

A Christian Passover Seder
for
Holy Thursday



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The Mass of the Faithful, the Eucharistic banquet, is a transformation of the Israelites' religious banquets, especially of the paschal feast in the course of which Jesus instituted the Eucharist.

This transformation is radical, for it fulfills the promises of the ancient rites while illuminating them with a brilliance before inconceivable. It is with the ancient rites that we must begin, then, if we are to explain the Mass, the banquet of reconciliation, just as it was with the ancient prophecies that we had to start in order to explain the Gospel of the New Covenant, the tidings of that reconciliation.

— Father Louis Bouyer, *The Paschal Mystery*

Preparing the Seder

THIS CHRISTIAN VERSION OF THE JEWISH PASSOVER SEDER, or ritual meal, is modified for use in families. It is most effective in teaching children (and parents, too) the tradition of the Mass, a representation of the Last Supper of our Lord with His apostles, where He instituted the sacrifice of the Mass and the priesthood.

If you are planning to go to Church for the Holy Thursday evening Mass, remember to start the seder meal early. Though this Christian version of the Passover Seder is much abbreviated, it still takes longer than the usual weekday family dinner.

Elements of the Meal

Lamb The word “pesach” (pasch, passover) applies to the Lamb of Sacrifice as well as to the deliverance from Egypt and to the feast itself.

Unleavened Bread (matzoh) is called the “bread of affliction” because it recalls the unleavened bread prepared for the hasty flight by night from Egypt. Three large matzohs are broken and consumed during the ceremony.

Bitter Herbs (moror) are a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and suffering in Egypt.

Green Herbs to be dipped in salt water. Salt water represents tears of sorrow shed during the captivity of the Lord’s people.

Haroseth (or “haroses”) represents the mortar used by the Jews in building palaces and pyramids of Egypt during their slavery. (It is a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine.)

Wine is dipped from a common bowl. The “Four Cups” — Thanksgiving, Haggadah (“telling”), Blessing, and Melchizedek (“righteousness”) — are said to be four different words for redemption, spoken by God to Moses.

Menu Suggestions for Seder Meal

The suggested menu is purposely very simple with a vaguely Middle-Eastern flavor. Some of the ceremonial foods can be part of the meal. You could, of course, make substitutions and additions, so long as the main elements (above) are included. Christians are not bound by Jewish dietary rules or customs. It would be wise to read through the entire ritual before you begin.

Roast lamb (or chicken or turkey)
Spinach or other dark green vegetable
Green salad, with dressing; or celery
Rice seasoned with herbs
Ratatouille (eggplant and zucchini with garlic and tomato)
Matzoh (unleavened bread)
Haroseth (dessert)

Foods needed for seder ceremony

Green herbs (parsley or celery); bitter herb (horseradish); salt water; four large matzohs, wrapped separately in napkins on a plate; red wine.

- Each person should have these items already on a plate in front of him or her before the ceremonial meal begins: parsley sprig, small amounts of horseradish and haroseth, and a small dish containing salt water.

To make unleavened bread (matzoh):

Mix together 1 cup whole wheat (graham) flour, 3 tablespoons oil, a pinch of salt and enough water to make a pliable but not sticky dough. Knead about 10 or 15 times, adding a little flour to pastry board, if necessary, to keep the dough from sticking. Divide the dough into four pieces, and roll out each piece on a sheet of waxed paper about 9" in diameter (or until bread is about 1/8" thick.) Prick the bread with a fork; then peel off the paper, placing bread on cookie sheets. Bake bread at 400° until crisp but not brown (approximately 8-10 minutes).

To make haroseth:

Partially peel and chop or finely dice 6 to 8 apples, leaving some skin on. Add coarsely ground walnuts or pecans (about a third as many as apples) and an equal amount of raisins. Season with cinnamon, honey and a little sweet red wine.

Other items for the ceremony:

- Candles (one or more)
- Bowl and dipper or carafe for wine
- Small pitcher containing water; a bowl and a hand towel
- Traditionally, the mother's head is covered with a white cloth
- A *Hakishut* or a china dinner plate or platter with the following ceremonial foods arranged on it: green herbs (parsley or lettuce); bitter herb (horseradish); a boiled egg; haroseth. (A *Hakishut* is a ceremonial plate made especially for seders, available from a Jewish religious goods store.)
- Everyone should have a copy of the ritual, as the prayers and psalms are read by all.

Table setting

The table should be set as for any other important meal with these inclusions:

- The four large matzohs (unleavened bread), each wrapped in a napkin are on a plate placed near the father's place.
- The pitcher of water, bowl and a small towel, for the ritual washing of hands, should be near the father's place.
- The bowl or carafe of red wine should be placed in front of the father.
- The candle (or candles) should be in front of the mother for her to light.
- Everyone should have a glass or cup for the wine.

Readers in the ceremony

Father leads the service

Mother lights candles, blesses the light

Youngest Child asks the four questions about the meaning of Passover.



The Paschal Meal

I - KINDLING OF THE FESTIVAL LIGHTS

Symbolizes the coming of the Messiah, the Light of the World

The mother lights the candles. All stand.

Mother's Prayer:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to kindle the festival lights.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who hast kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season.
May our home be consecrated, O God, by the Light of Thy countenance, shining upon us in
blessing and bringing us peace.

All: Amen.

II - KIDDUSH

The Cup of Thanksgiving — Blessing of the Feast

On a plate before each person is a dish of salt water, some horseradish, green herb (e.g., parsley), and haroseth. A bowl of wine is set at the father's place.

Father's Prayer:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, Who has chosen us above all peoples, and hast exalted us above all tongues, and hast hallowed us with Thy commandments.
In love hast Thou given us, O Lord our God, seasons for gladness, holy days, and times for rejoicing, this day of the feast of the unleavened bread, the time of our freedom, an assembly day of holiness, a memorial to the Exodus from Egypt.
For Thou hast chosen us and hast sanctified us above all peoples, and Thou hast given us Thy sacred seasons for our inheritance.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who dost sanctify Israel and the festivals.

The Cup of Thanksgiving is distributed. Holding the wine, the people say:

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who dost create the fruit of the vine.

All drink.

The father ceremonially washes his hands by pouring water from a small pitcher into a basin, wiping his hands with a napkin, while praying.

Father:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who hast hallowed us with Thy commandments and hast commanded us concerning the washing of hands.

All take the green herb, dip it in salt water, and say:

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who dost create the fruit of the soil.

All eat the green herb.

The father uncovers and lifts slightly the first of the three large pieces of unleavened bread, which are each wrapped in a linen napkin on a plate before him.

Father:

Behold! This is the bread of affliction, which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.

Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God's will to redeem us from all evil and from all slavery.

III - HAGGADAH

Telling, instruction — Story of deliverance from Egypt

The cup of Haggadah, the second cup of wine, is poured. The youngest person asks the four traditional questions.

Youngest Child:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. Why on this night do we eat only unleavened bread?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why on this night do we eat especially bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip herbs in any condiment. Why on this night do we dip them in salt water and haroses?

On all other nights we eat without special festivities. Why on this night do we hold this Passover service?

Father:

The Syrians pursued our fathers, who went down into Egypt and sojourned there in a very small number, and grew into a nation great and strong and of an infinite multitude. And the Egyptians afflicted us and persecuted us, laying on us most grievous burdens. And we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, Who heard us, and looked down upon our affliction and labor and distress. And He brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand, and a stretched-out arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders.

Therefore, even if all of us were wise and well-versed in the Torah, it would still be our duty from year to year to tell the story of our deliverance from Egypt. Indeed to dwell at length on it is accounted praiseworthy.

*The paschal lamb is brought in and placed before the father at the head of the table.
The father lifts the lamb, and all ask:*

All:

What is the meaning of pesach?

Father:

Pesach means the paschal lamb, which our forefathers sacrificed to the Lord in memory of that night when the Holy One passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt, as it is written: “And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ You shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, for He passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when He slew the Egyptians, but spared our houses.’” (Exodus 12:26-27)

The father again uncovers the first piece of unleavened bread and holds it.

All:

What is the meaning of matzoh?

Father:

This is the bread of affliction which our fathers took with them out of Egypt as it is written: “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any provisions.” (Exodus 12:39)

The father lifts up the bitter herb, while all ask:

All:

What is the meaning of moror?

Father:

Moror means bitter herb. We eat moror to recall that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers, as it is written: “And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they made the people of Israel serve with rigor, and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field; in all their work they made them serve with rigor.” (Exodus 1:12b,13-14)

IV - HALLEL PSALM

Thanksgiving for deliverance from Egypt

As a preface to the Hallel psalm, the father lifts his cup of wine and says:

Father:

In every generation each one ought to regard himself as though he had personally come out of Egypt, as it is written: “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’” (Exodus 13:8)

Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, bless, exalt, and adore Him Who did all of these miracles for our fathers and for ourselves. He has brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festive day, from darkness to a great light, and from subjection to redemption. Let us then recite before Him a new song.

He sets down his cup of wine without drinking it.

ALL STAND and recite Psalm 114

All:

HALLELUJAH, praise the Lord!

Father:

When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language.

All:

Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

Father:

The sea looked and fled, Jordan turned back.

All:

The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

Father:

What ails you, O sea, that you flee?

O Jordan, that you turn back?

All:

O mountains, that you skip like rams?

O hills, like lambs?

Father:

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,

At the presence of the God of Jacob.

All:

Who turns the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a spring of water.
HALLELUJAH, Praise the Lord!

All are seated.

V - THE SOLEMN BLESSING OF THE FOOD

The father takes the cup in his hand and says:

Father:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who hast redeemed us and hast redeemed our fathers from Egypt, and has permitted us to live unto this night, to partake on it of the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs.

So may the Lord our God and the God of our fathers permit us to live unto other festive seasons and holy days.

May Thy will be done through Jacob, Thy chosen servant, so that Thy name shall be sanctified in the midst of all the earth, and that all peoples be moved to worship Thee with one accord. And we shall sing new songs of praise unto Thee, for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who dost redeem Israel.

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who dost create the fruit of the vine.

All drink from the second cup of wine, the Cup of Haggadah.

The father then takes up the matzoh and blesses it with the following prayer:

Father:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who dost bring forth bread from the earth.

He then breaks the matzoh into pieces and gives a piece to each person. Holding the bread in their hands, they say:

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and hast commanded us concerning the eating of unleavened bread.

All eat the bread.

Father:

Let us combine the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs and eat them together, as it is written:
“With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”

All place bitter herb and haroseth between two pieces of unleavened bread and say together:

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and hast commanded us concerning the eating of bitter herbs.

VI - THE PASCHAL SUPPER

Other foods are brought in and the people eat the meal. The second matzoh may be consumed with the meal.

VII - THE CUP OF BLESSING

At the end of the meal, the father takes the last matzoh from the plate, breaks and distributes it to all.

As it was the custom to end the Passover meal with eating this final piece of unleavened bread, it was probably at this point that our Lord blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to His disciples saying: “This is my body, which is given for you.” (Luke 22:19)

All hold the bread in their hands while the father says:

Father:

Let us bless the Lord.

All:

May the name of the Lord be blessed from now unto eternity.

Father:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who dost feed the entire world with Thy goodness, with grace, with loving kindness and with pity. He gives bread to all flesh, for His loving kindness endureth forever. And in His great goodness, food has not been, and shall not be lacking for us, forever and ever, for the sake of His great name; for He is God, Who feeds and supports all, and does good unto all, and prepares food for all His creatures, which He did create.

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who feedest all Thy creatures.

All eat the bread.

The third cup of wine, the Cup of Blessing, is poured.
ALL STAND.

Father:

What shall I render to the Lord
For all His bounty to me?

All:

I will lift up the cup of salvation
And will call on the name of the Lord.

Father:

I will pay my vows to the Lord
In the presence of all His people.

All:

Precious in the sight of the Lord
Is the death of His saints.

Father:

O Lord, I am Thy servant,
I am Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid.

All:

Thou hast loosed my bonds.
I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call on the name of the Lord.

Father:

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people,
In the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

All:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has created the fruit of the vine.

All drink the Cup of Blessing.

VIII - THE CUP OF MELCHIZEDEK

The Final Blessing

The fourth cup of wine is filled. Melchizedek gave bread and wine to Abraham and blessed him. The name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness. As Priest-King of Salem (Jerusalem — “peace”) he is the Old Testament “type” of Jesus Christ, of the eternal priesthood. (Genesis 14:18-19, Psalms 110, Hebrews 5:6,7).

All raise their cups and say:

All:

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Who hast created the fruit of the vine.

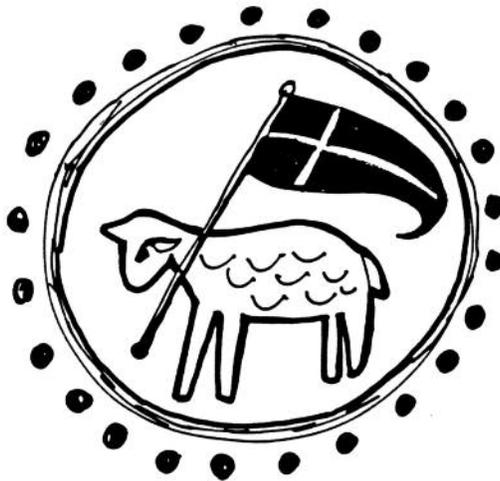
All drink the fourth cup. The ceremony concludes with the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26, which the Lord instructed Moses to give to the people.

Father:

The Lord bless you and keep you:
The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you!
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace!

All:

Amen. Amen. Amen.





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