

A Ritual of Compassion: Eucharist

Mark's gospel contains teaching about Eucharist outside the Last Supper story. The feeding stories/miracles are also stories about Eucharist.

The fact that they involve bread and fish rather than bread and wine looks odd to us but is quite consistent. Crossan suggests that Eucharist is as much a ritualisation of Jesus' open commensality during his whole life as of the Last Supper so a meal with fish works as just as well. The fish symbolism of Christ makes this even more appropriate

There are two feeding stories in Mark. I'd been taught that they were evidence of Mark's reliance on previous sources which are inexpertly edited together. Father Anderson's suggestion that they are actually deliberate makes more sense and has support of other scholars as well. Mark is writing for the Roman Church so it makes sense to have a feeding story set in a gentile setting as well as for the Jews.

The first feeding story is the one Father Andersen concentrates on (Mark 6:30-44)

READ

The key passage is "Give them something to eat yourselves."

Mark uses the words of the Eucharist in this feeding story to underline the fact that he is looking at the real meaning of Eucharist. Father Andersen makes the point that the community would know the ritual. He suspects that the author of Mark was concerned that they had forgotten what it meant.

The liturgy derived from the Last supper says do this in remembrance of me. What do we do:

TAKE - what we are and have

BLESS - appreciate what we have

BREAK - what we have and are

GIVE - to others

Mark is telling his Church what doing the Eucharist means to the person doing it. Like the feeding story it is a “miracle” done by the followers of Jesus. When they live in generosity they become Jesus in their community. It is worth noting that the disciples did not have a lot, but they gave everything they had. In return they receive in leftovers more than they started with.

Ancient testimonies to Eucharist:

Paul: 1 Cor 11.17-34 **READ**

Didache IX p64

Justin lxvii p66

VIDEO

Framework of the Eucharistic Liturgy

2 Processions

Gifts

Communion

PICTURE

The procession of the gifts originally involved the whole community. It involved bringing forward bread, wine, oil, wax, blankets etc, like a St Vinnies. Perhaps this tells us that our collection should go up with the gifts. The liturgy links the gifts with Jesus by bringing back from these gifts the bread and the wine for the assembly.

This is then celebrated with the Sanctus, the Memorial acclamation and the doxology.

The gifts that are made holy in the liturgy are the bread and wine AND the rest of the collection AND the community itself. To consecrate the bread and wine is to consecrate ourselves because in a very real sense we are the gifts that are brought forward.

The communion procession starts with the Our Father, which we dare to say as Jesus talked to his Father.

We have the sign of peace which acknowledges that we are bound together in this ritual.

The procession does still involve the whole church. We eat the bread which is a private thing, but we see each other share the bread which involves the whole community committing itself to the same covenant.

We drink from the cup, but it is a shared cup. We share the suffering of Christ. The ritual I grew up with had separate cups which is less poetic.