

ST VINCENT'S LENTEN TALKS 2026

THE MASS UNFOLDED

THE EUCHARIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT



Watch a recording of the talks by scanning this QR code.

The second talk asked a simple question: where does the Eucharist come from? By turning to the New Testament, it showed that the Mass is not a later invention but rooted directly in the words and actions of Jesus and immediately lived by the earliest Christians.

The starting point is the Last Supper in Jerusalem during Passover. This was not a peaceful meal but took place amid tension, betrayal, and danger. Understanding Passover is crucial. The Jewish meal did more than recall Israel's escape from Egypt; through ritual action the saving event became present to participants. God's past rescue shaped the present community.

Within this setting Jesus takes bread and wine and gives them new meaning. Saying, "This is my body... do this in remembrance of me," he transforms the Passover. Liberation is no longer centred on Egypt but on his own self-giving. The bread and wine become signs of a definitive act of salvation and the beginning of a new covenant.

John's Gospel deepens this insight through the washing of the disciples' feet. Instead of describing the institution of the Eucharist directly, John shows Jesus acting as a servant. The Eucharist is therefore not only something received but a pattern of life. Communion with Christ leads to humility and service. Significantly, the meal occurs amid misunderstanding, rivalry, and betrayal. The Eucharist is given not to the perfect but to those needing mercy and redemption.

Jesus' Bread of Life teaching found in St John's Gospel prepares for this reality. Speaking of his flesh as true food and his blood as true drink, he points beyond symbolism toward participation in his life. Believers remain in him and he in them. The Eucharist is therefore communion rather than mere reminder.

After the Resurrection, the New Testament shows how central the breaking of bread quickly became. The disciples recognise the risen Christ at Emmaus in the breaking of bread. The Acts of the Apostles describes Christians gathering for teaching, fellowship, prayer, and Eucharist. From the beginning Christian worship had a recognisable Eucharistic shape.

St Paul's letters, written within a generation of Jesus' death and resurrection, call the Eucharist participation in the body and blood of Christ. Paul warns against selfish or divided participation because the sacrament creates unity. To receive Communion while ignoring others contradicts what is celebrated. The Eucharist binds believers together as one body.

Taken together, the Passover, the Last Supper, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the life of the early Church form a single story. The Mass celebrated today stands in continuity with the first Christian gatherings. It is Christianity's living heart, not an optional addition.

The practical consequence is clear. The Eucharist cannot be confined to an hour on Sunday. Grace received at the altar must shape daily life in patience, forgiveness, generosity, and service. Early Christians were recognised by their love for one another because the Eucharist formed their conduct. Lent therefore invites not only attendance but understanding and conversion: each celebration places believers at the table with the disciples, at the foot of the Cross, and in the presence of the risen Lord.



The Jewish Passover meal remembered the Exodus and made it present.



'You also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example.'

*"And their eyes were opened and they recognised him."
Luke 24:31*



**The remaining four talks will focus on parts of the Mass itself. Join us in the Conference Centre this Tuesday 10th March where we will be exploring the 'Introductory Rites and Liturgy of the Word'.
7pm - 8.30pm
Speaker: Mgr Nicholas Rotherham**