



MYSTICAL SUPPER

May 2



Did you know that the Holy Eucharist has a “birthday”?

On Holy Thursday, the Church celebrates the institution of the Holy Eucharist — the “birthday” of Holy Communion — which marks the beginning of the New Covenant.

The Passover meal (also called the “Festival of Unleavened Bread”) was instituted by God through Moses. It was to commemorate, through a perpetual day of remembrance, the Angel of Death “passing over” the homes marked with the blood of the Passover lamb and the miracle of Israel “passing through” the Red Sea from Egypt to the Promised Land.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He celebrates this Passover meal in the Upper Room in Jerusalem with His disciples. Previously, Christ — through the turning of water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana — transformed the cultural institution of marriage into a grace-giving sacrament. In the same way, Christ turns bread and wine into His body and blood, and transforms the Passover meal into the Divine Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist.

After giving thanks, Jesus breaks the bread and says: “This is my body.” In the same way, He takes the cup of wine and says: “This is my blood.” As Saint Maximos the Confessor says: “[Christ] transmits to us divine life, making Himself eatable.” And as Saint Justin Martyr says: “We call this food Eucharist.”

At the “Mystical Supper” in the Upper Room, Jesus transforms the Jewish “day of remembrance” into an ever-present memorial (“birthday”) for the Church, saying: “Do this in remembrance of me.” For “Jesus IS the Passover [Greek: πάσχειν] that is our salvation.” — Saint Melito of Sardis

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