

***Fourth Sunday of Lent***  
***March 10, 2024***  
***Year of the Most Holy Eucharist***  
***Reflection #11***

*“And Moses called all the ancients of the children of Israel, and said to them: Go take a lamb by your families, and sacrifice the Phase (Passover Lamb). And dip a bunch of hyssop in the blood that is at the door, and sprinkle the transom of the door therewith, and both the door cheeks: let none of you go out of the door of his house till morning. For the Lord will pass through striking the Egyptians: and when he shall see the blood on the transom, and on both the posts, he will pass over the door of the house, and not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses and to hurt you. Thou shalt keep this thing as a law for thee and thy children for ever. And when you have entered into the land which the Lord will give you as he hath promised, you shall observe these ceremonies. And when your children shall say to you: What is the meaning of this service? You shall say to them: It is the victim of the passage of the Lord, when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses. And the people bowing themselves, adored. And the children of Israel going forth did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.” (Exodus 12:21-28)*

The institution of the Feast of the Passover, found in Exodus 12, is one of the most significant events recorded in the Old Testament. Modern scholars propose the feast originally began as a shepherd’s celebration held in spring. They offer this observation for two reasons. First, general consensus held that most new lambs were born in the springtime. Second, springtime marked the beginning of flock migration toward the summer pastures. It is believed shepherds would sacrifice one of the new lambs, sprinkling its blood upon the flock while asking for protection and continuing flock fertility as they traveled toward these new fields. Once this feast is associated with the Passover event, it takes on a much more significant meaning. It becomes so significant; it will even affect the way Israel would record time.

Our reflection upon this celebration can never do it adequate justice. I will, however, spend more than one week upon the explanation and significance of this event. As I often say, “Greater minds than mine,” have written libraries explaining the significance of this feast. Our offering will be a mere drop in the ocean of knowledge already available. Many of the thoughts I will offer are found present in the book: *The Holy Mass – on Earth as it is in Heaven* by Kevin and Mary O’Neill. Although written as a children’s book with the use of Lego characters, this book conveys a deep and beautiful theology of the Eucharist. I encourage all young families to purchase this book and read it with their children.

Returning to the Book of Exodus, Moses instructs the people to procure a lamb for each house. The lamb was to be “unblemished,” meaning it was to be free of any mark or stain. It was to be impeccable. The lamb would be sacrificed in the morning hours without the breaking of any of its bones. It would be slowly roasted over a fire upon a spit. Some have suggested the spit to have been made of wood in the shape of a cross. With the use of a branch of hyssop, the lamb’s blood was sprinkled upon the doorposts. Two other food items were to be eaten with the roasted lamb. These consisted of desert herbs and unleavened bread (containing no yeast). The dress and posture of those who would eat this meal signified they were pilgrims on a journey.

Much later, once the children of Israel are living in the promised land, 4 cups would be offered, during the meal, which would further emphasize the history and significance of this event. Even later, once the Temple of God in Jerusalem is in operation, a further liturgical action would surround this event. A solemn act emphasizing its religious significance in the lives of the people.

With this history in place, next week we will reflect upon this event and how it is fulfilled in the person of Jesus with His death upon the cross. May God bless and keep you till then.