

The Cenacle of Jerusalem

Third Sunday of Easter (Cycle C) - Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35
Ave Maria Catholic Church, May 15, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

During the Easter season, we are guided by the Liturgy to certain places. These are holy places, just as the land where the redemption of the world took place is holy. Among those places, the Cenacle of Jerusalem enjoys singular importance.

1. The Cenacle of Jerusalem witnessed the last meeting of the Apostles with Jesus before His Passion.

There Jesus gave his farewell discourse, a passage of which we read in this Sunday's liturgy. It is very significant that immediately after Judas departs from the Cenacle, Christ speaks of the glorification of God in his humanity.

These words of Christ could not have been expected because all that is about to happen will be, humanly speaking, a denial of the glorification of Christ; it will be His extreme humiliation. But Jesus' words are not subject to human limits. With these words, Jesus reveals the divine mystery. On the Cross of Christ, God will be glorified as Love and Truth, as Justice and Mercy. Jesus indeed "*makes all things new.*"

2. The Cenacle of Jerusalem is also the witness to Christ's first meeting with the apostles after the Resurrection.

Jesus enters the Cenacle despite the closed doors; he stands in the midst of his disciples and says, "*Peace be with you!*" (Jn 20:21). It is Jesus's first revelation of Himself to the Apostles after the Resurrection.

The Cenacle is also the place of the second coming of the Risen Lord to convince the doubting Thomas. Jesus says, "*Look . . . stretch out your hand and place it in my wounds.*" (See Jn 20:27). Then, the apostle not only believed, but he also expressed his faith in the highest and most concise profession: "*My Lord and my God!*" (Jn 20:28).

In the presence of the Risen One, the truth of both his humanity and his divinity became clear to Thomas. The One who had risen by his own power was the Lord. Jesus is the Lord of life.

3. The Cenacle witnessed the beginning of the Church.

After the Lord's Ascension, the apostles, together with Mary, the Mother of the Lord, await the coming of the Paraclete. The Cenacle is the place of Pentecost, where the descent of the Holy Spirit takes place.

This is the place that witnessed the beginning of the Church. Once again, the words of the book of Revelation can be applied to this place: *"Behold, I make all things new."*

Today, in the first reading, we followed the apostolic journey of Paul and Barnabas in the different cities of the Middle East where the Gospel was announced, and the Church was coming to birth. This is the mission of the Church. It is the mission that Jesus gave the apostles when He entered the Cenacle and said: *"Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, I too send you"* (Jn 20:21). And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said: *"Receive the Holy Spirit,"* (Jn 20:22-23).

Afterward, in the power of the Spirit the Consoler, the Apostles were able to announce that *"it is necessary to pass through many tribulations to enter into the Kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).

4. The Cenacle of Jerusalem not only witnessed those events, but it is also the witness of a Memorial.

The Lord asked: *"Where is my room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"* (Mk 14:14). And that room was the site of the Last Supper.

And Jesus said, *"... This is my Body."* *"This is my blood, the blood of the covenant"* (Mk 14:22, 24). And He added: *"Do this in memory of me."* These are the words spoken by Christ himself, which instituted the New Covenant.

The Cenacle is the place of the Holy Eucharist, which is the *"perfect sacrament of the Passion,"* for it contains Christ and the complete power of His Passion. In the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas: *"This sacrament has in itself Christ crucified [Christum passum]. Then, whatever is the effect of the Passion of our Lord, all that is likewise the effect of this sacrament,"* (In Joan, 6, lect. 6, n.7).

The Council of Trent provides this explanation: *"Our Savior, when about to depart out of this world to the Father, instituted this sacrament, in which He poured forth, as it were, the riches of His divine love towards men, making a remembrance of His wonderful works."* (Council of Trent, Sess. 13, chap. 2)

5. Finally, the Cenacle is the place of the New Commandment

In the Cenacle, Jesus not only shows His love for us by accepting the chalice of his passion and death for our salvation and giving Himself to be our strength. In the Cenacle, He also teaches us how we must love.

Jesus says: “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you.*” (John 13: 34). He is not repeating the commandments of the law, but He is giving a new commandment. Now, we have a person to follow. We have a person to imitate. If we want to know what love means, we must look at Jesus. If we want to find true love, we must follow Jesus. If we want to love in the highest possible way, we must imitate Jesus.

The Cenacle of Jerusalem is the place of the prelude of Jesus’s Passion, it is the place of the manifestation of the Risen Lord, it is the place that witnessed the beginning of the Church, it is the place of the memorial of the wonderful works of Christ, and it is the place of the New Commandment. The Cenacle is the place where Jesus “*makes all things new.*”

Let us return to the Cenacle as often as we can. Let us make a spiritual journey to this holy place and let us encounter Jesus who goes to His passion and death for our salvation, rises from the dead for our eternal happiness, establishes the Church to sustain us, institutes the Eucharist to strengthen us, and gives us the new commandment of “*loving as He loves us.*” Amen.