

Reflection on Mark 14:12-16,22-26 The Body and Blood of Christ

Jesus' disciples ask him in today's Gospel: *Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?* Jesus response seems coded and mysterious. Ched Myers' commentary on Mark's Gospel called *Binding the Strong Man* gives some helpful insights into what may have been happening in this first part of our Gospel. He says:

"Mark is shifting our attention from the undercover operation of the authorities to the underground movements of the community. An anonymous network coordinates prearrangements to facilitate the fugitive community's movement in the city. The man carrying a pitcher of water connotes a "signal," just conspicuous enough (carrying water pitchers was the work of women) in a crowded city to draw only the attention of those watching for it. This "runner" leads the disciples to a "safe house," in which they find the attic room already prepared. There the community will celebrate the meal after the manner of the original Passover: eating "as those in flight" (Ex 12:11).

When reading Myers commentary we are given the distinct impression that just as the religious authorities are plotting to find ways to *kill* Jesus, there is also a counter *underground* community doing the same thing in support of Jesus and his followers.

Everything is ready for Jesus and the disciples to celebrate Passover. As they celebrate Passover Jesus takes the unleavened bread (which symbolises the haste the Israelites experienced as they left Egypt and didn't have time to add the yeast) and he then blesses the bread and breaks it and gives it to his disciples saying *Take it, this is my body*. How would the disciples have interpreted this action and these words of Jesus at that very moment? What is Jesus saying to all of us at this very moment?

This *bread* that was the nourishment and food for the Israelites as they escaped Egypt and journeyed toward their homeland, Jesus is now saying to his disciples and to us: *my body* is now going to be your nourishment and your food as you journey into your true Homeland – the Heart of your Being where I dwell. Jesus is saying take me into every part of you, consume me, let me nourish you so that you then *consciously become* what you already are – a Wholeness of Love. As you journey into this Wholeness and become my Heart of Love in the world then together we will become food and nourishment for others. Jesus is saying to us today *come Home*. Just as the bread was highly symbolic in the Passover Meal, Jesus converts this same bread to then become his Body (of Christ) for the world. Jesus has become the continuation and fulfilment of the original ritual and is revealed as the *Cosmic Christ* living and breathing in and through everything even in a simple piece of bread.

Then Jesus takes the cup. At the Passover there are five cups of wine. Four of them symbolise God's promise to Moses of redemption and they are fully consumed during Passover. The fifth cup is called Elijah's Cup and represents the complete redemption that has not yet come but will be announced by Elijah. The fifth cup isn't consumed at Passover – it represents waiting for full redemption – for Wholeness. Is it this fifth cup that Jesus takes and drinks from? This symbolises that the time of waiting is over, the Messiah has come; God's promise is being fulfilled and your redemption is here. But the Messiah's blood will be *poured out* because not all will believe, not all will see, not all will open into this Wholeness. Jesus asks us: *Can you drink the cup that I drink?*

As we celebrate Eucharist in its many forms and we see the extraordinary journey that has gone before us we will see that this beautiful symbolic ritual is our invitation into Love. When we eat the Bread we become what we eat. When we drink the Cup our blood too will be poured out for many. This Eucharistic celebration extends far beyond any building. Ilija Delio in her book *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being* says: *If we say yes to the embrace of the crucified Christ, then we must be willing to offer that embrace to our neighbour, our brother or sister, whoever he or she might be. Eucharist means finding oneself internally related to every other in the field of love; it is the source of a truly catholic-whole making- personality and the emergence of a new humanity bound in love. Albert Haase writes that "everyday, in some way, we are challenged to become the bread that is broken for the hungry of the world."* Can we truly eat the Bread and drink the Cup Jesus offers each of us today? Will we accept this extraordinary invitation into Love and journey Home? *Annemarie Reiner*