

Solemnity — The Body and Blood of Christ

† Sunday, 6 June 2021 [In England & Wales – 10 Sunday in Ordinary Time superseded]



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer: Abraham Our Father in faith –
A Deeper Understanding Between Christians, Jews, and Moslems

Keynote: One People of God in communion with Christ – the New Covenant

Book of Exodus 24: 3-8

Moses, leader of the Old Testament People of Israel, assembles the people to listen to the Law of God. The ‘contract’ or covenant made between God and the people, takes the form of an exchange of words, a sacrifice and the sharing of a meal together. ‘Taking the Book of the Covenant Moses read it to the listening people, and they said: “We will observe all that the Lord has decreed – we will obey.”’ At the altar the sacrifices made, Moses ‘took the blood and cast it towards the people.’ The sprinkling with the sacrificial blood marks out these People of the Covenant, ‘This,’ says Moses ‘is the blood of the Covenant that the Lord has made with you.’ The eating together binds the people together – not unlike as at a wedding feast when bride and groom have made their contract and join with family and friends to celebrate their union.

Responsorial Psalm 115 (116) – a song of thankfulness for God’s blessing

Letter to the Hebrews 9: 11-15

Much of the content of this letter assumes an understanding of the Old Testament customs of the Jewish Temple priesthood – largely unknown to us today. Only the Temple High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy Sanctuary carrying the ‘blood of sacrifice’. Now in the New Covenant the author of this letter writes: ‘Christ... has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him... his own blood, having won an eternal redemption for us.’ Thus Christ ‘brings a new covenant, as the mediator so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance, may actually receive what was promised.’

Optional Sequence – *Lauda Sion* – may be sung

Gospel according to Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26

‘On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed...’ so the scene is set. Jesus’ Last Supper with the disciples is placed in the context of the Jewish ritual of the Passover Meal – the sacrificial lamb has been roasted and placed upon the table. The moment is full of significance for the disciples. They recall the flight from the slavery and hardship in Egypt, they recall the freedom gained by Israel in the covenant with their God, they remember all the saving deeds God has performed throughout the history of their people.

It is this moment that Jesus chooses to give his disciples a New Covenant, the new pledge of his being with them until the end of time. ‘As they were eating Jesus took some bread and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them “Take it,” he said, “this is my body.” Then he took the cup, “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”... after psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives.’ So the final days begin.

Today it is time for us to remember who we are as a people, why we celebrate and remember the death and resurrection of the Lord, and to remember our destiny as God’s People until he comes again.