



I

COME TO THE TABLE

MUCH has already happened to recall our Jewish heritage by the time we hear this part of the Eucharistic Prayer at the evening Mass on Holy Thursday:¹

And so, Father, we bring you these gifts.
We ask that you make them holy by the power of your Spirit,
that they may become the body and blood
of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist.

On the night he was betrayed,
he took bread and gave you thanks and praise.
He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

¹ From the Eucharistic Prayer III in *The Roman Missal* (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., 1973).

Take this, all of you, and eat it:
this is my body which will be given up for you.

When the supper was ended, he took the cup.
Again he gave you thanks and praise,
gave the cup to his disciples, and said:
Take this, all of you, and drink from it:
this is the cup of my blood,
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.
It will be shed for you and for all
so that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in memory of me.

With these words, we gather at the Table of the Lord to remember and celebrate the point when, during his last Passover seder, Jesus established the Eucharist as a sacrament. From that time forward, the Holy Supper of the Lord would stand at the center of the Christian Mysteries to celebrate what we believe is God's greatest act of salvation.

For thousands of years, the *seder* (Hebrew for "order") has ushered in the annual celebration of Passover for our Jewish forebears including, of course, Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples. This year, too, the Jewish members of God's family will observe Passover with a seder and we will observe Holy Thursday. These different holy days of different religious communions share a connection through Judaism. By illuminating these connections, *Come to the Table: A Catholic Passover Seder for Holy Week* seeks to enrich our appreciation of this shared heritage.