

Mass Parts 29/52:

Institution Narrative



The Institution Narrative are the words Jesus used at the Last Supper to institute the Eucharist. The words are the same in all of the different Eucharistic Prayers:

*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.
Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood,
the Blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in memory of me.*

From the very beginning, the Church has always used these exact words in the celebration of the Eucharist. We find the words in the Gospels: in Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, and Luke 22:17-20. St. Paul also gives us the words in his first letter to the Corinthians 11:23-26.

Other Christian denominations see this ritual as a reenactment of the Last Supper. Catholics see that meaning as only *one part* of what we are doing. It is not just a reenactment of that moment; it is also a participation in something more. The Jewish Passover feast has a foreshadowing of this. Exodus 12 describes the first Passover meal. Verse 14 says that “This day will be a day of *remembrance* for you.” The “remembrance”, the *mnemosunon*, is different from a simple memory. It takes on the idea of a memorial, a making present what happened in the past. In the modern Jewish Passover ritual, the meal begins with the youngest person at the table asking the eldest: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” The answer is the Passover story and God’s leading the Israelites out of Egypt. The story is told in the present tense: “On *this* night we were freed from Pharaoh.”

Through the grace of the sacrament, the Eucharist is not just a memory or reenactment of the Last Supper, which itself was a Passover meal. The same person that offered his very body at the Last Supper is the same person that suffered, died, and was buried. This same body we offer has risen and ascended to the Father. Our Eucharist is not a reenactment; it is a true participation in the heavenly banquet. Christ’s call to “do this in memory of me” continues until the end of time. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.” (1 Cor 11:26).

There were many covenants that God made with the Israelites: Noah (Gen 9), Abraham (Gen 12), Moses (Exod 19-24), and David (2 Sam 7). The prophet Jeremiah speaks of a *new* covenant (31:31). This new covenant will not be written on stone like Moses’, but will be written on our hearts (31:33). The fulfillment of this new covenant is in the Blood of Christ. Luke 22:20 and Paul (1 Cor 11:25) speak of the “cup of the new covenant.” In Latin, the word for “covenant” is *testament*. This is where we get the titles of Old Testament and New Testament. It is not just about “testimony” as a report, but about a new covenant, a New Testament, and this one is written on our hearts, as our hearts are united to the Sacred Heart of Christ.