

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) He fed them with the finest wheat and satisfied them with honey from the rock.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 109)

ANTIPHON: You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

RESPONSE: **You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.**

LECTOR: The Lord's revelation to my Master: "Sit on my right: I will put your foes beneath your feet." **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord will send from Zion your sceptre of power: rule in the midst of all your foes. **R.**

LECTOR: A prince from the day of your birth on the holy mountains; from the womb before the daybreak I begot you. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change. "You are a priest for ever, a priest like Melchizedek of old." **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! I am the living bread from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live for ever. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.

TODAY'S READINGS Genesis 14:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 9:11-17

NEXT WEEK (Saints Peter and Paul, Year C) Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19

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The bread and wine narrative



22 June 2025 Body and Blood of Christ Year C

Bread and Wine are the staples of the life of faith. They are also, simply, staples of life. As staples of life, they signify good living, the celebration of abundance. As staples of faith life, they signify strangely, by being sacrificed, offered to God in thanksgiving, as the crown of abundance, the celebration of God's faithfulness.

Bread means sustenance; wine means celebration, a movement beyond mere survival into the surplus of festival. Grain and grape are transformed through human activity into life-giving (bread) and life-celebrating (wine) elements. And when these staples of life are brought to God, he catches them up into an all-new level of life. Let's now call it divine life.

So human life is completed by surplus, by moving beyond itself, first from survival to celebration, and then, by carrying up that movement onto the plane of the ultimate, into sharing in the divine life God made us for and calls us to.

Of course, I'm talking about what happens at the altar, the table of feasting that joins heaven and earth, unites God and humanity. Incredibly, our understanding of bread and wine goes back to the origins of faith, to the life of Abraham. This week's first reading is the first place, in fact, that bread and wine appear in Scripture.

Melchizedek, whom Abraham gives a tenth of his surplus and who brings out bread and wine, is a priest-king of Salem (the future Jerusalem, the capital city of David's kingdom about a

thousand years later), who serves "God Most High." Abraham recognises the God of this priest-king as the very God who called him out of Babylon ("Ur of the Chaldeans") and who made a singular promise that his family line would carry forward God's own purpose to bless all nations. It's a strange story. Who is this priest-king? Why does Abraham give him a tithe? What's up with the bread and wine? The place of this story within the wider narrative of the Abraham story underlines its strangeness. It just breaks through into a narrative about Abraham's miraculous war victory against five kings and his refusal to share any of the spoils with another king.

Melchizedek sticks out like a sore thumb. But he is never heard of again in the story. He is, however, pinned to David in a very important Messianic Psalm (110, fittingly used as the responsorial). And the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament has an entire chapter (7) pinning Melchizedek to Christ.

Given the prominent place of bread and wine in the agrarian and liturgical life of ancient Israel, it seems like this episode with Abraham (like so much in his story) is meant to be a pregnant heading for all that is to unfold in his descendants' story. The bread and wine of Melchizedek are only fully understood, in all their strangeness, at the altar of Jesus Christ, where that promise to Abraham, carried forward through the old sacrificial system, is realised.

W Chris Hackett

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