

Our OT lesson from the 12th chapter of Exodus speaks about the first Passover. The Passover meal is still the most important meal of the Jewish year. For Jews, the Passover meal is the yearly reminder that God acted on Israel's behalf and brought them out of slavery. And Exodus 12 lays down the rules and regulations for how the meal is to be eaten. And if you look at Exodus 12, the thing that jumps out first and foremost is the importance of the lamb and the lamb's blood. The lamb is the central image of ch12.

Our reading this evening begins with instructions. Every household needs a lamb. If a household is too small, they are to join with their neighbors in obtaining a lamb.

The lamb is to be without blemish. In other words it is to be perfect. It is to be the best lamb that can be offered. It's also supposed to be a year old male. That means a lamb just beginning the prime of its life.

It shall be slaughtered at twilight. Some of its blood is to be painted on the doorways, on the two vertical posts, and on the horizontal lintel. It is to be cooked and eaten in a certain way. There are to be no leftovers.

It is to be eaten hurriedly. The flesh of the lamb will be food for the upcoming journey.

And finally, it is the blood of the lamb that will be the sign of protection. God will pass over the houses marked with the lamb's blood. The people inside will not be destroyed. The blood will provide safety.

During the first Passover in Egypt, it is by eating the flesh of a lamb and by spreading its blood on the door posts that the Children of Israel are saved. The flesh and blood of the unblemished lamb bring salvation to the children of Israel. For Christians, salvation also comes through eating the flesh of a lamb and through the lamb's blood. In this case, however, it is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who brings us salvation.

The Passover lamb was supposed to be the best that people had to offer to God.

God also offers us his best. God offers his unblemished, perfect, and sinless Lamb, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the new Paschal or Passover Lamb. He provides spiritual nourishment and sustenance for his people through the sacrament of his body and blood.

Now Holy Communion is rich with symbolism and many levels and layers of meaning. But a very essential core meaning is the Lamb of God's body and blood.

The bread broken and shared is Christ's broken body; the wine that is shared is Christ's blood poured out for us. Jesus himself says, "This is my body... This is my blood."

Like the blood of the Passover lamb, the blood of Jesus provides safety. In fact it provides the only real safety there is. The blood of Jesus shed on the cross is the only thing that

can save us from the power of sin and death. Jesus' death takes away our sins. As the book of Revelation says, it is by washing in the Lamb's blood that we are made clean and white as snow.

The blood of the Passover lamb painted on their door posts saved the people of Israel from death. The blood of the lamb of God painted on the wood of the cross saves us from death.

Also, the flesh of the Passover lamb provided food for the journey. The Passover was a meal which prepared the people to embark on a journey out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. Likewise, Jesus' body gives us food for our journey through life.

The Last Supper finds its meaning in both the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus is sacrificed on the cross. Jesus comes forth from the tomb alive forevermore. Jesus passes over from death to life. Thus we can be fed with his living body. His life can give us life for our journeys, until that day when we are brought into the Promised Land that is prepared for those who have faith in him.

We are called to intimate relationship with our Lord and Savior. Yet, this relationship is not expressed in the abstract. This relationship is cemented in the concrete. The incalculable gift given to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ comes to us in concrete ways: in a piece of broken bread, in a cup of poured wine, which are spiritually his body and his blood.

We come to Jesus' table and we are fed. We are not fed in some abstract way. Instead, we share concrete and tangible signs of our Lord's presence with us. He saves us from death. He gives us food for our journey.

My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, says the Lord. Blessed are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb.