

THE PASSOVER



FROM THE PSALMS

“A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength....Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.”

—Psalm 33:18–20

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

—1 Corinthians 5:7b–8 ESV

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.”

—CCC, 1340

THE PASSOVER

INTRODUCTION

Joseph's family moved to Egypt during the famine and stayed there a long time—hundreds of years! Not all the leaders of Egypt were happy they were there. Eventually, God's people were forced into slavery. What was God's plan to free his people from this slavery? How does his solution prepare us for Jesus, who will deliver us from slavery to sin?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

Joseph's family, the Israelites, need help. God raises up a man named Moses to deliver his people from their troubles. Pharaoh refuses to listen to Moses and he continues to enslave and kill God's people. The Lord calls the people of Israel his "firstborn son." Pharaoh was harming God's firstborn, and so God would take away the firstborn of the Egyptians. One night, God sends his angel to destroy every firstborn male throughout the land. God protects his people by giving them a way to save their firstborn sons: a special meal called the Passover.

SCRIPTURE

Read Exodus 12:3–13

COMMENTARY

God's plan to save his people was unexpected. He did not send an army or a mighty warrior. The victory over slavery came from the sacrifice of a lamb and eating its flesh with your family. The Passover meal was a necessary part of saving your child. If you did not follow the Lord's instructions, your firstborn son would die.

God gave Moses clear instructions on how to celebrate the Passover. Each family had to take a healthy lamb from their flock. It could have no broken bones. After the lamb was killed, the blood from the lamb would be sprinkled on their doorposts with a hyssop branch. The family would then gather and eat the lamb with

unleavened bread. If they did all these things, their son would be safe.

After Passover night, the Egyptians woke up to find their firstborn sons all dead. They were so upset at their loss, they told Israel to leave. Israel was free to go home to the land of their fathers, the Promised Land.

God frees Israel from slavery, but the Old Testament shows the Pharaoh was not the only one to whom the Israelites were enslaved. Like all humans after Adam and Eve, they were enslaved to sin. They needed more than a lamb to rescue them from this kind of slavery.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

God gave his people these instructions because he already knew how he would save us from slavery to sin through Christ. God knew he would send his own Son into the world to give his life, spill his blood, and make it possible for us to eat his flesh in the Eucharist. By the death of the Lamb of God, by receiving this sacred meal, we are freed from slavery to sin so we can go to the true Promised Land of heaven. To make sure we understand that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, we are told in the scriptures that Jesus' legs were not broken and he was offered a drink from a hyssop branch—both elements from the Passover.

IN THE LITURGY

Every Mass is a celebration of the new Passover. Every time we receive the Eucharist, we are freed from slavery to sin and given the food that gets us to the Promised Land of heaven.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in Heaven, you can accomplish amazing things in simple ways. Help me to trust in the power of the Holy Mass and its power to save me from sin. Amen.

RESOLUTION

The Israelites had to listen to God very carefully and trust him. Help your parents with a household chore and be sure to complete every step carefully.

THE BRONZE SERPENT



FROM THE PSALMS

“As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against thee!’”
—Psalm 41:4

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

—1 Peter 2:24

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. “For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom... grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself.”

—CCC, 160

THE BRONZE SERPENT

INTRODUCTION

After the Israelites escape from Egypt, they must begin their long journey to the Promised Land. Traveling is tiring and many begin to complain that they wished they had just stayed in Egypt. They openly grumble against God. In response to their complaints, God punishes them but then provides a remedy for their punishment. How does God's cure foreshadow Jesus' death on the cross? We'll find out after we pray.

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

Our scripture passage today may sound like God is being a little harsh, but we must understand that the Israelites have been complaining harshly against the Lord. Instead of thanking him for saving them, they say that they long to return to Egypt. God is a good and wise Father. He deals with them firmly, but lovingly to teach them to trust and respect him.

SCRIPTURE

Read Numbers 21:4–9

COMMENTARY

This is a story of God's healing power. In fact, the serpent wrapped around the pole is such a well-recognized symbol of healing, it is the international symbol for ambulances!

God's people were complaining against the Lord, expressing their regret that they ever followed him out of Egypt in the first place. They grumble about their food—food which God miraculously sends to them every day! Their ingratitude was sinful.

God sends fiery serpents which bite the Israelites causing them to die. There may be something “supernatural” about these serpents because they are described as “fiery.” This word is used to describe the angels, “the burning ones.” The Israelites cry out to God for help.

God responds to their pleas and provides a way for them to be healed when they get bitten. Moses makes a bronze serpent and places it on a pole. Whenever the Israelites look at it, they are cured. Their glance at the serpent is an act of faith which saves them from their illness.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

In the Gospels, Jesus compares himself to the bronze serpent. In John 3:14–16, Jesus says, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” Faith (or belief) in Christ saves us from death.

Jesus is like the bronze serpent for another reason: The bronze serpent in the book of Numbers looks poisonous, but is not. Jesus, hanging on the Cross, looks like a sinner justly punished for his crimes, but he is not. He is the blameless Son of God who is the cure for our sin. We are invited to follow him in faith and love.

IN THE LITURGY

The crucifix that hangs in every Church is a reminder that Jesus is the cure for our sin. When we make the sign of the Cross as we enter Church or begin Mass, we remember that God has saved us from sin by giving us his own life.

RESOLUTION

Avoid complaining today. When it is time to say your prayers or when you are asked to obey your parents, do so gratefully.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, increase my gift of faith so that when I sin, I might look to you on the cross for healing. Help me never long for sinful things. Amen.

WATER FROM THE ROCK



FROM THE PSALMS

“He cleft rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers!”

—Psalm 78:15–16

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.”

—1 Corinthians 10:1–4

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“It is on this harmony of the two Testaments that the Paschal catechesis of the Lord is built, and then, that of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church... Thus the flood and Noah's ark prefigured salvation by Baptism, as did the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea. Water from the rock was the figure of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, ‘the true bread from heaven.’”

—CCC, 1094

WATER FROM THE ROCK

INTRODUCTION

As the Israelites are making their difficult journey to the Promised Land, they become thirsty. This is understandable since they are traveling in the wilderness. However, they angrily complain to Moses and demand a sign rather than trust in the Lord's plan. How does God provide water for his people in a way that prepares us for the death of Christ?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

In Exodus 16, the story right before this one, God provides his people with miraculous food called manna. Now, God provides his people with miraculous drink.

SCRIPTURE

Read Exodus 17:1-7

COMMENTARY

God causes water to pour out of a rock! He has shown his people he can part the sea, he can cause food to rain down from the skies, and now he brings forth water from a rock. The Lord proves he is trustworthy because he takes care of his people even when it seems impossible. This story also tells us that when God provides for his people he provides for them *abundantly*. There is plenty of water for all God's people to drink.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, that the Israelites drank from a "supernatural" rock and that the "Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus is the source of the miraculous water given to the Israelites in the wilderness so they might live. He is also the source of the supernatural drink that quenches what we are truly thirsting for: God's life.

Jesus was crucified on a Friday and because of the approaching sabbath, the leaders were eager to have him removed from the Cross and be buried before sundown. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with him so they would die sooner. The soldiers approach Jesus and saw that he was already dead. Just to be sure, one soldier pierced his side with a spear causing blood and water to flow out. The blood and water are signs of his gifts of baptism and the Eucharist.

These sacraments give life to the Church. Our souls need these sacraments for life more than our bodies need water to drink. We can receive these supernatural gifts because our Lord was struck on the Cross and poured out his divine life for us.

IN THE LITURGY

The Mass is a re-presentation of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. When the priest offers Jesus' body and blood in the Eucharist, he is placing before us (in an unbloody way) the death of our Lord. We receive Jesus' Body and Blood at Mass because he gave us his Body and Blood on the Cross. When the Mass is celebrated, we are flooded with grace, which comes pouring from the altar. We receive the Eucharist and are given the miraculous food and drink we need to arrive safely at the Promised Land.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, increase my thirst for you. Help me see that I am in a desert of sin and the sacraments and a life of prayer is the supernatural drink that quenches my thirst and gives me life. Amen.

RESOLUTION

Every time you take a drink of water, thank the Lord for his death on the Cross, which gives us the supernatural drink of his grace.