**Friday (Thomas a Kempis)**

*Christ says to the disciple:* I am the giver of holiness. I seek a pure heart and there I will dwell. Prepare and make ready for me a large upper room, and there I and my disciples will eat the Passover with you. Do whatever lies within your power and do it earnestly, not out of habit or necessity, but with awe and reverent love receive the Body of our Lord and God, who deigns to come to you. It is my invitation and my bidding: I will supply whatever is lacking in you. Come, therefore, and receive me. You come in order to be hallowed and united to me; that you may receive fresh grace, and be inspired anew to amendment of life. No less vigilance is required after Communion than devout preparation beforehand. For a constant vigilance after is the best preparation for receiving richer graces. Savour the presence of God, for you possess him. I am he to whom you should offer your whole self, that, set free from care, you may no longer live in yourself, but in me.

**Scripture** **(1 Cor. 10:16-17)**

***The blessing cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.***

martben1@btinternet.com

*The Body and Blood of Christ*

**Eat, drink and be holy**

***When reading the description of the assembled people being sprinkled with the blood of a freshly slaughtered animal (Exodus 24:3-8) ask yourself, would you avoid being splashed if you were there? If you did, whatever the reasons (probably perfectly reasonable), you would be refusing to be part of the next step in your nation’s history. The Israelites were gathered at Sinai to listen to all of God’s Laws and instructions which Moses, the mediator between God and the people, had written. Having agreed that this was what they wanted, (God doesn’t force anyone to live in his way), it was time to ‘put your life where your mouth is’ by being sprinkled with the sacrificed animals’ blood. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, representing God, and the other half on the people. Because it was the same blood, this bound God and the people in the covenant: both were committed to each other.***

***The significance of blood in the Covenant was that it contained the very life of the animal, and so was sacred, (hence the rules about not eating flesh with blood in it.).***

***The sacred nature of blood is also key to the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, (Mark 14:12-26). When Jesus asked his apostle to eat his flesh and drink his blood, it must have been deeply shocking to them, but it is vital in that this is a new covenant, sealed by his blood. Interestingly, in Mark, the words and actions of the Last Supper are sandwiched between the prediction of betrayals by Judas and Peter, showing that this new Covenant is with flawed humans, taking us as we are. Jesus is sacrificing himself for all humanity. It is important to understand the real meaning of ‘sacrifice’, which is two Latin words meaning to ‘make sacred’. Sacrifice works by offering something to God so that what is damaged or flawed can be given back to us, made whole (made ‘holy’).***

***Mark is careful to link this Passover meal with the first Passover, so that Jewish readers would immediately associate Jesus’ words and actions with liberation from slavery. It is precisely this that Paul has in mind, (Hebrews 9:11-15) when he talks of Christ winning eternal redemption for us, the word being used in the same sense as redemption from Egypt and Babylon, and in Psalm 130, which talks of ‘with God there is fulness of redemption’. Also important to note is that in none of these cases of redemption is there any suggestion that payment of a price was demanded as a condition of redemption. I have always had real difficulty with the idea that God demanded payment for ‘Original Sin, especially when the only payment is his own son’s life. Jesus giving himself freely and completely to people who are about to betray him plus the proper understanding of ‘sacrifice’ shows that Jesus wasn’t ‘buying off’ an angry God; he was offering his life so that human life could be made holy.***

***Asking his disciples to eat his body and drink the divine life in him makes this new Covenant different to the old one where blood was sprinkled on the outside, bringing about a ritual cleansing. Now it is internal. Jesus is the high priest, our mediator, who has access to God. Because he is the sacrifice, it is he who goes up to God, i.e. into full union with God. But because it is his blood, and because he has his apostles drink it, complete union with him (and with each other, because they share the same loaf and drink from the same cup) is possible. We don’t ‘go to communion’; we are received into communion. In most cases, you are what you eat – it becomes part of you. In the case of the body and blood, of Jesus, you become what you eat and drink.* Martin Bennett**

**Monday (Meister Eckhart)**

Our Lord desires to dwell in and with his people. Go to your God and you shall be sanctified, joined and made one with him alone. For only in the sacrament shall you so truly find such grace that your bodily powers are so united and gathered together by the noble power of the physical presence of our Lord’s body that your mind and all your scattered senses are now united and gathered together and thus are raised up and properly offered to God. For we should be transformed into him and wholly united with him so that what is his becomes ours and all that is ours is his, our heart one heart with his and our body one body with his.

**Scripture (John 6:53-57)**

***Jesus said, “In truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in that person.***

**Tuesday (C.S.Lewis)**

Let me make it quite clear that when Christians say that the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean something simply mental or moral. When they speak of being ‘in Christ’ or of Christ being ‘in them’, this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts. It explains why this new life is spread not only by purely mental acts such as belief, but by bodily acts like Baptism and Holy Communion.

**Scripture (Matthew 26:26-28)**

***Now as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to his disciples. ‘Take it and eat,’ he said, ‘This is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he handed it o them saying, ‘Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’***

**Wednesday (A New Catechism)**

The Eucharist is a meal, a thanksgiving and a sacrifice at once. The simplest of gestures, the giving of bread and wine, and the simplest of words, “this is my body...this is my blood”, focus for us all that Jesus is and gives. These various meanings have been the subject of much thought ever since the time of St. Paul. But much more important than the meditations of the Church is the obedience with which the Church follows the command, “Do this as a memorial of me.” Because of this “doing”, the Church has been accompanied, nourished and constituted by the Eucharist throughout the ages, down to the present day.

**Scripture** **(Psalm 111:1-5,9-20)**

***I give thanks to God with all my heart in the meeting place of the just, and their assembly. Great are the deeds of the Lord, to be pondered by all who delight in them. Full of splendour and majesty his work, his justice stands firm for ever. He gives us a memorial of his deeds; the Lord is compassion and love. He gives food to those who fear him, he keeps his covenant ever in mind. He has sent deliverance to his people, and established his covenant for ever; holy and awesome is his name. His praise shall last for ever!***

**Thursday (Jean Vanier)**

Jesus lives his authority in total communion with the Father, as a child of the Father. He never tried to prove who he was or what he could do. Everything he did or said was in union with the Father, in order to glorify the Father. Jesus exercises authority out of love. And now, Jesus’ followers are called to do everything in communion with Jesus. They will speak Jesus’ words. They will wash each others’ feet. They will communicate his love. They will be Jesus.

**Scripture (John 17:18-19,21-23)**

***Jesus said, ‘As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you loved me.***