by a worthy way of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

I am the true vine and you are the branches,
says the Lord.
Whoever remains in me, and I in him, bears
fruit in plenty, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously be present to your people, we
pray, O Lord,
and lead those you have imbued with
heavenly mysteries
to pass from former ways to newness of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Do not abandon yourselves to despair.
We are the Easter people and hallelujah is
our song.

St John Paul II