

## **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.***

*Corpus Christi*

## **Holy Communion: to be received together**

*My early days of receiving the Eucharist were at the altar rails, receiving the host on the tongue ('don't let it touch your teeth!'), when the idea of receiving from the chalice wasn't even thought of. I am grateful for this early grounding because it left me in no doubt about the sacredness of the sacrament.*

*The emphasis on it being 'spiritual food for the soul', however, taught me that receiving Communion was mainly about my own individual salvation, about helping my soul on its journey to heaven. When St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, he leaves us in no doubt about the sacredness of the Eucharist, saying it is the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), but when he reminds them of the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper (11:23-26), he is clearly angry with how the celebration had become so far removed from what Jesus had initiated. They were no longer celebrating, (doing in memory), the Lord's Supper because the community was divided with the rich eating and drinking plenty whilst the poor went without. They were, therefore, not proclaiming Jesus' death, i.e. the great act of love and service Jesus was entering into 'on the night he was betrayed'.*

*It's worth considering what Jesus actually meant by 'this' when he said 'This is my body / this is my blood'. Of course, the bread and the wine, but he couldn't have done this the night before because it had to be a Passover meal, a celebration of how God liberated his people from slavery to be able to live in the Covenant with him; Passover, where it was his body and blood to seal of the new Covenant, gave the bread and wine he offered a depth I need to remember when I hear the words 'this is my body/ blood'.*

*As he had deliberately chosen twelve apostles to symbolise the new Covenant (the old one being made with twelve tribes), would 'this' not also apply to the table and the twelve guests around it? If so, it adds meaning to the Christian churches as the Body of Christ, would 'this' not also refer to the Twelve? Giving it was also an integral part, (he couldn't have instituted the Eucharist on his own!), as was the breaking (which comes before the words) and pouring, pointing to his imminent great act of obedience and love for his people on the cross. This must also, I think, include these actions.*

*In the Feeding of the 5,000, (Luke 9:11-17), the words and actions of Jesus are exactly the same as at the Last Supper. The other details (Messianic banquet, 12 baskets left over) were all clear signs of the New Covenant, and the role of the disciples in the miracle points to their – and our role – in it. When they bring the ludicrously inadequate amount of food, Jesus doesn't say 'Just leave it to me'; he takes what they have, blesses it and gets them to distribute it: they are the mediators of God's blessings.*

*The abundance of God's blessings and his power would be familiar themes for the Jewish audience. One example is Abraham's victory over an all-conquering alliance of five kings with just 318 men, (Genesis 14). The priest Melchizedech, recognising that it was God acting through him, offers him a banquet, (brings bread and wine). Abraham does not take the glory to himself: he offers what he has to God, to be used by him - a similar pattern to the feeding miracle... and to Jesus' actions in the Last Supper.*

*When I receive the Eucharist, therefore, these passages tell me quite clearly that Jesus wants to become part of me, but he is not offering a 'me and you' religion. He unites all of us as one body, and does so for a reason: we are mediators of the abundant love of God to those who are, in different ways, hungry. 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 to 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 other's 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.'*