

The First Love Feast (Agape) After The Resurrection

In the open entrance hall outside that of the holy Last Supper, Nicodemus prepared a repast for the Apostles, the holy women, and the disciples. Thomas was not present at it. He kept himself in absolute retirement. All that took place at this feast was in strict accordance with Jesus' directions. During the holy Last Supper, He had given Peter and John, who were sitting by Him and whom He ordained priests, detailed instructions relative to the Blessed Sacrament, with the command to impart the same to the other Apostles, along with some points of His early teachings.



I saw first Peter and then John communicating to the eight other Apostles, who were standing around them in a circle, what the Lord had entrusted to them, and teaching them the way in which He wished this Sacrament to be dispensed and the disciples instructed. All that Peter taught was repeated in the selfsame manner by John. The Apostles had put on their festal garments. Peter and John had, besides, a stole crossed on their breast and fastened with a clasp. The eight Apostles wore a stole over one shoulder and across the breast and back. It fastened under the arm with a clasp crosswise. Peter and John had been ordained priests by Jesus; the others looked still like deacons.

After that instruction, the holy women, nine in number, entered the hall. Peter addressed them in some words of instruction. I saw John at the door receiving into the house of the master of the feast seventeen (as I counted) of the most trusty disciples, those that had been longest with the Lord. Zacheus, Nathanael, Mathias, Barsabas, and others were there. John served them while they were washing their feet and putting on festal garments, long white robes and girdles. Matthew was sent back to Bethania after Peter's discourse, in order there to reproduce, at a similar repast given in the house of Lazarus, the instructions just heard and the ceremonies witnessed. There were many disciples present at this feast.

And now a table was prepared in the entrance hall. It was so long that the seats of some of the disciples extended beyond the hall and into the courtyard, planted with trees, that surrounded the Coenaculum. Three avenues were left open to the tables, in order to approach them with the

viands. The holy women now sat together at one end of the same table with the men. They too wore long white garments. They were veiled, but without their faces being concealed. They sat cross-legged on little stools that had a kind of upright at the backs. Peter and John sat opposite each other at the center of the table. They closed the men's row, and then began the women's. The couches used at this feast were not like those at the Last Supper. They were low cushions. They looked as if they were woven, and were scarcely long enough to receive the upper part of the body, for they hardly reached below the knees. Each had before him a cushion raised upon two higher feet, which were fastened into cross-uprights. It stood in an oblique direction. All reclined near the table, the feet of one at his neighbor's back. At Simon's house and at the Last Supper, the guests reclined on stools of a different kind, the feet turned entirely out.

The meal was conducted with ceremony. The guests prayed standing and ate lying, while Peter and John taught. At the end of the meal, a flat, ribbed loaf was placed before Peter, which he divided into small pieces as marked by the ribs. These he distributed right and left on two plates. A large cup was next sent round, and out of it each one drank. Although Peter blessed the bread, yet it was not a sacrament, only an agape, a love feast. Peter said that they should all desire to be one as was the bread that they were eating and the wine they were drinking. After that they sang Psalms, standing.

When the tables were moved aside, the holy women retired to an apartment in the form of a half circle at the end of the hall. The disciples ranged on either side, while the Apostles walked up and down teaching and imparting to these ripe disciples all they durst concerning the Blessed Sacrament. This was like the first catechetical instruction after Jesus' death. I saw also that they walked around among one another extending hands joyously declaring that they would have all things in common, would resign all things for one another, and would live perfectly united. A feeling of deep emotion stole over them. I saw them flooded with light and, as it were, dissolving into one another. All seemed to resolve into a pyramid of light in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to be not only the apex, but the radiant center of all. All graces flowed in streams from Mary down upon the Apostles, and from them back again through her to the Lord. This vision was symbolical of their union and the reciprocal relations existing among them.

Matthew, in the court of Lazarus' house, taught a great many more of the disciples who were not so well instructed as the others. They had the same kind of a meal and went through similar ceremonies.

