

“engine” of *agape*. Earthly food and drink are changed into the substance of our bodies when we consume them to strengthen and conserve them. There is an “intimate union” between the food and drink and ourselves. Intimate union is also true of the Eucharist: it is the sacramental sign of “comm-union.” It creates an intimate union between us and Christ and therefore between us in Christ. However, in the Eucharist it is not Christ who is transformed into us. Rather, the Eucharist transforms us spiritually into a closer image of Christ. St. Augustine once heard the voice of Christ saying to him: “I am the food of strong men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you convert me, like the food of your flesh, into you, but you shall be converted into me.”

2. “Having loved those who were his own in the world, Jesus loved them to the end (Jn 13:1) ... Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying ‘This is my body given for you’ (Lk 22:19).”

Charity is first infused into us in Baptism (it is a “theological” virtue), but the Eucharist is called the “sacrament of charity or *agape*”, the gift of self. By it, Christ in his love desires to remain present to us in his sacred humanity and not just as God. He was leaving his disciples to go to his passion and then to ascend to the Father, so he devised the Eucharist as the sacrament of his continual presence on earth. His physical body could only be present in one time and place, but he is Saviour of all. He did not leave all who would believe and love him later, but were not around during his physical time and place on earth, without contact with his sacred humanity. He invented the Eucharist. But the Eucharist is not just the sacramental presence of his humanity: it is also the presence of the act of sacrificial *agape*-love by which he redeemed humanity and espoused it to himself, that is, the act of his death for our sins. When we receive the Eucharist, we don’t just receive his “static” body but also the dynamic act of love by which he gave himself up for us. In the Eucharist, he literally performs the act of dying love for us. By doing so, Jesus enters into the most intimate physical and spiritual union possible with us, a true spousal union. The physical fades as the host is corrupted in our bodies, but the enduring spiritual effect is the most important: that is, the nourishing and increasing of sanctifying grace, charity and of the Indwelling of the Trinity within.

So, the three main aims of the Eucharist as willed by Jesus are: 1) to perpetuate His human presence among us as Redeemer and Victim for our souls; 2) to perpetuate His redemptive sacrifice, the supreme act of his burning charity; and 3) to unite himself in intimate communion with us.

## THURSDAY AGAPE

EVENING PRAYER (VESPERS)  
THURSDAY, WEEK 3  
*EASTERTIDE*

### Introduction (All stand)

*Priest:* O God, come to our aid.

*People:* O Lord, make haste to help us.

*Priest:* Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

*People:* as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

### Hymn

All creatures of our God and King,  
lift up your voice and with us sing  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,  
thou silver moon with softer gleam,  
O praise Him, O praise Him!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,  
ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,  
O praise Him! Alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,  
ye lights of ev'ning find a voice!  
O praise Him, O praise Him!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

### Psalms and Canticle (All sit)

**Psalm 131 (132):1-10**  
**God's promise to the house of David**

“The Lord God will give him the throne  
of David his father” (Lk 1:32).

*Priest: The Lord God gave him the throne of David, his father. Alleluia.*

*Men:* O Lord, remember David  
and all the many hardships he endured,  
the oath he swore to the Lord,  
his vow to the Strong One of Jacob.

*Women:* ‘I will not enter the house where I live  
nor go to the bed where I rest.  
I will give no sleep to my eyes,  
to my eyelids I will give no slumber  
till I find a place for the Lord,  
a dwelling for the Strong One of Jacob.’

At Ephrata we heard of the ark;  
we found it in the plains of Yearim.  
‘Let us go to the place of his dwelling;  
let us go to kneel at his footstool.’

Go up, Lord, to the place of your rest,  
you and the ark of your strength.  
Your priests shall be clothed with holiness;  
your faithful shall ring out their joy.  
For the sake of David your servant  
do not reject your anointed.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: The Lord God gave him the throne of David, his father. Alleluia.*

Comfort the sick and renew their strength; deliver them from all pain and  
distress.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

Help the anguished and the oppressed; in your love uphold the needy.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

Through your cross and resurrection you have won immortal life; grant  
to our dead the joys of your kingdom.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

Our Father

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*Priest:* Almighty, ever-living God, make our hearts more open to your love  
in these days of Eastertide, when you have made known to us the depth  
of that love. You have rescued us from the darkness of error: make us  
adhere more firmly to the teachings of your truth. Through our Lord  
Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the  
Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. *All: Amen.*

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*Priest:* The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to  
everlasting life.

*All: Amen.*

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### Scripture Readings for Silent Meditation

1. “Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood,  
you shall not have life in you” (John 6:54).

*Having been born, we need nourishment and growth to maturity. In the spiritual life,  
we are born to supernatural life through Baptism, nourished in the Eucharist and grow  
to maturity through Confirmation. Through the Eucharist, we are given to nourish,  
replenish and strengthen the supernatural life of God in us. In what does this life consist?  
Principally in sanctifying grace and divine charity or agape. The Eucharist is the*

on *those* who fear him.

He puts forth his *arm* in strength  
and scatters *the* proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty *from* their thrones  
and *raises* the lowly.

He fills the starving *with* good things,  
sends the rich *a*-way empty.

He protects Isra-*el*, his servant,  
Remembe-*ring* his mercy,  
the mercy promised *to* our fathers,  
to Abraham and his *sons* for ever.

Glory be to the Father and *to* the Son and to the *Ho*-ly Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and e-*ver* shall be, world without *end*.  
Amen.

*All: I am the bread of life that has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread  
will live for ever: and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.  
Alleluia.*

### **Prayers and intercessions**

Priest: Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen  
asleep. Let us praise him in our prayer.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

Lord, remember the Church you built on the apostles; bless all those who  
believe in you.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

You are the healer of body and soul; come to us with your salvation.

*All: Risen Lord, hear us.*

### **Psalm 131 (132): 11-18**

*Priest: Jesus Christ is the only Ruler over all, the King of kings and Lord of lords.  
Alleluia.*

*Men:* The Lord swore an oath to David;  
he will not go back on his word:  
'A son, the fruit of your body,  
will I set upon your throne.'

*Women:* 'If they keep my covenant in truth  
and my laws that I have taught them,  
their sons also shall rule  
on your throne from age to age.'

For the Lord has chosen Sion;  
he has desired it for his dwelling;  
'This is my resting-place for ever;  
here have I chosen to live.'

'I will greatly bless her produce,  
I will fill her poor with bread.  
I will clothe her priests with salvation  
and her faithful shall ring out their joy.'

'There David's stock will flower;  
I will prepare a lamp for my anointed.  
I will cover his enemies with shame  
but on him my crown shall shine.'

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: Jesus Christ is the only Ruler over all, the King of kings and Lord of lords.  
Alleluia.*

## Canticle

## Apocalypse 11

### The Judgement

*Priest: Lord, who is your like, majestic in strength and holiness? Alleluia.*

*Women:* We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,  
who are and who were,  
that you have taken your great power  
and begun to reign.

*Men:* The nations raged,  
but your wrath came,  
and the time for the dead to be judged,  
for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,  
and those who fear your name,  
both small and great.

Now the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of his Christ have come,  
for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down,  
who accuses them day and night before our God.

And they have conquered him  
by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony,  
for they loved not their lives even unto death.  
Rejoice, then, O heaven,  
and you that dwell therein.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: Lord, who is your like, majestic in strength and holiness? Alleluia.*

## Short Reading

## 1 Peter 3:18, 21-22

Christ himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life. And now you are saved, not by the washing off of physical dirt but by a pledge made to God from a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has entered heaven and is at God's right hand, now that he has made the angels and Dominations and Powers his subjects.

## Short Responsory

Priest: The disciples rejoiced, alleluia, alleluia.

*All: The disciples rejoiced, alleluia, alleluia.*

Priest: They saw the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.

*All: The disciples rejoiced, alleluia, alleluia.*

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

*All: The disciples rejoiced, alleluia, alleluia.*

## Canticle *(All stand)*

## Magnificat

### My soul rejoices in the Lord

*Priest: I am the bread of life that has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever: and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world. Alleluia.*

*Women:* My soul glori-fies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

*Men:* The Almighty works mar-vels for me.

Ho-ly his name!

His mercy is from age to age,