

Take-Home: Session 6

A Kingdom of Priests · Do This

What We Found

The seals came off. Melchizedek, the first priest in the Bible, king of Salem, brought out BREAD AND WINE and blessed Abraham; God swore the Messiah would be a priest for ever after that man's order; and on the night before he died, Jesus took bread and wine, said "This is my body which is given for you... this cup... poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood," and commanded the Twelve: "Do this in remembrance of me." The Supper was a Passover, and the Passover lamb had to be eaten, and the night was fixed for ever as a memorial each generation enters, not just recalls. The cup-word of Matthew and Mark, "my blood of the covenant," quoted Sinai itself, where Moses sealed the covenant in sacrificial blood; Luke's "new covenant in my blood" carries the same grammar. And we were honest: Genesis 14 never calls the bread and wine a sacrifice; it is the whole sweep, Genesis to Psalm 110 to the upper room to the Church's earliest reading, that lights the verse up, read backward from Christ, the way the Church has always read. We also tested the memorial-only reading, the view that the bread and wine are bare symbols and the Supper only a remembrance, against our earliest witness, and found Paul calling the cup "a participation in the blood of Christ" and warning that unworthy eating makes a person "guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord." Paul's severity is hard to square with a merely symbolic account; stronger Protestant views of spiritual presence deserve their own conversation.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Cyprian of Carthage

Writing around the year 253, St. Cyprian teaches that in Melchizedek, priest of God Most High who offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham, the sacrament of the Lord's sacrifice was prefigured: what Melchizedek carried in figure, Christ the true priest fulfilled, offering his own body and blood. You made his argument before you heard his name. (Faithfully summarized from his letter on the Eucharist.)

Letter 63

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Ignatius of Antioch

On the road to martyrdom around the year 107, St. Ignatius warned against those who "abstain from the Eucharist... because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins." Within one lifetime of the upper room, this was the test.

Letter to the Smyrnaeans

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Justin Martyr

Describing Sunday worship to the Roman emperor around the year 155, St. Justin wrote that "not as common bread and common drink do we receive these," but as the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, over which thanksgiving has been made by the word of prayer that comes from him. The surrounding chapters (65 and 67) describe what your parish still does.

Live It This Week

- At Mass this week, listen for tonight's exact words in the Eucharistic Prayer. You will recognize where its central words were born, especially in the institution narrative.
- Read the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13 to 35) slowly: Scriptures opened, bread broken. Which half of that rhythm is stronger in your life right now?
- Keep your opened guess sheet in your Bible at Genesis 14. Someday, show someone and tell them this story.

Memory Verse

"This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:19 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read John 20:19 to 23, twice: the evening of Easter.

Catechism References

CCC 611; CCC 1337; CCC 1363 to 1364.