

THE BREAD OF ANGELS

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The first time bread is mentioned in the Scripture it is during the punishment God gives Adam. "In the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread." It is significant that God mentions this in the punishment of Adam, because the new Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:22), will identify Himself as "The Bread of Life". It is He who will give the antidote to the sin of Adam.

The second time the Scripture uses the word bread is in conjunction with the word "wine". It is very significant that the bread and wine go together, "Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem), brought out bread and wine; for he was a priest of the Most High God." (Gen. 14:18) Christ is not a Levite priest; "Jesus has - become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Heb 6:20) Like Melchizedek, Jesus is the King of Jerusalem, and a High Priest of God who offers bread and wine. This shows the importance of the Eucharist and how it is related to the priesthood of Christ.

Christ continues through His Catholic priests to offer the sacrifice of His body and blood, under the appearance of bread and wine, according to the order of Melchizedek. "On the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks broke, and said, ' This is my body which shall be given up for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In like manner He took the cup, after He had supped, saying, ' This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Cor. 11:23-25)

It is here at the Last Supper that Jesus clarifies what He spoke of earlier during His ministry. He is the true "bread of angels". The Scripture says: "He commanded the skies above and doors of heaven be opened; He rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread. The bread of angels was eaten by men." Ps 78:23-25. (cf. Ex 16) "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and have died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that if anyone eat of it he will not die. I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (Jn 6:48-52)

Thus, we see the purpose of the Eucharist is for Christ to dwell within us: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn 6:55) Christ gives us His body, blood, soul and divinity under the taste and appearance of a pleasant meal of bread and wine. This is why He says; "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (Jn 6:56) Through faith we recognize that the Eucharist only appears to be bread, " they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread." (Lk 24:35)

Because the Eucharist is Christ Himself, we must be properly prepared to receive Him. If we have committed a mortal sin, we must go to confession first, before receiving Communion. Otherwise instead of bringing grace to the soul, Holy Communion brings the sin of sacrilege. St. Paul warns us, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord - he who eats and drinks unworthily, without distinguishing the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself." (1Cor 11:27-29)

We should remember to make use of confession (Jn 20:23), to prepare to receive Christ Himself, "the living bread come down from heaven." (Jn 6:51) He comes down to us each time we celebrate the miracle of the Mass.