Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest

Gospel text (*Lk* 22,14-20): When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, «I was eager to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God». Then they passed him a cup and when he had given thanks he said, «Take this and share it among yourselves: for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes». Jesus also took bread, and after giving thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying, «This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me». And He did the same with the cup after eating, «This cup is the new covenant, sealed in my blood which is poured out for you».

«I was eager to eat this Passover with you before I suffer»

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Today, the liturgy invites us to fathom out the marvelous priestly heart of Christ. Within a few more days, the liturgy will take us again to Jesus' heart, but centering instead into its sacred character. Today, however, let us admire his shepherd's heart, his saviour's heart that melts for his flock He will never forsake. A heart that shows “concern” for his disciples, for us: «I was eager to eat this Passover with you before I suffer!» (Lk 22:15).

This priestly and shepherd's heart shows his feelings, especially, in the institution of the Eucharist. He begins the Last Supper when the Lord will institute the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, faith and love mystery. St. John synthesizes in a phrase the feelings overwhelming Jesus' soul in that heartfelt moment: «Jesus knew that His hour was come (…) having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end» (Jn 13:1).

Unto the end!, unto the very last moment! An anxiety that brings him to give everything to everybody to remain forever by our side. For his love is not limited to the Apostles, but He is thinking of all men. Eucharist will be the instrument allowing Jesus to soothe us “always and everywhere”. He had spoken of sending over “another” reliever, “another” defender. He speaks of “another” one, because He —Jesus-Eucharist— is, indeed, our first Consoler.

Fulfilling his Father's Will forces Jesus to part with his own, but his love impels him to remain with them, and He institutes the Eucharist, whereby He really remains present. «Consider —writes St. Josemaria— the experience, so human, of the farewell of two persons in love (…). Their eagerness would be to go on being

together, and yet, they cannot (...). But, what we cannot do, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, can, (...) He remains. He will go to the Father, but will remain among men». Let us repeat with the psalmist: «How numerous, o Lord, my God, you have made your wondrous deeds! And in your plans for us there is none to equal you!» (Ps 40:6).