

## Guide for a Christian Seder Meal

*St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church*

Before beginning: Choose who will play the role of Narrator, Father, Mother, and the youngest child. Make sure everyone has a glass of wine or grape juice, the Seder Plate is prepared and on the table, and the towel and 3 crackers or matzo with a napkin are ready.

Narrator: Our table is set for a festive meal. This table setting, with the special plate and the people who celebrate, become an environment in which the events of the Exodus from Egypt will be re-lived by all of us. But we are not merely just recalling historic events. Each person must think of themselves as personally participating in the Exodus of history. This is the Jewish and now Catholic, understanding of "sacred remembering." At the Passover supper, just as at our Liturgy, we are not simply recalling something that happened a long time ago. Instead, those events are now brought into the present, so that we are truly participating in them. No matter how many generations removed all of us may be from the historic Exodus, at the Passover supper the Lord brings each one of us out of Egypt with Moses! In the New Testament, Jesus tells his disciples "Do this in memory of me." Whenever we gather and hear those words spoken with the ritual actions of the priest, we ourselves are being gathered by the Lord to share that very same supper with him and his first disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem, where Jesus substituted himself for the symbolic paschal lamb. This is why St. Paul writes "Christ was sacrificed for us as our Passover," and John the Evangelist proclaims "Behold the Lamb of God!"

### Lighting of the Candles

Narrator: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (All make the Sign of the Cross). We will now begin by lighting the candles. Will the mother, sister or daughter closest to the two candles light them now and recite this prayer:

*Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and has commanded us to kindle these festival lights. Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season. In your name we light these candles to recall the Passover supper of your Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## The Kiddush

Narrator: The next step in the meal is for Father to bless the festival. Fathers, brothers and sons, now recite together:

*Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has chosen us among all peoples and sanctified us with your commandments. Out of your love have you given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive season of gladness, even this day of the feast of the unleavened bread, a memorial of the departure from Egypt. You have chosen us for your service and have made us sharers in the blessing of your hold festivals. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who have preserved us and brought us to this season.*

(Father raises his cup.)

*We who are Christians know, as St. Luke writes, that on the night our Lord celebrated the Passover with his disciples he said "From now on, I tell you that I shall not drink wine until the kingdom of God comes."*

(All drink from their cup.)

## Washing of the Hands

Narrator: Let us now move on to the washing of the hands. Jesus would have participated in this ritual action, but he changed it to the washing of the feet, one of the lowliest tasks in Jewish culture.

Although there is no special blessing associated with the washing of the hands, it is a ritual action that reminds us that in keeping the commandments of God we are made pure, and keeping God's commandments means participating in the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist, through which we are truly cleansed, in order that we may follow Christ's model of service, in cleansing and serving others.

Fathers and Mothers, rise now and pick up the bowl of Holy Water at your table and the towel, and go around to each member of your family, allowing them to dip their hands in the water and make the sign of the cross. This ritual action symbolizes the act of parents handing on the faith to your children, in keeping with the commands of God, who told us to "tell your children of my saving works."

## Dipping of the Greens

Narrator: This step celebrates the arrival of spring as the season of our deliverance. There is a bowl of salt water on the Seder Plate. The saltwater represents the tears shed by the Israelites while they were slaves in Egypt, longing for deliverance. Let the saltwater also stand as a symbol for our own tears of repentance, in sorrow for our sins which wound the Body of Christ.

Everyone prays together: *Blessed are you, O Lord our God, the King of the Universe, and the Creator of the fruit of the earth.*

(All dip a sprig of parsley into the salt water and eat it.)

### Breaking of the Matzo

Narrator: We are now at the Breaking of the Matzo. On the table, there are 3 matzos. Traditionally, only 1 loaf of bread is served at a Jewish meal. Two loaves are served at the Sabbath supper, as a reminder of the double portion of manna that was gathered each Friday by the Israelites in the wilderness. Because Passover is the biggest feast in the Old Testament, 3 loaves are blessed and shared at the Passover supper. These three loaves also represent the 3 classes of the Jewish people at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple – the priests, the Levites and the people of Israel. For most Jewish holy days, only the priests or High Priest could enter the temple, the holy sacred space of the people. But this changed at Passover. During this festival, over 200,000 lambs were sacrificed as an offering. In keeping with Jewish law, it took 3 men to sacrifice a lamb, so on Passover at least 600,000 men entered the temple. But in order to enter the temple, the men had to be elevated to the dignity of priesthood, to enter into the presence of God. To be elevated to the priesthood, the men first had to immerse themselves in a ritual bath of cleansing, and put on the white linen robes and hats of the priests. Christians continues to wear the white robes of the priests as they were immersed in ritual bath during Baptism because they had become “a kingly priesthood, and a holy nation.” However, it was not only the men who entered the Holy Temple who bathed in the ritual waters and wore the robes of the priest. All of those men, women and children who ate the Passover Supper also had to bathe in the ritual bath and put on white robes. They were also elevated to the priesthood so that they could eat the Passover supper. Since everyone was a priest, everyone was able to eat the entire supper at Passover, rather than only the priest of the Temple. Sharing in the full Passover supper meant that each man, woman and child directly participated in that Passover sacrifice. What does that mean to us, the kingly priesthood of all believers? It means that at Holy Communion every man, woman and child shares directly in the one perfect sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on Calvary.

(Father removes the middle matzo from the stack of 3. He breaks it in half, places both halves on his plate and raises it for all to see.)

Father and Mother recite: *Behold this, the bread of our affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt! Let all who are hungry come and eat with us, let all who are needy come and share in our Passover supper. Now we are here, next year may we be in the land of Israel! Now we are slaves, next year may we all be free!*

(Father wraps the broken matzo in the napkin and places it under his plate, so that it is hidden.)

Narrator: The broken matzo is a symbol of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus. This breaking and enshrouding represents the death and burial of Christ.

## The 4 Questions

Narrator: It is time for the asking of the 4 Questions. The youngest child will read the questions, and everyone recites the answers.

1. Why is this night different from all nights?  
*Because there was no time in our rush to freedom to allow the bread dough to rise. (Everyone takes a piece of the top matzo)*
2. Why do we eat bitter herbs tonight at this special meal?  
*To taste again the bitterness of slavery (everyone takes a piece of the radish and eats it)*
3. Why do we dip our foods twice tonight, and this time with sweet jam?  
*We dip once into the saltwater to recall the tears shed in bondage, and we dip again into the sweet charoset to remind us to keep our faith in God, who changes our cries of sorrow into shouts of joy (everyone samples the apple mixture, which symbolizes the mortar that was used with the bricks in Egypt.)*
4. Why do we recline at table tonight?  
*As a symbol of joy at being free men and women, liberated by God from bondage.*

## The 10 Plagues

Narrator: Now, let us remember how God delivered us from slavery in Egypt, through recalling the 10 Plagues.

(Read Exodus 7:14-11:36, watch “The Prince of Egypt” or a YouTube clip.)

## The Second Cup – the Cup of Plagues

Narrator: We drink the second cup together, after hearing the story of liberation.

Everyone: *We drink from the juice cup a second time with joy at the saving power of God.*

(All drink.)

## The Dayenu Litany

Narrator: Let us all sing the praises of God, our Lord! Everyone recite or sing!

**If You had created us, and had not given us Your light,**

**Refrain: That would have been enough.**

**If You had given us Your light, and had not made a covenant with Your people (refrain)**

**If You had made a covenant with us, and had not called us by our name (refrain)**

**If You had called us by our name, and had not saved us from the flood (refrain)**

**If You had saved us from the flood, and had not loved us when we strayed (refrain)**

**If You had loved us when we strayed, and had not free us from our slavery (refrain)**

**If You had freed us from our slavery, and had not led us to the promised land, (refrain)**

**If You had led us to the promised land, and had not sent us holy prophets (refrain)**

**If You had sent us holy prophets, and had not promised us a Savior (refrain)**

**If You had promised us a Savior and had not sent us Your beloved Son (refrain)**

## Cracking the Egg

Narrator: At a Jewish Passover meal, eating the egg represents mourning over the destruction of the Temple, but it has a different meaning for Christians. For us, cracking the Easter eggs is a sign of Christ's resurrection. Let us take up the Easter eggs and open them!

(Everyone opens/smashes/cracks the Easter eggs according to what is on the plate.)

Everyone cries loudly: ***Christ is risen! Death is conquered! Yes, He is risen! He is truly risen!***

## Distribution of the Matzo

Narrator: Fathers, remove the wrapped matzo from its place and place it on your plate.

Father: *“This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) Jesus changed the significance of the matzo forever, and gives us his body at every Mass. This matzo, like the Eucharist, is broken in small pieces and everyone must eat their own piece, just as each of us must accept Jesus’ grace for ourselves. As we eat this bread, think about Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose body we are privileged to truly receive in the Eucharist, our once, now and forever Passover sacrifice.”*

(Father breaks off a piece of matzo for each family member and all eat their piece.)

### The Third Cup – the Cup of Redemption

Mother: *“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:20) Jesus changed the significance of this cup forever and gives us his blood at every Mass. This third cup is called the Cup of Redemption because we were brought out of slavery – slavery to sin- at a great price, the blood of our Lord and Savior who will one day return in power and glory.*

(All drink again.)

### The Fourth Cup – the Cup of Praise

Narrator: Children, quick! Stand up and run to the front door! See if you can see Jesus!  
(Children go to the door and open it. They look out and then return to the table.)

Father: *Is Jesus here?*

Children: *No, there is no sign of his return at this moment.*

Father: *Maybe next year. Let us be awake and prepared for his coming. Let us drain our cups now, in praise of the Lord, our God.*

(All empty their cups.)

Father: Now, let us recite Psalm 113, and praise the Lord, our God.

### **Psalm 113**

**Alleluia! You servants of Yahweh, praise, praise the name of Yahweh!**

**Blessed be the name of Yahweh, henceforth and forever!**

**From east to west, praised be the name of Yahweh!**

**High over the nations is Yahweh! His glory transcends the heavens!**

**Who is like Yahweh our God?**

Narrator: Now our Seder is completed, every law and custom fulfilled. As we have gathered here to celebrate this Passover tonight, may the Lord keep us safe until we meet again.

Everyone: *Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the Universe, and Creator of the fruit of the vine. Amen!*

(All make the Sign of the Cross.)