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[Home](#) - [Saint Josemaria](#) - [Talking to God](#) - 5th Luminous Mystery: The Institution of the Eucharist

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2004.8.25

And when the hour had come, he reclined at table, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said to them, 'I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you that I will eat of it no more, until it has been fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' And having taken a cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and share it among you; for I say to you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God comes.'

And having taken bread, he gave thanks and broke, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In like manner he took also the cup after the supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you. (Luke 22:14-20)

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (Jn 13:1)."

When our Lord instituted the Eucharist during the Last Supper, night had already fallen. The world had fallen into darkness, for the old rites, the old signs of God's infinite mercy to mankind, were going to be brought to fulfillment. The way was opening to a new dawn—the new Passover. The Eucharist was instituted during that night, preparing in advance for the morning of the resurrection.

Jesus has remained in the Eucharist for love ... for you.

He has remained, knowing how men would treat him ... and how you would treat him.

He has remained so that you could eat him, and visit him and tell him your concerns; and so that, by your prayer beside the tabernacle and by receiving him sacramentally, you could fall more in love each day, and help other souls, many souls, to follow the same path.

Good child: see how lovers on earth kiss the flowers, the letters, the mementos of those they love...

Then you, how could you ever forget that you have him always at your side—yes, *Him*? How could you forget ... that you can eat him? Lord, may I never again flutter along close to the ground. Illumined by the rays of the divine Sun—Christ—in the Eucharist, may my flight never be interrupted until I find repose in your Heart.

Holy Rosary—Appendix, The Institution of the Eucharist

Let us begin by asking the Holy Spirit, from this moment on, to give us the grace to understand every word and gesture of Christ. Because we want to live a supernatural life, because our Lord has shown his desire to give himself to us as nourishment for our soul, and because we acknowledge that only he has “words of eternal life.”

Faith makes us profess in the words of Peter that “we have come to believe and to know that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” It is this faith, together with our devotion, that leads us to emulate the daring of John, to come close to Jesus and to rest on the breast of the Master, who loved those who were with him ardently, and who was to love them, as we have just read, to the end...

Think of the human experience of two people who love each other, and yet are forced to part. They would like to stay together forever, but duty — in one form or another — forces them to separate. They are unable to fulfil their desire of remaining close to each other, so man’s love — which, great as it may be, is limited — seeks a symbolic gesture. People who make their farewells exchange gifts or perhaps a photograph with a dedication so ardent that it seems almost enough to burn that piece of paper. They can do no more, because a creature’s power is not as great as its desire.

What we cannot do, our Lord is able to do. Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, leaves us, not a symbol, but a reality. He himself stays with us. He will go to the Father, but he will also remain among men. He will leave us, not simply a gift that will make us remember him, not an image that becomes blurred with time, like a photograph that soon fades and yellows, and has no meaning except for those who were contemporaries. Under the appearances of bread and wine, he is really present, with his body and blood, with his soul and divinity.

Christ is Passing By, 83

The important thing is that we should love the Mass and make it the center of our day. If we attend Mass well, surely we are likely to think about our Lord during the rest of the day, wanting to be always in his presence, ready to work as he worked and love as he loved. And so we learn to thank our Lord for his kindness in not

limiting his presence to the time of the sacrifice of the altar. He has decided to stay with us in the host which is reserved in the tabernacle.

For me the tabernacle has always been a Bethany, a quiet and pleasant place where Christ resides. A place where we can tell him about our worries, our sufferings, our desires, our joys, with the same sort of simplicity and naturalness as Martha, Mary and Lazarus. That is why I rejoice when I stumble upon a church in town or in the country; it's another tabernacle, another opportunity for the soul to escape and join in intention our Lord in the Sacrament.

Christ is Passing By, 154