

JULY 18 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

Our first reading, the Exodus story of the last meal that the Hebrews — or as the Israelites were called — is a prophetic omen, a prophetic sign of the Last Supper that Jesus had and gave us the Eucharist.

It was a sign of God being in charge and liberating the people of Israel.

Cecil B. DeMille had done that fabulous movie, "The Ten Commandments," and we can picture the scene between Moses and Pharaoh. The dramatic exchange, the fight between them. And yet, those are not the protagonists in this whole story, this Exodus story.

It is God and the Israelites and their trust in God. They suffered, they prayed, God listened, and God liberated.

They were to have the Last Supper, and it was a detailed supper that the Lord gave them instructions for. They were to have their loins girt, sandals on their feet, a staff in their hand, and be ready to go. They were to eat the meal not prepared with all the spices and boiled, but roasted over the fire.

They would eat it as they were in a hurry because they were on a journey.

That is the same thing with all of us. We are also on a journey. We have emotional burdens, psychological burdens, financial burdens, political burdens. And we are nourished in the same way with the Eucharist today.

So, the meal was given in detail as a sign of God's liberation of the people of Israel, or the Hebrews, as they were called. They were the ones who trusted in the Lord.

It is a faith story, told by a faith community to faith believers in order to emphasize and strengthen their faith.

It was a meal that would always be there to remind them of their liberation from slavery by God, who was in charge.

As they went into the land that God had chosen for them, there were two communities. There was the community of the shepherds, who took care of the sheep and goats and cattle, and there were the farmers, who took care of the wheat and barley and the harvest.

Very much like our first two sons in the Book of Genesis — Cain and Abel. One a farmer, one a shepherd.

That would be the story of our life today. We fall between these two categories, and yet they are united to form one community.

The shepherds would offer a lamb at the beginning of the year in order to have a harvest of lambs and protection against the wolves. Meanwhile, the farmers would offer the first fruits of their crop — wheat or barley — to ensure a harvest.

At the Passover, they would combine these two — the lamb and the harvest — in order to remember and remind themselves that it was the Lord who was in charge.

This was just before the final plague. There were nine plagues before, and Pharaoh's heart was stubborn. But now, the tenth plague — and it was gruesome indeed. The firstborn of every human and every animal would be slain.

Human sacrifice was quite common at the time among the Moabites. And, you know, it's not only then but even in our own lifetime, human sacrifices are done by certain countries and certain cultures. But thanks

be to God, governments are gradually discouraging people — by the help of education and the help of mass media — to realize that human sacrifices do not achieve anything, because they are figments of their imagination.

When we had those human sacrifices in the time of Moses and Pharaoh, it was a choice that they took. They decided — the parents decided, the community decided.

But in this case, the story of their exodus, there was no choice. The sacrifice was imposed upon them by God. It's a God that you and I don't relate to, because it's a God of vengeance, a God of anger. And we know that God is a God of mercy and compassion.

As I said at the beginning, I say it now. It is a faith story told by a faith community to faith believers in order to boost up their faith.

They will celebrate this year after year to remind them that they are on a journey. And when they are on a journey, they are tired and weary.

We see that in the Gospel today. The apostles are through a field of grain. We are not told whether it's wheat or barley, but they are tired, they are hungry. They pluck corn and they go against the traditions of that time.

Jesus is quick enough to point out that the law is made for man or woman, but human beings are not made for the law.

This happens to us constantly. We use the law in order to get out of sticky circumstances: "I cannot do that because the law says that."

For goodness sake, look at the human person. What does he need? And administer to him or to her.

In that way, you and I are doing the will of God.

God bless you all.