

**TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
URBANIANA PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

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**The Relevance of the Symbolic Meaning of Jesus's Words and  
Actions at the Last Supper, (Luke 22:14-20).**

**For an Authentic Christian Living in the Contemporary  
Christian Communities of Zimbabwe Today.**

Supervisor

**Rev. Fr. Dr. Wojciech Szypula SVD**

A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theology

**NAIROBI 2022**

## **STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I, here undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method, and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This Long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Theological work to both my parents and my siblings. Also, I dedicate this work to my Capuchin Friars who have been a great help and support to me up to this day.

## **EPIGRAPH**

“This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19).

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to various people who have helped me in my life. First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, brothers, and sisters. They have been a great support to my integral growth up to this day.

Many thanks go to my supervisor Rev. Fr. Dr. Wojciech Szypula SVD. He is such a humble and dedicated lecturer and Biblical scholar. He guided me so well in my research. I would also like to thank Fr. Apollinaire Chishungi, the Vice-Chancellor of Tangaza College, the Dean of Theology Rev. Fr. Dr. Josaphat Wanyonyi Nabibia, all the other lectures in various courses in the school of Theology, the Office of the Registrar, and the entire administration of Tangaza University College as well as the library staff who create a conducive atmosphere for study in the college.

Last but not the least, my gratitude goes to the Capuchin Friars and all my friends. I convey my deepest thanks for their encouragement and support. May God bless you all in your endeavors!

## ABBREVIATIONS

Acts	Acts
1-2 Cor	Corinthians
Deut	Deuteronomy
Ed.	Editor, edited by
Etc.	et cetera, and so forth
Exod	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
Gk	Greek
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
John	John
Luke	Luke
LG	Lumen gentium
Mark	Mark
Matt	Matthew
NT	New Testament

OT	Old Testament
Phil	Philipians
Rom	Romans
St	Saint
S.V.D.	Society of the Divine Word
V. / vv	Verse / verses

*NBC Guthrie, D. – Motyer, J.A., New Bible Commentary, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids Michigan:*

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

*NJBC Brown, R.E. – Fitzmyer, J.A. – Murphy, R.E., ed., The New Jerome Biblical  
Commentary, Bangalore: Theological Publication 2009*

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Christianity has the largest population in Zimbabwe when it comes to religion and more importantly, Catholicism has significant numbers, but the question is, why there is little impact on Christian life and values in Zimbabwe? Human rights are violated, there are divisions among the people due to language, economic crisis, or political affiliations, and there is great poverty and a growing tendency of no concern for the other among the people except when they want to use them. The question, especially for Christians, is where are the values they proclaim every day as they worship and why is there no trace of Christian values in the society that Christianity prescribes? Where is that existential authentic and practical way of life prescribed by Jesus whom the Christian follow as they make the largest and most significant numbers when it comes to religions, In Zimbabwe?

This study notices the gap that is left when it comes to practicality as people only focus on the mechanical and routine approach to religion as many consider all as magic and easily forget that there is something to be lived too in society from what we profess with our mouths and should be translated into the way we live with each other. Thus Luke 22:14– 20, stands as the foundation to understand Jesus’s teaching and be able to easily find ways to translate it to be our way of life. We live in a world characterized by a lack of commitment in the Christians, particularly Catholics, and also a failure to apply their faith in their day-

to-day lives in their communities. Catholics receive the Body and Blood of Jesus every time they worship, but it ends there in church and after their worship, they go back to leave their lives as if nothing happened, and this is a very troubling issue and problem. Thus this work seeks to address this special issue by showing how the Eucharist can be the source and better means for Christians to transform their lives and live the values that the gospels give. Thus this study seeks to highlight the importance of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist which is often forgotten, as the foundation for understanding well and appreciating the real presence of Jesus, present among His people and thus understand what it means and implies for one who receives the Eucharist and be able to live it in their daily lives.

## **1. Motivation and Aim of the Study**

After two years of my pastoral experience in Zimbabwe, as I journeyed in my formation journey, After my four-year study in Theology, I got interested in studying the bible as I felt it leads us back to the real meaning which is founded on scientific facts and helps us understand what exactly Jesus meant and how it should help us be better and more like Him. What struck me most in the Bible is Jesus's words and actions at the Last Supper in Luke 22:14-20. This helped me understand the symbolic meaning which helps us understand how it is important for people to know what type of a Christian community Jesus formed and how they should live well their lives following His life. Unfortunately, there seems to be a danger in differentiating between the Eucharist which is Christ we receive when we worship and our day-to-day lives in our neighborhood or society and this is what the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist helps us to do.

These two are not separated but complement each other as Christ's presence, the same Christ we have received should lead us and we should allow Him to guide our lives and our actions so that others may be able to realize His presence through us and our way of life. Therefore the main aim or goal in this study is to promote the understanding of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist as a fundamental basis and foundation for understanding the Real presence of Jesus in us, not as a routine, obligation, or even some magical event, but an invitation to a life lived following the teaching Jesus gave at the Last Supper and this life will be lived in and through him for those who receive the Eucharist.

## **2. Methodology and Sources of Study**

This study will use mostly the exegetical analysis of Luke 22:14-20. This exegetical approach will help us come into contact with the truth of what Jesus through Luke 22:14-20 wants to put across for us today. So this text will be discussed in a scientific and biblical methodological analysis particularly, textual criticism, structural criticism, and literary criticism. To achieve the above-mentioned purpose of this research work, I intend to carry out library research using books, journals, articles relevant to this study, online materials, and commentaries that the biblical scholars have produced. Other materials that will be used are Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, the Greek bible, and the Catholic Answer Bible.

## **3. Structure and Content**

The essay takes into account the pericope, Luke 22:14-20, which is about the Last Supper meal. This essay unfolds in three chapters with a general introduction and general

conclusion. In the general introduction, the essay gives briefly the structure and the content of the research, the motives, and purpose of the study and the methodology and the sources of the research paper. Each chapter will have a short introduction and conclusion.

Chapter one starts by situating the text (Luke 22:14-20). This will be accomplished by looking at some specific scientific biblical research methodologies. These methods are the delimitation of the text, which will be discussed at length as this work will be dealing with *Terminus a Quo* and *Terminus ad Quem*. When this is done this chapter will look at the context of the Pericope, and this too will be presented at length by looking at the immediate and the remote context of this text in the gospel of Luke and other books. The parallels of this text will be done starting with the Old Testament parallels, followed by the New Testament parallels, and ending with the parallels that are found in Luke's gospel itself. Then a conclusion will give a summary at the end of this chapter and this shall leave the door open to welcome the second chapter

Chapter two will focus on the exegetical analysis of Luke 22:14-20. It begins with an exposition of the historical and geographical context of the Gospel of Luke. This is followed by showing the structure of this specific text of the Last Supper meal. Then the main work and relevance of this work which is the exegesis of the text will be dealt with in detail. This will be done by explaining the meaning of the words and actions of Jesus during that meal (Luke 22:14-20), and what it meant symbolically, as Jesus intended to communicate to His followers. This chapter will also show the relevance of the Emmaus encounter in helping the disciples in understanding what Jesus said, meant, and did at the Last Supper. Then lastly we will expose the Symbolic meaning's practicality of the Eucharist, in the life of the First Christian Community and this will lead to the conclusion of this work.

Finally, the third chapter puts in perspective the application of the message that is elaborated in Luke 22:14-20. To discuss the application of this message to the Christian communities today, we shall present first the Situation of the Church in Zimbabwe and its people's mechanical and superficial way of life. The above point will be challenged by the example of the life of the First Christian Community. Then the Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist is given as an aid to Witness the real presence of Jesus to Humanity. This is followed by the heading that explains that the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, are to be lived not just recited. Then this work will then show that Zimbabwean Christians should develop and foster an unwavering application of Christian Values in our Social Life. Then Self-Giving Love to the Community is applied to avoid Individualism, in its extremes as this community Jesus founded was a community that shared their lives. These subheadings will help present the message of the relevance of the meaning of Jesus's words and actions at the last supper and its application to the Zimbabwean context today. This chapter aims to show that the message that Jesus taught his disciples in a 1st-century context is still relevant to today's world.

All in all, this paper has pointed out the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist in Luke 22:14– 20, which stands as the foundation to understand Jesus's teaching and be able to easily find ways to translate it to be our way of life. We live in a world characterized by a lack of commitment in the Christians, particularly Catholics, and also a failure to apply their faith in their day-to-day lives in their communities. Catholics receive the Body and Blood of Jesus every time they worship, but it ends there in church and after their worship, they go back to leave their lives as if nothing happened, and this is a very troubling issue and problem. Thus this work seeks to address this special issue by showing how the Eucharist can be the source and better means for Christians to transform their lives and live

the values that the gospels give. Thus this study seeks to highlight the importance of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist which is often forgotten, as the foundation for understanding well and appreciating the real presence of Jesus, present among His people and thus understand what it means and implies for one who receives the Eucharist and be able to live it in their daily lives.

# CHAPTER I

## Situating the Text

### 1. Introduction

The first chapter of this essay will focus on the situating of the text (Luke 22:14-20). This will be accomplished by looking at some specific scientific biblical research methodologies. These methods are the delimitation of the text, which will be discussed at length as we focus on *Terminus a Quo* and *Terminus ad Quem*. When this is done this chapter will look at the context of the Pericope, and this too will be presented at length by looking at the immediate and the remote context of this text in the gospel of Luke and other books. Then the parallels of this text will be done starting with the First testament parallels, followed by the New Testament parallels, and ending with the parallels that are found in Luke's gospel itself. Then a conclusion will give a summary at the end of this chapter and this shall leave the door open to welcome the second chapter and this chapter will be shown as giving the foundation for the basis of this essay.

## 2. Delimitation of the Text

In this section, we will discuss the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem*, and this is done to indicate the boundaries of the passage of our study.

### 2.1. *Terminus a Quo*

Our biblical text begins with verse 14 of Luke chapter 22, and this is so because this verse in Luke expresses Jesus's earnest desire to eat the Passover meal with his apostles.<sup>1</sup> Actually, from verse one of chapter 22, we are slowly initiated to the Passover or the Last meal of Jesus and His disciples, but the fourteenth verse introduces the actual scene of the Passover feast itself.

It catches the warmth of the relationship of Jesus and his apostles and how dear they were to Him, especially now that His hour had come (22:14-15; cf. John 13:1). It is from this clause that Luke 22:15 and 16 shows that Jesus makes a connection to make the Apostles know that He would not eat this meal again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God, this clearly states the title of this part that it was the Last Supper of Jesus and His Disciples on earth. Therefore verse fourteenth marks a transition in Luke's gospel.

### 2.2. *Terminus ad Quem*

The ending part of this passage is found in verse 20 of Luke chapter 22. This is so because verse twenty in its strict sense is the end of the scene presented, as far as the last

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday Publications, 1997), 256.

supper meal is concerned. Verse 21 and 22 are a part of the last supper theme but with a different point to bring, even though it's a connecting part that leads to the passion of the Lord. We see in verse 19 and our endpoint, in verse 20, that the Lord's supper is a sign or a memorial of Christ who has already come, who by dying delivered us and His death is in a special manner, set before us in that ordinance, by which we are reminded of it.<sup>2</sup> Thus this closes the Last Super Narrative in its strict sense, by giving the final meaning of the whole purpose of the Last supper event.

### **3. Context of the Pericope**

In this section, we will focus more on the circumstances that make or form the setting of our extracted text Luke 22:14-20, so that we may better understand the text and that the meaning may be clarified in a better and clearer way.

#### ***3.1. Immediate Context***

The pericope is situated between two texts, and these texts are Luke 22:1-4, 7 and also Luke 7:21-30, that is, the mention of the feast of the Unleavened Bread which was drawing near and also the plot of killing Jesus which was put at the hand of Judas Iscariot to hand Him over (see. Luke 22:1-4, 7) and also the scene were Jesus predicts His betrayal immediately after the meal was shared. This also led to the debate of who was to be the

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<sup>2</sup> "Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Bible: Luke 22 Bible Commentary." Christianity.com accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary/matthew-henry-complete/luke/22>

greatest among them and how Jesus referring to the actions at the meal gives them the criteria of a true leader, setting Himself as an example (Luke 7:21- 30).

These three parts that are, including our extracted text Luke 22:14-20, cover Jesus's preparation and partaking in the Last Supper with His Apostles and His explanation on what this Last Supper meal meant (see. Luke 22:1-4, 7, 14-30). In the text that is immediately before, that is 22:1-4, 7, the narrator introduces the Feast of the Unleavened Bread which was approaching, and with this approaching Feast, we realize that on the other hand the chief priest and the Scribes too, were plotting to kill Jesus. This leads us to the one whom these leaders sent, and mentioned as Judas and who was one of Jesus's disciples to hand Him over. But the narrative in verse seven shows that at this moment the feast of the Unleavened Bread had come, and adding to this other important aspect added in this verse is the mention of the day for sacrificing the Passover Lamb. All these will be of great importance to the text we studying as it gives us the introduction and the gist of what is ahead.

Secondly, we then see in Luke 22:14-20 Jesus used the unleavened bread to symbolize His Body which was to be broken for all, and also the cup of wine to symbolize what we saw in verse 7 when Jesus gave Himself as the sacrificial Paschal Lamb to seal this new covenant that God had made with His people through His Son Jesus Christ. Thirdly the text that is immediately after the Last Supper narrative, (Luke 22:21-30), brings in Jesus prediction of one who will betray Him, and with this, from what we saw in (vs. 3 and 4) we immediately think of Judas even though he is not mentioned by name during the meal.

This leads to a debate of who is the greatest among these apostles. This brings Jesus to show them that a true leader in this new community of His should be a leader who offers service. This is vital because it adds more meaning to the Last Supper's action and words of Jesus. After all, he uses Himself as an example. One who will be broken for His people and

one who will be sacrificed and seal a new covenant, to reconcile people with God. Therefore, both the immediate text before (22:1-4, 7) and the immediate text after it (22:21-30) are situated there to help us who read this text of the Last Supper in Luke to understand the context, purpose, and meaning of Jesus's words and actions at the Last Supper in Luke 22:14-20.

### ***3.2. Remote Context***

The following brief passages can serve as remote context of our pericope. The first one is the meal mentioned in Luke's narrative when Jesus was in Simon's house when Peter's mother-in-law got healed and began to "serve" those present (Luke 4:39). The main thing in this which connects to that Last Supper is the call to service, and it is this service that hallmarks all disciples.<sup>3</sup> It's also vital because it shows that this service gets its power from the meal in which Jesus is also present.

The second remote context is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. In this, we notice the same words of Institution being used by Paul in a different context, here Paul addresses the issue of how the believers should present themselves at worship, and conducting Eucharistic meals. The issue circled the notion that some wealthy Christians were consuming too much when it comes to eating, as these Eucharistic meals followed after the Eucharist, and this left others hungry. Thus in these Eucharist meals, there was no unity but divisions, mainly based on one's social status.

Lastly, we also look into the Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 2:42-47 and also in chapter 4:3-37, which presents the life of this new community that Jesus had founded, we

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<sup>3</sup> See John McKinnon, *Luke Gospel Commentary: Jesus Last Supper Celebration*, 2016, accessed December 20, 2021, <http://johnmckinnon.org/index.php/luke22v14-20>

see the breaking of the bread and we realize it is Luke's last supper narratives mentioned as one of the basic action of the Christian community which was accompanied by self-giving, and loving actions that should spring from the living of the words and actions of Jesus which He commanded during the last supper.

The nature of these texts mentioned above gives us an understanding of a new way of life that was coming and which was based on the new community, which sprung out from the very moment of the Last Supper and this new community will bring a vivid and practical explanation of what Jesus's words and actions meant to this new Community. The basic thing is the notion of leadership and greatness, which was to be viewed in a way much different from what they would normally have expected.

This was to be a community to be led by a spirit of Service as we see incited in Luke 4:39 when Peter's mother in law after being healed immediately served Jesus and His disciples at the table. Secondly, this shows that this Community was to be led by a spirit of Unity as seen in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. This community should exercise patience with one another and should be united and not divide each other when they come for the Eucharist as the Eucharist bonded them as one community in Christ. The third thing is that this Community is to be guided and led by a spirit of self-giving, and loving actions, which we witness in the Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47, how the participation in the Eucharist was transmitted to the way of life of the people by being charitable and concerned about others up to the extent that no one lacked anything, as all the possessions and properties were shared among them according to each one's needs (Acts 2: 45).

Therefore concerning the whole gospel, Jesus forms a new community himself, which he would give Himself fully too and seals this covenant with His blood so that whatever he taught and did through His actions while he moved with them might be the way

of life to lead and guide the life of this community he established. Thus all we see Peter, Paul, and the early Church do, all Sprung from the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper.

#### **4. Parallels**

In this part, we will focus on the passages that are found in the First Testament, and those found in the New Testament, which have a similar or closer description as the last supper in Luke 22:14-20.

##### ***4.1. First Testament Parallels***

The first and most significant Old Testament parallel to the last supper in Luke is the Passover event found in the Book of Exodus 12:1-17. The Passover as an event was so special to the Jews in the sense that this was the night that God began to redeem His people the Israelites from the bondage in Egypt. We see in Exodus 12:7, Moses and Aaron being instructed by God to tell the people that they should take some of the blood of the lamb they slaughtered and smear it on the doorposts. This was to save them from the angel of death who was passing killing all the firstborn. Verse 8 continues to offer an instruction from God that they should also eat the unleavened bread. The other important verse of Exodus 12 to our study is verse 14, which states that "This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord, as a perpetual institution."<sup>4</sup> Thus, concerning our text in Luke 22:14-20, Jesus also uses a special meal which he ate with His

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<sup>4</sup> The African Bible (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 1999), 111.

disciples in the upper room to teach His disciples about His death and resurrection, which can be easily linked to the event of Exodus 12.

The first parallelism is on the issue that, in both cases, the events of the meal took place at night. The term night in its usage in the Jewish tradition was actually, “used in a figurative sense of the time when a man can no longer work and the time when a man is in danger of stumbling when he travels.”<sup>5</sup> Thus this was a crucial time as in Exodus the Israelites were in anticipation of redemption from Egypt as it was for the Apostles to be redeemed from sin, though they did not know it at the time. Thus this called for preparedness and readiness to avoid the dangers of stumbling on this journey as the term night was understood.

The second link between the two is also the mention of the unleavened bread and the blood from the slaughtered lamb which when sprinkled on the doors salvation was granted to those who had it on their doors. Thus in the part of Jesus wine would represent the blood of the lamb that was shed and put on each door. Thus with Jesus's words at the last supper, He linked the Passover of the Old Testament forever with the New Testament covenant. During Israel’s escape from the slavery of their brutal Egyptian masters, it was the blood of the lamb that caused God’s angel of death to ‘pass’ the house of the Israelites, while not sparing the firstborn children of the Egyptians.<sup>6</sup> Also in the New Testament, it will be the Blood of Jesus that will serve this purpose.

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<sup>5</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1966), 616.

<sup>6</sup> See David Martin. *How the Lord’s Supper is linked to the Passover*. (Koinonia Publications, February 2020), 17, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://medium.com/koinonia/how-the-lords-supper-is-linked-to-the-passover-21f79d336d53>

Exodus 24:8 is another passage that relates to the last supper narrative in Luke. It talks of the sprinkled blood by the priests, both on Yahweh's altar and the people as an essential rite of the covenant.<sup>7</sup> This can be related to the last supper in the sense that, "The sacrifice of Christ was also a covenant sacrifice ratifying a new covenant."<sup>8</sup> Thus we see this when Christ gave the chalice to His Apostles to drink as a sign of the new covenant that Jesus was going to seal with His blood on the Cross.

Also as it was a traditional practice of the Jews, it was something that was done and was part of their culture, remembering what we saw in Exodus chapter 12, the instruction that they should remember how the Lord saved them as a nation in Egypt. In the same manner, we realize that in the Last Supper Narrative, Jesus when He gives them the Chalice to drink, He also instructs them they should also do this in memory of Him, that is, from generation to generation as in the same instance of the Jews.

In the same line, we realize too that apart from the book of Exodus, we find a parallelism in the prophetic books too. To begin with, we have Jeremiah 31:31, 32:40, which Mentions, "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will make with them an eternal covenant."<sup>9</sup> This is more linked to this Last Supper narrative in the sense that, in Luke 22:20, Jesus when he took the cup, says this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

Thus Luke 22:20 fulfills the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah, in the sense that God makes a New Covenant through His Son Jesus Christ, who gives up His life for the New

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<sup>7</sup> See Reginald C. Fuller, ed., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Publishers, 1969), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Fuller, ed., 23.

<sup>9</sup> The African Bible, 1360, 1362.

Community he had started with His Apostles. Thus as we know it today, this covenant is indeed an eternal one as Jeremiah mentioned in His book, because this covenant is sealed by the blood of Christ, and He did this once and for all, (Hebrews 10:10).

The other parallelism in the Old Testament is from the book of the prophet Zechariah 9:11. It talks of, “the blood of your covenant with me.” “This blood of your covenant is a reference to the blood that sealed the covenant at Sinai, (Exodus 24:8).”<sup>10</sup> This too is a reference or a prophecy that anticipated the blood of Christ which sealed a new covenant that was built upon the new community he had founded on His Apostles. Thus according to the new catholic commentary on scripture, we learn that the sprinkling of the blood on the people probably symbolized the establishment of a blood relationship between the divinity and the people.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***4.2. New Testament Parallels***

Apart from the Old Testament texts which are parallel to that of Luke 22:14-20, we also have New Testament texts that are similar to that of Luke. The first text is from Mark 14:22-26. It is very close to that of Luke 22:14-20. In this passage of Mark, we come to encounter Jesus offering Himself in sacrifice for the new covenant, by giving up His Body and Blood for the redemption of us all. We realize in this too as in Luke 22:14-20, that the context for this was nothing other than the Jewish Passover feast. Thus marking the fulfillment of the new covenant of God and His people through the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> The African Bible, 1614.

<sup>11</sup> See Fuller, 732.

The second Parallelism in the New Testament is in the Gospel of Matthew 26:20.26-30. This text has some parts that are closely linked to Luke 22:14-20. From analyzing it, verse 26 of Matthew chapter 26, narrates almost the same thing that we find in Luke 22:19, which narrates how Jesus took, blessed, and broke the Bread and how He gave it to His Apostles and told them to eat it for it is His Body. Though Luke's narrative on this section adds the words, "do this in memory of me", which connects to the remembrance the Jews were told to do in exodus 12 after the Passover meal. In the same line, we also realize that verse 27 and verse 28, mention what we read in Luke 22:20 when the chalice is given symbolizing the blood of the new covenant which would be sealed by the Blood of Jesus on the cross. It is also important to note that, Matthew adds the notion of, "forgiveness of sins", which Luke does not include.

Despite these minor differences, we come to also realize that in Matthew too, "the command to eat, followed by 'this is my body', implies participation in the death of Jesus or its effects which just as those who partake of the Passover share in the redemption from Egypt, so too those who take and eat share in the benefits of Jesus's atoning death."<sup>12</sup> Thus these two passages from the two Gospels of Matthew 26:26-30 and Luke 22:14-20, share a lot in common and they are so parallel in many aspects in their narratives of how the Last Supper was celebrated by Jesus and His Apostles.

Apart from the gospels, we have another link in the Acts of the Apostles 27:35, almost at the end of the book which depicts the words and actions of the Last Supper that is led by Paul as he was giving some advice.

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<sup>12</sup> John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 879.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul addresses the issue of how the believers should present themselves at worship and conducting Eucharistic meals. As explained before, the most important part of this very important section is on the issue of how Paul refers to the nature of the Eucharist and he did that to instruct them and he did this by, referring to the tradition about the historical Jesus recounting the institution of the Eucharist, in our main text of interest which is Luke 22:14-20.

This specific text in Paul's letter to the Corinthians is one of the closest narratives to that of Luke 22:14-20 mainly because of the distinctive features of this account that our text in Luke does possess too. The first is verse 24 which uses the word "This is my body that is for you", and we see the same in Luke 22:19 as well, which mentions these same words concerning the body of Christ. Another very important dimension is on the 25<sup>th</sup> verse of the eleventh chapter of the First Corinthians. This verse brings the Old Testament notion of "the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

This becomes so important because in Luke too, Jesus was beginning a new community which will be formed around him and his teachings,<sup>13</sup> and in Luke 22:20 Jesus shows that this blood will seal this covenant as it did in the Old Testament, the one from the goats or lamb, especially on the day of Passover of the Jews. Thus these aspects too are included by Paul in His first letter to the Corinthians to remind the Christians of the right meaning of the Eucharist from the Gospel of Luke.

We also realize a mostly emphasized repetition of the words: "do this in memory of me", which are found in the last lines of verses 24 and 25 of 1 Corinthians ch. 11, mainly after the words over the bread and the cup which represented the body and blood of Jesus

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<sup>13</sup> See Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 399.

Christ. This also shows the same instruction given to the Israelites in Exodus 12:14, to remember the day of the Passover for it was the day that the Lord redeemed them from the slavery and bondage of the Egyptians and they also had to keep the custom of the unleavened bread since it was on the same day of the Passover that we see it eaten. Thus it is the same as our text in Corinthians and the same too in our gospel of Luke.

The main remembrance part in the mind of Jesus helped Paul too to help and instruct the Corinthian believers that when they will be able to view the Eucharist, in this manner it would serve to help them keep the memory of Christ alive until the Parousia with their lives and actions.

#### *4.3. Parallels in Luke*

The first significant or parallel in Luke is an insight from the feeding of the Five thousand, (Luke 9:16), which is similar to the words Jesus used in Luke 22:19a, which mentions Jesus taking the bread, saying the blessing, breaking the bread, and giving it to the disciples to eat. This parallel is vital in the sense that it prefigures the Lord's Supper, both in the Eucharistic Language used and in the use of actions.<sup>14</sup> Despite appearing before the last supper this passage gives a hint on what Jesus would do, and most importantly in this part gives out the point that compassion was what he was preparing His disciples to do so that they can satisfy His people both with material and spiritual bread.

Luke 24:30 is another significant parallel to Luke 22:19 that is found in this same Gospel and it gives us the experience of Jesus breaking the bread. This narrative of the encounter with Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is only found in Luke,

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<sup>14</sup> African Bible, 1747.

and thus it is a very important aspect that also brings about the same scenario of the Last Supper in Luke 22:19 and it offers a very important and a second way of interpreting the real meaning of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper.

The breaking of the bread that is narrated as happening in the house of these two disciples is a symbolic indication which Jesus communicated at the Last Supper of his broken body on the cross. Also, we realize that the breaking of bread is the occasion placed for these disciples to recognize Jesus. Thus these two disciples come to realize that it was Jesus in the setting of a meal,<sup>15</sup> and at the same time knew that they were to live as he had done on the cross and in His Life which the Eucharist meal symbolically represented and sought to communicate.

But in this passage, we only hear the narrative of the breaking of bread only but we see that Luke in this part leaves out the other part of the cup which kind of leaves the reenactment of the Last Supper incomplete. As we have seen from the Old Testament and even more strongly in Luke, the cup symbolized the new covenant. Thus Luke wants to focus chiefly on Jesus's pattern of self-sacrificial service.<sup>16</sup> He wants to bring a very important instruction that the table fellowship is meant to keep the keen awareness of what Jesus life was all about in the community and that all who partook in it should live as Jesus did.<sup>17</sup>

As we have mentioned above, this brings out the second key of explaining the meaning of Jesus words and actions at the Last Supper as it explains that it is a practical and existential aspect of Christian practice which, in addition to the Scripture provides a full

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<sup>15</sup> See Fuller, ed., 1020.

<sup>16</sup> See Wojciech Szypula. "Luke and Acts." Lecture Notes, Tangaza University College, Nairobi, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Szypula, 2018.

picture and full experience of Jesus. Thus, breaking the bread is a way to keep the community in a keen awareness of how Jesus lived his life.<sup>18</sup> This is also a powerful reminder that as his disciples, the faithful ought to live their life following the same pattern. Jesus vanished from their sight immediately after they recognize him. This indicates that now they have all the tools and the foundation to act on what they had experienced which they do by returning to Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Therefore this parallelism in Luke of the Emmaus encounter contributes a lot to the understanding of the Last Supper meal of Jesus and His disciples as it offers the remembrance part of Jesus's presence to His disciples and what it entailed.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have situated our text of Luke 22:14-20 by looking at the delimitation of the pericope. In this, we dealt with the terminus a quo and terminus ad quem setting the beginning part of our text and the ending part after it. This was then followed by the context of the pericope and this focused much on the circumstances that made and formed the setting of our text in Luke: 22:14-20. This was accomplished by firstly focusing on the immediate context of the text. More meaning was added to this through the analysis of the remote context of the text. Parallels too relating to the text were given starting with the First Testament parallels and followed by the New Testament parallels. Then they are concluded by the parallels in Luke, which add more value to our text. We have presented these significant aspects of scientific biblical research methods, to bring to light the intricacies that

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<sup>18</sup> Ron Graham. "Simplybible.com Australia." 2018, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.simplybible.com/f47a-notes-breaking-of-bread-a-distinction.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, 397.

surround our pericope (Luke 22:14-20). This chapter is done to have a bird's eye view of this most interesting pericope before presenting its exegesis which will be done in the ensuing chapter.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Exegetical Analysis of Luke 22:14-20: Words and Deeds of Jesus at the Last Supper.**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter is the heart of this essay because it focuses on the exegetical analysis of Luke 22:14-20. It begins with an exposition of the historical and geographical context of the Gospel of Luke. This is followed by showing the structure of this specific text of the Last Supper meal. Then the main work and relevance of this work which is the exegesis of the text will be dealt with in detail.

This will be done by explaining the meaning of the words and actions of Jesus during that meal (Luke 22:14-20), and what it meant symbolically, as Jesus intended to communicate to His followers. This chapter will also show the relevance of the Emmaus encounter in helping the disciples in understanding what Jesus said, meant, and did at the Last Supper. Then lastly we will expose the Symbolic meaning's practicality of the Eucharist, in the life of the First Christian Community and this will lead to the conclusion of this work.

## **2. Historical and Geographical Context**

### ***2.1. Historical Context***

The first important thing to look at in Luke's historical context is how he makes a lot of effort to position his story in the wider context of the Roman imperial power and international politics. We also notice that the Gospel itself focuses not on just events that were happening in the outcastes of the towns but mainly on the main stories of the towns that brought a lot of attention and recognition from the people. These two points mentioned above are concretely supported by the fact that, in Luke 1:1 and 2:1-2, Luke begins to situate his story into the wider imperial-political map.

He mentions that John and Jesus are born during the reign of Augustus, who's the first of a long line of emperors. In the same line, he also adds that it was at the time when Herod the Great was the king of Judea and neighboring regions and mentions Quirinius as well who also was a governor of Syria at the time, (Luke 2:1-2). He also Luke 3:1-4, adds that John and Jesus start their work when Tiberius Caesar is in the fifteenth year of his long reign as Emperor. Also at the same time, Pontius Pilate is currently governor of Judea, and Herod is a tetrarch of Galilee, while his brother Philip was also a subordinate ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and also Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene. Besides this Luke situates this period in the time of the High Priest namely, Annas and Caiaphas, ( Luke 3:1-2). Therefore, this serves as the historical context where John and Jesus start their work, which was a tough time and a risky period to accomplish their mission, but they still made

it happen.<sup>1</sup> Therefore we notice that “Luke's Gospel gives a reader a more comprehensive grasp of the history of the period than the other Gospels. Luke presents more facts about the earthly life of Jesus than we see in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, or John.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus this makes Luke's Gospel unique as it takes a look into the life of Jesus from a historian's perspective. The book itself from the examples shown above, reveals an author who sounds more interested in the historical details as he tries to bring forth the purpose of the Gospel which is that, he wants to reassure the Christians of his day that their faith in Jesus is not just a usual person, but the authentic goal towards which God's ancient dealings with Israel were heading towards.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the composition of the Gospel is in line with the model of historical writings prevalent in the Greco-Roman world of the period. The beginning of the Gospel of Luke is, for instance, a descent from the traditional style of narrative writing among the Christians of the first century and a leaning towards Hellenistic historian's methodology of designing an account along the lines of a historical genre.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the importance of knowing the historical context of Luke helps us to, first of all, understand the audience that the author of the gospel of Luke addressed, as they had their own political, social, cultural, and religious understanding and background as well. Secondly, it then helps us to understand the exact meaning of the gospel as it was intended by the author of Luke's gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> See “The Setting of Luke's Gospel.” Shmoop University Study Guide, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/bible/luke-gospel/analysis/setting>

<sup>2</sup> John A. Martin. *Luke, In the Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, 1983), 201.

<sup>3</sup> See John Nolland. *Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas: Word Books Publishers, 1989), 10.

<sup>4</sup> See Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2013), 456.

As the writer of Luke takes measured steps in weaving together the historical data, literary devices, and Christian expectations in committing the story of Jesus into writing. Such a learned approach of the writer of the third Gospel towards the source materials and writing techniques turns his work into a lofty pillar of the church.<sup>5</sup> Thus this serves as the basic foundation of the exegetical work we will be doing in this chapter and it will help us in this work to know the world and worldview in which this gospel was written and the actual intended message the author wanted to communicate.

## **2.2. Geographical Context**

This is mostly seen in Luke's work as in the historical context that, "Luke uses geography to structure his story and to advance his literary and theological goals. The center of his story is the city of Jerusalem and the events that take place there."<sup>6</sup> There is a move in the narrative towards Jerusalem. This has its bearing in Luke 2:22 from Jesus childhood when Jesus was presented in the temple of Jerusalem and when he remained there until his parents found Him thinking that he was lost. This goes up to the end of the Galilean ministry. The transfiguration account explicitly prepared Him for the journey to Jerusalem and Jesus's death in Jerusalem, which was the accomplishment of His mission (Luke 9:31). To also mark the great importance of the importance of Jerusalem as an important geographical context we realize that, "Luke has all of Jesus's resurrection appearances take place in the environs of the city, and in the last of them, Jesus instructs the disciples, 'stay in the city' (24:49)."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Syed Waqas, "*Life Story of Jesus in Luke's Gospel*" (Ph.D. diss., Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, 2020), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, 15.

Johnson also in the *Sacra Pagna* in pg. 15, includes the Acts of the Apostles to show how this geographical movement of Jesus now moves from Jerusalem to other places and back and does this by saying that:

Jesus's announcement in 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth," is carried out within the narrative itself. The ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) is followed by the evangelization of Judea and Samaria (8-12), then Asia Minor and Europe, ending in Rome (13-28). Each outward movement, however, also circles back to Jerusalem (see Acts 12:25; 15:2; 18:22; 19:21; 20:16; 21:13; 25:1).<sup>8</sup>

With this, Johnson shows that Jerusalem is the center of Luke's narrative in spatial terms. The middle twelve chapters of the two-volume work narrate events exclusively in that place. Luke makes this place so central because Jerusalem was of obvious historical importance both for Judaism and the nascent Christian movement.<sup>9</sup> Thus Jerusalem stands as a very important geographical context, especially as we will show the link between the Passover meals in the Old Testament and how the new covenant is to be inaugurated with that of the Passover in the new community of Jerusalem that Jesus was starting.

### **3. Structure of the Text**

The structure of this passage, which is from vs. 15-20 of Luke 22 brings about four important distinctive parts that form the structure of our text and which will form the themes of our exegetical work that follows in the next heading below. Vs. 14 is not much included in the structure in the sense that it mainly serves as the setting for the Passover meal and this meal is briefly laid out and shows Jesus reclining at the table which was a normal posture

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, 15.

<sup>9</sup> See Johnson, 15.

which guests at important and solemn meals assumed. Ordinary meals were usually eaten while sitting and they are several places in Luke that we see this for example in Luke 11:37 and also in Luke 14:10 and Luke 17:7.<sup>10</sup>

The first part begins with Jesus's initial words. In this first part of the structure of the Last Supper narrative (22:15-16), we realize that Jesus's initial words are a transition between the two eras of the Salvation History, that is between the first covenant sealed by the blood of the Passover lamb and the covenant made at the Last Supper which was to be sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>11</sup>

This is followed by the second part of the structure of our text, (22:17-18) which is the sharing of the first cup. This first Cup simply signifies the forming up of the new community of the New Covenant by Jesus himself. The breaking of the bread which is narrated in Luke 22:19 serves to offer a very important way of life to this new community that is formed by Jesus or even the pattern of Life under the New Covenant.<sup>12</sup> The last part of the structure of our text, (Luke 22:20) is the second cup which inaugurates the New Covenant, and as Jerome says, "It is a covenant sacrifice, a communion of life."<sup>13</sup> This Structure is so crucial to the exegesis of our text and it will guide this exegesis to be understood well and in detail.

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<sup>10</sup> See David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 178.

<sup>11</sup> See Wojciech Szypula. "Luke and Acts." Lecture Notes, Tangaza University College, Nairobi, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> See Jerome Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Neyrey, 17.

#### 4. Exegesis of the Text

This is the most central and most significant part of our paper as it is going to offer the exegesis and the deeper interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the words and the actions that Jesus did at this Last Supper meal with His Apostles as narrated In Luke 22:14-20. As John McKenzie mentions, “The Eucharist is remarkably rich in Symbolic significance; it presents almost all the major themes of the primitive Christian preaching and teaching...Thus this part will seek to discover this teaching to fully grasp the wealth of Eucharistic symbolism as the Christian Passover.”<sup>14</sup>

The most very important thing to be understood in this part is that, as said before in the structure is that, to give a precise exegesis we need to know that the basis of all this is in the understanding that this meal serves as a transition between the two eras of the Salvation History, that is: between the first covenant sealed by the blood of the Passover lamb and the covenant made at the Last Supper which was to be sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>15</sup> We can even realize this when Jesus in the course of this meal will redefine the meaning of the Passover symbols in terms of his death and its significance. The bread and the cup will become the symbols of Jesus’s body and blood which will inaugurate the new covenant.<sup>16</sup> Adding to the previous point, the exegesis will also serve as Jesus’s farewell address about the past and the future, and more importantly, it will provide us with the

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<sup>14</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1966), 250.

<sup>15</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> See Neyrey, 17.

meaning of the life that Jesus Himself lived. This is vital because in this Luke provided an exhortation for his Communities and this will be an exhortation to us as well.<sup>17</sup>

Before we enter into the exegesis of our text it is important to differentiate between the two interpretations of the Eucharist. We have the Eucharistic interpretation, in which some Christian traditions, such as the Catholic Church, take Jesus's words literally, holding that the bread and the wine became transformed into Jesus's own body and blood. This is the famous interpretation that focuses on the real presence of Jesus in the bread and the wine, and, consequently, his permanent presence among the believing community.<sup>18</sup>

The second one is called metaphoric or symbolic interpretation. Many Christians, particularly those of reform tradition, although they differ in their interpretations, generally understand Jesus's words over the bread and the wine symbolically and metaphorically,<sup>19</sup> and focus on Jesus's action as symbolically pointing to what he is about to undergo on the cross and the significance of his acts. According to this interpretation, Jesus's statements could be paraphrased as meaning "this symbolizes (rather than 'is') my body/blood".<sup>20</sup> This is the main interpretation that we will deal with in our exegesis in this part.

It is very important to understand that this work shows that these are very different positions, but it should be recognized that one interpretation does not have to exclude another. This means that Jesus's words could be read from the point of view of the real presence or on the view of its symbolic meaning, not to show that one is greater than the

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<sup>17</sup> See R.E. Brown, J.A Fitzmyer and R.E Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 715.

<sup>18</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

other. Thus, particularly in our analysis, we will focus on the symbolic meaning of Jesus's words plus his actions at the Last Supper because Luke certainly sees Jesus' words and actions as having a deep theological significance to interpret what Jesus will soon do on the cross, the effects of these actions, and what they teach and guide his disciples on how they should live.

#### ***4.1. Jesus' Initial Words (22:15-16)***

This meal simply symbolizes a cross over from Jesus's earthly ministry to the completion of his salvific work in his death, resurrection, and ascension. As discussed before in the structure of the text, it is also a transition between the two eras of salvation history. The Passover which is the foundation of Luke's work here<sup>21</sup> commemorated the exodus from Egyptian bondage and this began the history of the people of Israel. It is not a break from the Jewish Passover of old but Jesus's Passover is a preamble to a new chapter in that salvation history where Jesus's death will initiate a new type of God salvific action that will complete the salvation history and fulfills it.

Neyrey also adds an important aspect that, "in one sense, this is Jesus's last meal, for he will not eat or drink again, yet future eating and drinking are predicted in God's kingdom."<sup>22</sup> This is the point that explains well that, Jesus uses the image of an eschatological banquet which will be yet another Passover meal. This meal will not be the Exodus one from Egypt, but a celebration of the kingdom of God which will be established in its fullness and salvation will come to its full effect with it.

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<sup>21</sup> See Neyrey, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Neyrey, 13.

#### **4.2. *The First Cup (22:17-18)***

This section is so outstanding in the sense and central to the words and actions of Jesus in the sense that, Jesus gives the cup with the command that it be shared among his disciples. This was not a part of a standard Passover rite where everyone would have their own. Sharing of the cup implies the establishment of a new community that will be brought together by Jesus.

He leaves behind a community of disciples who will continue to celebrate the Passover meal commemorating the salvific event he is about to accomplish. It appears reasonable that Luke presented this first cup at the beginning of the meal to emphasize that the disciples are now entering into the time of a new Passover, and this serves as a new salvific event in which they partake as a community of Jesus's disciples the people of the new covenant.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4.3. *Breaking of the Bread (22:19)***

The second part is in the nineteenth verse that narrates Jesus breaking the bread and this will show that Jesus was merely indicating a guideline of the way of life that was to be lived under the New Covenant that he had established which was formed by the sharing of the one cup as explained above. Jesus takes the unleavened bread, pronounces a blessing over it, and then breaks it for distribution (Luke 22:19).

Jesus reinterprets this symbol entirely. The broken and shared bread represents his body given up for the disciples. The present tense of this phrase, "is given", signifies Jesus' irrevocable decision to carry on with his passion. The essential meaning of Jesus' action is

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<sup>23</sup> See Szygula, 2018

the indication of the self-sacrificial nature of Jesus's actions that will soon follow. He allows himself to be broken in an act of complete devotion and service intended for benefiting the disciples.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Jesus's words have a twofold significance:

On the Eucharistic level, the Church recognizes that the bread becomes the real body of Christ, and this act of Jesus is reenacted in every Eucharistic celebration. In this sense, Jesus offers himself as a permanent presence in the disciple's community.<sup>25</sup> The same applies to the cup and blood becoming Jesus's wine.

On the symbolic level, this gesture of breaking and the sharing of the bread symbolizes Jesus's act of self-giving, of having his body broken for the sake of the disciples. Another important symbolic meaning of this act is that by consuming the broken bread the disciples are joined to Jesus's self-sacrificial mission which they are to reenact in their own lives.<sup>26</sup>

To eat, in the scriptural language is a command to figuratively absorb something that ought to become a part of one's own identity. By consuming Jesus' broken body the disciples accept to adjust themselves to live by what that bread implies a sacrificial and self-giving pattern of Jesus himself. The purpose of "going back" to this moment is to never lose sight of the core event which makes all Jesus' other actions, past, present, and future meaningful.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist According to Acts* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998), 16.

<sup>25</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> See Paul Bernier, *Bread Broken and Shared: Broadening our Vision of Eucharist* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1981), 72.

<sup>27</sup> See Szygula, 2018

Secondly, by the command that they “eat” His broken body, the disciples are called to re-enact Jesus's sacrifice with their own lives.<sup>28</sup> This “going back” to the last supper is for them to be a lasting reminder that their ministry must follow the example of Jesus's cross. Thus, symbolically, the breaking and eating of the bread establish the pattern for discipleship, as if providing a new law for the disciple to follow.

#### ***4.4. The Second Cup (22:20)***

Vs. 20 gives us another cup again, after the first one that we heard narrated in vs. 17 and 18. This second cup inaugurates and signifies the New Covenant and this is proved by Jesus himself in vs. 20 as he calls it “the cup of the new covenant in my blood, which is being poured out for you”.<sup>29</sup> These words interpret the significance of his death on the cross which signifies that which is about to occur, that is, Jesus’s death which would initiate the new covenant. This is a direct allusion to Exodus 24:8, as we saw in the first chapter as we dealt with the first testament parallelisms, where Moses uses the blood of a sacrificed animal to officially ratify the Sinai covenant. He called it “the blood of the covenant”.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus declares that his death on the cross will initiate a new covenantal relationship between the people and God. Uniquely, Luke focuses on the covenant-making significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, which makes the covenant wherein, the disciples can relate to God through Jesus and through the Spirit whom he will send. Thus the significance of this cup is the establishment of a new relationship between God and the people through this new

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<sup>28</sup> See *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 716.

<sup>29</sup> *The African Bible*, 1773.

<sup>30</sup> See Reginald C. Fuller, ed., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Publishers, 1969), 23.

covenant sealed not by the blood of the Lamb but sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>31</sup>

## **5. Relevance of the Emmaus Encounter**

The entire Emmaus story is intended to indicate the interpretive keys through which the events of Jesus' last days, as well as the experience of the early Christian community, can be understood.<sup>32</sup> These two keys are the explanation of the scriptures by Jesus to the two disciples and the experience of Jesus that the disciples had after the Breaking of the bread. The second key will be our main focus as it brings about the understanding of the Last Supper's actions and words of Jesus concerning their life and responsibilities.

### ***5.1. Jesus' Explanation of the Scripture (24:25-27)***

This is the first interpretive key and in this one phrase he answered and solve both of their dilemmas that the Messiah had to die following the Scriptures, but his death would have eternal glory as its goal. This is the sense of the events that transpired in Jerusalem, and the meaning of the empty tomb. But despite this explanation from scripture, it seemed not enough for them to realize Jesus in their midst.

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<sup>31</sup> See John L. McKenzie, 156.

<sup>32</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

## **5.2. *The Experience of Jesus: The Breaking of the Bread (24:28-31)***

This narrative now shows us that, even getting knowledge of the Scripture, they still did not recognize Jesus with them. That is why this section is important as it shows us that, Jesus's repetition of the breaking of bread at the last supper in Emmaus has great influence. When they invite Jesus to stay with them, we see Jesus presiding over the evening meal. As mentioned before, Jesus breaks the bread in an exact way as in his actions at the Last Supper.<sup>33</sup> Luke appeals here to the symbolic interpretation of what happened and that final meal. The disciples recognize Jesus not only through his words but through his actions. Luke's point here is highly symbolic. He implies that to fully understand Jesus and his life one must recognize that his entire life was summed up in his actions on the cross complete and total self-giving of his life for the sake of the people. When the disciples remember the last supper they come to understand that Jesus went to the cross on purpose. Thus, their journey to comprehension is complete.

The breaking of the bread is a symbolic indication of his broken body on the cross. Luke does not speak of the cup which means that this is not a full reenactment of the Last Supper. The cup for Luke symbolized the new covenant. In this instance, he wants to focus chiefly on Jesus' pattern of self-sacrificial service.<sup>34</sup> Table fellowship is meant to keep the keen awareness of what Jesus's life was all about in the community. It is a practical and existential aspect of Christian practice which, in addition to the Scripture provides a full picture and full experience of Jesus.

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<sup>33</sup> See Eugene LaVerdiere, 9.

<sup>34</sup> See Paul Bernier, 72.

Thus, breaking the bread is a way to keep the community in a keen awareness of how Jesus lived his life. This is also a powerful reminder that the faithful ought to live their lives following the same pattern as his disciples. Jesus vanished from their sight immediately after they recognize him. This indicates that now they have all the tools and the foundation to act on what they had experienced which they do by returning to Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> The point of the story of the journey to Emmaus is to demonstrate that to comprehend Jesus and to experience him fully, one needs the theoretical knowledge grounded in the Scripture which explains God's purposes and designs. This knowledge must be combined with the practice of service and self-sacrificial love, which Jesus expressed most fully on the cross.<sup>36</sup> This self-sacrificial love is reenacted in the Christian table fellowship where the believers remember what Jesus did and by repeating his actions declared their willingness to imitate him. Thus, the road to Emmaus and the experiences of Jesus in his scriptural explanation and breaking of the bread lays the foundation for the existence of the community of the disciples.

## **6. The Impact of the Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist on the Early Christians**

Therefore now we look at how, after understanding the meaning of the actions and words of Jesus at the Last, The disciples sought to leave their Christian life in this new Community. Acts of the Apostles is the best example of showing this as it seeks to highlight how the story of Jesus continues in the History of the Church.

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<sup>35</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> See Eugene LaVerdiere, 16.

Acts is nothing else but a natural continuation of the work of Jesus through the ministry of the apostles and the Church, “and also to tell us the development of the Eucharist as part of the life of the Church.”<sup>37</sup> We also learn from the Acts of the Apostles that this early community was “united”. This meant that there was harmony and unity, (Luke 2:44-45). This unity sprouted from prayer that was like a binding force to this community.

### ***6.1. The First Christian Community (2:42-47)***

This is the first of Luke’s extensive narrative summaries that present the life of the first Christian community in a broad and idealized fashion. It has a twofold part of the structure.

#### *6.1.1. Inner Religious Life and Social Life of the Community*

*(2:42- 43)*

This first verse identifies four practices upon which the religious life of the community was based.<sup>38</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. Also to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, (Acts 2:42). This implies that the community was molded with the proclamation of the apostles who have, presumably, instructed them further in Jesus’s teaching which they witnessed.<sup>39</sup> Fellowship implies working towards communion and close relationships. This implies harmony and union in the community. They focused on building their togetherness and harmony based on the teaching as well as the practices which will be described next.

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<sup>37</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, 10.

<sup>38</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> See Eugene LaVerdiere, 10.

Breaking of the bread. This is more than just an ordinary meal. It is the fulfillment of Jesus's command in Luke 22:19, it was the celebration and participation of the Lord's Supper. This was likely the famous agape meal of the early Christian's prayers. Another unifying factor was the prayers that they offered together as a reflection of belonging to one in the same God. They were praying together.

### *6.1.2. Outward Effects of the Community Life (2:43)*

This verse indicates that the Pentecost and Peter's speech was not a one-off event. It had a lasting impression and effect and led to a continuing awareness that something extraordinary has happened. This is manifested by the sense of all which was felt by the people in and outside of the community. Also, we realize in Acts 2:46-47, the intense inner religious and social life of the community translated into outward witness. Initially manifested itself in their visible presence in the temple where they spent much time. This outward visibility and presence was an outcome of their unity in the home church where they continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper. "To add more to this, we also are stuck with their lifestyle and piety which attracted numerous new followers who joined themselves to this new movement and thus enjoyed the benefits of salvation."<sup>40</sup> This section shows the first effects of the Christian witness. Chapter 2 of Acts describes the beginning of the Church. It all happens in response to the descent of the Holy Spirit, and in turn, the recipients of the Holy Spirit manifest the witness of its pious life of Christian fellowship become an evangelizing witness through which salvation is offered to evermore people. This is all as a result of the actions and words of Jesus at the last supper when he formed a

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<sup>40</sup> "Christianity Birth of the Church." The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, accessed February 01, 2022, [https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/birth\\_of\\_the\\_church\\_0.pdf](https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/birth_of_the_church_0.pdf)

new community which had to be in unity and living in a spirit of sharing and living in harmony and this community was and should be Jesus to the world always even today.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen how Jesus's words and actions at the last supper were so crucial and relevant to the life the new community he founded were to conduct their lives. Thus we have looked at the historical and geographical context of the Gospel of Luke to understand the author very well and be able to know his world. We also gave the structure of this specific text of the Last Supper meal, and immediately after we gave an exegesis of Luke 22:14-20. We did this by explaining the meaning of the words and actions of Jesus during that Last Supper meal, and what it meant symbolically, as Jesus intended to communicate them to His followers. Then this chapter gave the relevance of the Emmaus Encounter in helping the disciples in understanding what Jesus said, meant, and did at the Last Supper. Then lastly we dealt with showing the Practical part of the Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist in the way the first Christians lived their lives and made Christianity in their day relevant and inspiring. Therefore the principles recorded in Luke 22:14-20 can be transferred very well from their 1<sup>st</sup>-century context up to our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. Thus, in our next chapter, we shall focus on how the recorded principles in Luke 22:14-20 can be of importance and relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **The Significance of the Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist as the Foundation for an Authentic Life for Christian Communities of Zimbabwe Today**

#### **1. Introduction**

This final chapter puts in perspective the application of the message that is elaborated in Luke 22:14-20. To discuss the application of this message to the Christian communities today, we shall present first the Situation of the Church in Zimbabwe and its people's mechanical and superficial way of life. The above point will be challenged by the example of the life of the First Christian Community. Then the Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist is given as an aid to Witness the real presence of Jesus to Humanity. This is followed by the heading that explains that the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, are to be lived not just recited. Then this work will then show that Zimbabwean Christians should develop and foster an unwavering application of Christian Values in our Social Life. Then Self-Giving Love to the Community is applied to avoid Individualism, in its extremes as this community Jesus founded was a community that shared their lives. These subheadings will help present the message of the relevance of the meaning of Jesus's words and actions at the

last supper and its application to the Zimbabwean context today. This chapter aims to show that the message that Jesus taught his disciples in a 1st-century context is still relevant to today's world, be it in the religious, social, economic, or political arena.

## 2. The Situation of the Church in Zimbabwe Today

We begin with the nature of the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe since the year 2000, as this is the period that caused the demise of many values in people, even Christian values and practices, (which is why this paper seeks to address this), thus we see this is as a result of Zimbabwe being in an unending crisis.

<sup>1</sup> The crisis can be located within the socio-economic as well as the political spheres. Generally, Zimbabwe's economy has been on a downward spiral, while its politics have been characterized by violence, intolerance, and hate, due to political differences.<sup>2</sup> This has led its social space to be very toxic, as supporters of different political affiliations fail to relate in ways that accept and allow views that are different in a healthy manner.<sup>3</sup> This is the very situation in which this paper tries to address and provide solutions starting from an individual level, mostly targeting the Catholic Christians in Zimbabwe to initiate this way of life for a better society. As mentioned above, the political crisis has turned into an

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<sup>1</sup> See F. Q. MacLean, *Crises of Governance in Asia and Africa: Ethnicity and race in the changing political economies of South Africa and Zimbabwe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2001), 185.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Oxford, Los Angeles: University of Californian Press, 1990), 37.

<sup>3</sup> See Molly Manyonganise, "The March Is Not Ended": 'Church' Confronting the State over the Zimbabwean Crisis." Religions, accessed February 11, 2022, <file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/religions-13-00107-v3.pdf>

economical one that has left the majority of the citizens poor and without hope in life and to fight for survival.

### ***2.1. Mechanical and Superficial Living in the Life of the Christians of Zimbabwe today***

So in this section, it is also important to know that, poverty and violence caused by political and economic crisis breeds a lot of negative effects on the relationships that people have. People get divided, they segregate each other, hate each other, they become selective to whom they relate to, they even fight either physically or verbally, they discriminate against each other and they lack the attitude of working together for a common goal or even a common cause. Christian communities as well particularly in Zimbabwe are not exempted from such a cruel and un-Christian way of life.

You find all these types of negative behaviors caused by an external effect of poverty which diverts how a Christian community should be. Adding more to this, the mechanical and superficial Life in the Life of the Christians of Zimbabwe today can also be seen in the forgetting of fundamental Christian values that Jesus intended His community to live by. In this crisis that the Christian communities of Zimbabwe face today, we realize that the centrality of the Eucharist is easily forgotten and people only find ways how to get out of poverty. This isn't a wrong issue or thing to do but the greatest mistake done is to stop caring about the other person who is part of our Community. It's a disturbing thing now that, "A large number of Catholics show up at church on Sunday out of a sense of obligation...they do not involve themselves...their own lives have not been affected as a result."<sup>4</sup> In other words, we just remain the same with any effort to change.

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Bernier, *Bread Broken and Shared: Broadening our Vision of Eucharist* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1981), 79.

Thus with all this situation and kind of life and the, I do not care culture that has grown in Zimbabwe because of the crisis, this work seeks to show how humanity can be restored first in the Christian community itself and then to the outer world too, with the help of the life the Last Supper meal symbolized and inspired the first or early Christians to follow. Fully aware that if we dwell mostly on radically living like the first Christians, we will succeed as in their time and life situations were different from us, but one thing that will never be disputed and can help us today is the fact that, the “first-century Christians viewed the church as a family. The first Christians saw themselves as brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers to everyone who was part of the Christian community.”<sup>5</sup> This is not so, today we see each other as rivalries and competitors in all we do even in church circles.

In the first century, the family unit extended far beyond the nuclear family and was held together by an unconditional bond of commitment and service. You did not have to like your relatives, but you were expected to love them. It’s within this context that Jesus and Paul blew open the doors of the home and welcomed in all believers as brothers and sisters. They created a new focus on the family that extended far beyond one’s nuclear relatives and included people of every race and social strata who gave their allegiance to the risen Christ.<sup>6</sup> “The early Church we read in Acts was very different to what we imagine and experience as ‘the Church’ today, but we can still learn from it.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See “Four Ways the Modern Church Looks Nothing Like the Early Church.” Relevant Media Group, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/4-ways-modern-church-looks-nothing-early-church/>

<sup>6</sup> See “Four Ways the Modern Church Looks Nothing Like the Early Church.” Relevant Media Group, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/4-ways-modern-church-looks-nothing-early-church/>

<sup>7</sup> “Five things that we can learn from the early Church.” Elim International Centre, accessed February 10, 2022, [https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/525131/Five\\_things\\_that.aspx](https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/525131/Five_things_that.aspx)

The Church we meet in the book of Acts is very different from many of the more contemporary pictures people have developed of the Church. This is not to say it was perfect. The Church that had Peter and John amongst its leaders was also the Church of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5: 1-10). It saw spectacular answers to prayer. It also saw two of its most significant leaders martyred. It was able to resolve disagreements between different ethnic groups but unable to help Paul and Barnabas resolve their differences. However, there is no doubt that the picture we have of the Church in the book of Acts is compelling. So what was it like? Perhaps the clearest picture that we have of the Church in action is found in Acts 2:42-47.

### **3. Example of the Life of the First Christian Community**

In characterizing the way of life of the primitive Christians, the author of Acts says: “The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). He describes the mutual charity exercised by the original Jerusalem community, in which the members sold their property and placed the price at the feet of the Apostles, who divided it among the members according to their need so that no one lacked anything among them (4:34). Also in we find this in St. Paul’s doctrine concerning the Church as the body of Christ, in which the members, although having different functions, formed part of one sole body (Rom 12:3–8; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 2:20–22). In Jerusalem, although in the beginning the Apostles and earliest converts continued to pray in the temple (Acts 2:46) and follow the Jewish ritual (3:1; 5:21), they gradually became aware of themselves as a separate community or church. The term church was applied first to the Church in Jerusalem (7:38), then extended to the Christian

communities at Antioch (14:27) and Caesarea (18:22). While the widows, the poor, and the orphans among the convert Jews were cared for by the Jewish elders, the Apostles provided for the poor among the converts from Hellenism by ordaining seven deacons Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and the Antiochene Nicholas (Acts 6:5), thus freeing themselves for prayer and the ministry of the word.<sup>8</sup>

The basic example we learn from these early Christians is that they had desperation that produced prayer. The Bible says they got in that upper room and they devoted themselves to prayer, and they did not stop praying until God showed up to do what he said he was going to do and all their Eucharistic celebrations and meeting were done in the context of prayer. Secondly, they gave generously. Generosity is an important feature of life in the early Church.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had a need. Part of this generosity finds its impetus in the depth of fellowship that existed between the early Christians. These verses provide a fascinating insight into the early Church. There was a strong sense of community: The believers were together and had everything in common. At the same time that depth of community did not extend to communal living, they still retained property: “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had a need. This kind of sacrificial generosity is described here features throughout Acts and the epistles. This remains a touching and inspiring way of Christian life up to this day.

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<sup>8</sup> See “Christian Way Of Life (Early Church).” Encyclopedia.com, accessed February 08, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/christian-way-life-early-church>

The other very important aspect about these Christians is their unspeakable joy. The Church was joyful both in worship and fellowship: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:45-46). A ‘party’ might seem too irreligious to describe life in the early Church. However, these verses describe a very happy bunch of people who enjoyed being together and worshipping God. This kind of joyful fellowship and worship is found all over the New Testament. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, in particular, is bursting with joy even though he was in prison when he wrote it.

The third point is that the early church had a faith that produced obedience. They trusted God, and they did what God said, for example, before he ascended, Jesus told them, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).<sup>9</sup> The last point is that they reached out to the lost. The early Church was evangelistic. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47). Thus we see that the Church was evangelistic! It reached out to the lost world. Luke describes the evangelistic witness of the Church. Firstly, it was Jesus who was working through his Church. Secondly, people were being saved daily. Thirdly, those being saved were added to their number. Evangelism was only complete when the new believers were added to the Church. Nevertheless, Acts 2 introduces us to the broad themes and practices that shaped the Church of the first century and have continued to shape the Church in her

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<sup>9</sup> See Vance Pitman, “4 Things that Caused the Early Church to Spread Like Wildfire.” The Field: IMB Logo White International Mission Board, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.imb.org/2018/11/28/4-things-church-wildfire/>

most effective moments in history.<sup>10</sup> This is the major difference between the early church and the modern church, particularly the church in Zimbabwe at the moment. The early church was all about Jesus and embracing His two main principles of loving others and loving God. The modern church is about worshipping Jesus from a distance, ensuring that one follows rules just as an obligation, and alienating anyone different.

#### **4. The Symbolic Meaning of the Eucharist as a Means to Show the real presence of Jesus to Humanity**

This part of our work gives a very important application of how the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist can be a means to once again make the real presence of Jesus be felt or experienced or made present. First of all, “it is important to remember that there is nothing magical about the Eucharist...Jesus does not leap from heaven to earth.”<sup>11</sup> This is vital to mention because it prepares our minds to embrace that the Eucharistic presence is actually in the relationships that do exist in the Community, for example, the Christian communities we are talking about.

Thus in this paper, we have been seeing how practical the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist wants Christians to be. Thus as Paul Bernier mentions that “If our celebrations are real, we will know that Christ has broken the bread and shared with us, and is only looking for us to do the same.”<sup>12</sup> That is why as we were discussing the mechanical and superficial living in the life of the Christians of Zimbabwe today, which is also affected by the political

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<sup>10</sup> See “Five things that we can learn from the early Church.” Elim International Centre, accessed February 10, 2022, [https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/525131/Five\\_things\\_that.aspx](https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/525131/Five_things_that.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> Bernier, 120.

<sup>12</sup> Bernier, 78.

and economic crisis, we see that despite all that they suffer and endure as a nation, and in what we experience that all Human life grows out of situations we may not necessarily have caused, or chosen ourselves in a broader sense, for example, the situation in Zimbabwe to some extent. But what is important as Christians is to accept and make our own choices as we mature in taking responsibility. Not only in doing so for ourselves but for the Christian community, which is our larger family.

The first Christian community too was in its difficult situation, so different from ours today. But one thing that they retained was the aspect of the real presence of Jesus among them and as they understood symbolically the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, they lived their daily lives in, “the memory of Jesus,” that is, in living the life Jesus lived and taught, and this made Jesus be there and present with them. The Christians of Zimbabwe too in their situation are still having this important aspect of Christ’s life or presence and to decide not to be led or influenced by the political and economic crisis they are facing.

Someone may ask a question, what does it help to live Christian values in a place where they are suffering and everyone has to make ends meet even at the expense of bad immoral lifestyles. This is so because when the Christians of Zimbabwe understands that, Jesus is present in the Eucharist under the forms of bread and wine and see the Eucharist as born from the love of Christ to give life to the world, they as His followers will also create this environment of love once again in their communities and this will spread and at the end of the day even if the situation of the country remains the same, they as Christian will be there for each other to support and love each other and none of the members will remain distressed by the situation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Bernier, 80.

In addition to this, “we realize how the Eucharist is to be an adequate symbol for the world today, as well as an effective force for building a more Christ-like world, people will have to see that the bread which Jesus shares with us is not to be jealously hoarded but freely shared with all in need.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, as we know that, we actually cannot live in the church building, we have to go back to our homes and societies thus it is in taking Christ home that sums up the effectiveness of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist that inspired the first Christian community and which will aid the Christian communities of Zimbabwe to bring the real presence of Christ love and liberation to everyone. Thus, as we have seen, especially in the second chapter in the exegesis part, how Jesus’ words and actions at the last supper were crucial and relevant to the life of the new community he founded and gave a blueprint on how they should conduct their lives.

Following the same inspiration, Zimbabwean Christians should too take Jesus home. How can this be done? As we have mentioned earlier, the understanding of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist, which is the main purpose for this paper, helps us to know that, “The Eucharist should influence the life that follows the celebration, so that gradually all one’s values, ideals, and daily life choices are derived from the Eucharist.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, Luke 22:14-20 explains that we are a community that shares its life with others like the broken bread at the Last Supper. Therefore, there should be no separation between the Eucharist and our daily lives as they belong together to transform our lives, families, communities, society, and even a country. Paul Bernier brings out this point strongly as he

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<sup>14</sup> Bernier, 98.

<sup>15</sup> Bernier, 109.

mentions, “If the Eucharist is only a one-hour-a-week ritual and not one piece with the rest of our lives, we are liars, fools or schizophrenics.”<sup>16</sup>

Therefore the Christian communities of Zimbabwe if they understand and live what Jesus taught at the Last Supper despite the political and economic crisis, will be able to take care of each other and together make a difference in the country, starting from those Christian communities of families, or communities and the society. Therefore this part will be summed up by the very important words of Paul Bernier which mention that:

The Eucharist is never a passive, comforting moment alone with God, something which allows us to escape the cares and concerns of our everyday life. The Eucharist is where all these cares and concerns come to a focus, and where we are asked to measure them against the standard lived by Jesus when he proclaimed for all to hear that the bread that he would give would provide life for the entire world. But it will do so only if, finding ourselves with a basket of bread, we have peered deeply enough into the heart of Christ to know what to do with it.<sup>17</sup>

By the basket of bread, it can, be understood as all the giftedness that we have in life and try to put it at the disposal of the body of Christ for its betterment. The following part below will give a few practical ways how to know what to do with this basket of bread after knowing enough about what Jesus would want.

## **5. Words and Actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, to be Lived not Recited**

Therefore inspired by the above subheading, the question that remains to be addressed is on how to live and not only speak of what we believe as James in his letter wrote that be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves, (Jas 1:22) and

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<sup>16</sup> Bernier, 112.

<sup>17</sup> Bernier, 139,140.

also he mentions that so also faith of itself if it does not have works, is dead, (Jas 2:17). Thus as we have seen, “The Eucharist is remarkably rich in Symbolic significance; it presents almost all the major themes of the primitive Christian preaching and teaching and way of life.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore to remind ourselves of the symbolic meaning, we now know that:

Jesus reinterprets this symbol entirely. The broken and shared bread represents his body given up for the disciples. The present tense of this phrase, “is given”, signifies Jesus’s irrevocable decision to carry on with his passion. The essential meaning of Jesus’ action is the indication of the self-sacrificial nature of Jesus’s actions that will soon follow. He allows himself to be broken in an act of complete devotion and service intended for benefiting the disciples.<sup>19</sup>

On the symbolic level, this gesture of breaking and the sharing of the bread symbolizes Jesus’s act of self-giving, of having his body broken for the sake of the disciples. Another important symbolic meaning of this act is that by consuming the broken bread the disciples are joined to Jesus’s self-sacrificial mission which they are to reenact in their own lives.<sup>20</sup> To ‘eat’ in the scriptural language is a command to figuratively absorb something that ought to become a part of one’s own identity. By consuming Jesus’ broken body the disciples accept to adjust themselves to live by what that bread implies a sacrificial and self-giving pattern of Jesus himself. The purpose of going back to this moment is to never lose sight of the core event which makes all Jesus’ other actions, past, present, and future meaningful.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1966), 250.

<sup>19</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist According to Acts* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998), 16.

<sup>20</sup> See Bernier, 72.

<sup>21</sup> See Wojciech Szypula. “Luke and Acts.” Lecture Notes, Tangaza University College, Nairobi, 2018.

Secondly, by the command that they “eat” His broken body, the disciples are called to re-enact Jesus's sacrifice with their own lives.<sup>22</sup> This “going back” to the last supper is for them to be a lasting reminder that their ministry must follow the example of Jesus's cross. Thus, symbolically, the breaking and eating of the bread establish the pattern for discipleship, as if providing a new law for the disciple to follow.

Therefore in practical ways, the first impact is supposed to be the inner religious life and Social life of the community as we saw in the second chapter of this paper just as it is shown in the life of the first Christian communities in Acts 2:42-43. This first verse identifies four practices upon which the religious life of the community was based.<sup>23</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. Also to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, (Acts 2:42). This implies that the community was molded with the proclamation of the apostles who have, presumably, instructed them further in Jesus’s teaching which they witnessed.<sup>24</sup> Fellowship implies working towards communion and close relationships. This implies harmony and union in the community. They focused on building their togetherness and harmony based on the teaching as well as the practices which will be described next. Similarly, the Christian communities of Zimbabwe should also build unity within families, communities, and the society following the word that is preached to them when they worship, bound by the love of God and love of one another as a family.

The second important aspect was the Breaking of the bread. This is more than just an ordinary meal. It is the fulfillment of Jesus’s command in Luke 22:19, it was the

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<sup>22</sup> See R.E. Brown, J.A Fitzmyer and R.E Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 716.

<sup>23</sup> See Szygula, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> See Eugene LaVerdiere, 10.

celebration and participation of the Lord's Supper. This was likely the famous agape meal of the early Christians. This was so central to the Christians. As the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist explained, the gesture of breaking and the sharing of the bread symbolizes Jesus's act of self-giving, of having his body broken for the sake of the disciples. Another important symbolic meaning of this act is that by consuming the broken bread the disciples are joined to Jesus's self-sacrificial mission which they are to reenact in their own lives.<sup>25</sup> Therefore it is a Christian reminder that Christian communities should share themselves with others. In doing so this will build and produce complementarity within the Christians themselves and as in the first Christian community in the Acts, no one will be left in want meaning they will be able to be aided with the necessities to live while they also extend their giftedness to others as well, (see Acts 2:45).

Prayer is another unifying factor that they offered together as a reflection of belonging to one in the same God. They were praying together and this shows that in all aspects of their lives and every day they were together in all ways that are, even in prayer and life's experiences.

### **5.1. Unwavering Application of our Christian Values in our Social Life**

This part follows the effect of the inner community life that was lived by the first Christian community as explained above, (see Acts 2:43). We realize in Acts 2:46-47, that the intense inner religious and social life of the community translated into outward witness. This outward visibility and presence was an outcome of their unity in the home church where

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<sup>25</sup> See Bernier, 72.

they continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper. To add more to this, we also are stuck with their lifestyle and piety which attracted numerous new followers who joined themselves to this new movement and thus enjoyed the benefits of salvation.<sup>26</sup>

This is all as a result of the actions and words of Jesus at the last supper when he formed a new community which had to be in unity and living in a spirit of sharing and living in harmony and this community was and should be Jesus to the world always even today. Therefore, in the spirit, the Christian Communities of Zimbabwe, after partaking in the Eucharist and trying to live it, their lives will bloom as a result, and touch and inspire others to do the same and belong to such a way of life. Then at the end the people of Zimbabwe struck by poverty due to economic crisis and also because of political unrest, will be able to take care of each other without discrimination or unhealthy competition for survival, but together will be able to support, complement, and carry each other's problems and this will breed unity and harmony among them.

### ***5.2. Self Giving Love to the Community over Individualism***

Individualism is “a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent”<sup>27</sup> This breeds selfishness and lack of concern for those who are not so privileged in the society and breeds unhealthy divisions of a community that is full of classes in it and segregation will creep in. Thus as a means to heal that, we remember that the life of the Christian community is based on the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, (see Acts 2:42). Fellowship implies working towards Communion

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<sup>26</sup> See “Christianity Birth of the Church.” The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, accessed February 01, 2022, [https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/birth\\_of\\_the\\_church\\_0.pdf](https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/birth_of_the_church_0.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> H. C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 2.

and close relationships. This implies harmony and union in the community. As mentioned before the Christian community focused on building their togetherness and harmony. Thus the spirit of individualism will worsen the already falling situation, but self-giving love builds others through complementarity. Thus the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist teaches us or makes us understand better that we have to re-enact Jesus' sacrifice with one's own life. This means that we have to have a sense of belonging to the Christian community and learn to share our very lives with others and never promote individualism. This is what we call self-giving love to others and this is what Jesus communicated at the Last Supper and this is the very reason why the early Christians were a star shining in the darkness of their time.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have looked at the message of Luke 22:14-20 and its application. We have pointed out the situation of Zimbabwe and how it has affected the Christian life and how that has brought in a faith-based on attending the Eucharistic celebration but leaves people unchanged when they go to live in their societies. Then the rest of the chapter focused on practical ways to live the Eucharistic life in our societies for the betterment of everyone. Therefore, today the message contained in Luke 22:14-20 perhaps is even more relevant as in those days of the first century. Early Christians who lived in unity in the Christian communities shared their lives with others. This is what the Christians of Zimbabwe need to do to be able to bring out the real presence of Jesus within their community so that through their way of life they may also inspire the outer world so that as a people we take care of

each other and seek what is good for others despite the situation of the country, we should make the first start to seek solutions so that as Christian communities we become the change we need to see and this will reveal the Christ we receive in the Eucharist to others and as it springs out of the Eucharist we share, it will be extended out to our societies through the way we express our Christian values and slowly the situation of Zimbabwe will change slowly as people will learn and be able to take care of each other.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we have seen how the paper has attempted to show the importance of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist in Luke 22:14–20, which stands as the foundation to understand Jesus’s teaching and be able to easily find ways to translate it to be our way of life. We live in a world characterized by a lack of commitment in the Christians, particularly Catholics, and also a failure to apply their faith in their day-to-day lives in their communities. Catholics receive the Body and Blood of Jesus every time they worship, but it ends there in church and after their worship, they go back to leave their lives as if nothing happened, and this is a very troubling issue and problem. Thus this work seeks to address this special issue by showing how the Eucharist can be the source and better means for Christians to transform their lives and live the values that the gospels give. Thus this study seeks to highlight the importance of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist which is often forgotten, as the foundation for understanding well and appreciating the real presence of Jesus, present among His people and thus understand what it means and implies for one who receives the Eucharist and be able to live it in their daily lives.

In chapter one, we have paid attention to the situating of our text of Luke 22:14-20 by looking at the delimitation of the pericope. In this, we dealt with the terminus a quo and terminus ad quem setting the beginning part of our text and the ending part after it. This was

then followed by the context of the pericope and this focused much on the circumstances that made and formed the setting of our text in Luke: 22:14-20. This was accomplished by firstly focusing on the immediate context of the text. More meaning was added to this through the analysis of the remote context of the text. Parallels too relating to the text were given starting with the First Testament parallels and followed by the New Testament parallels. Then they are concluded by the parallels in Luke, which add more value to our text. We have presented these significant aspects of scientific biblical research methods, to bring to light the intricacies that surround our pericope (Luke 22:14-20). This chapter gave a bird's eye view of this most interesting pericope before presenting its exegesis which was done in the ensuing chapter.

In the second chapter, we have seen how Jesus's words and actions at the last supper were so crucial and relevant to the life the new community he founded were to conduct their lives. Thus we have looked at the historical and geographical context of the Gospel of Luke to understand the author very well and be able to know his world. We also gave the structure of this specific text of the Last Supper meal, and immediately after we gave an exegesis of Luke 22:14-20. We did this by explaining the meaning of the words and actions of Jesus during that Last Supper meal, and what it meant symbolically, as Jesus intended to communicate them to His followers. Then this chapter gave the relevance of the Emmaus Encounter in helping the disciples in understanding what Jesus said, meant, and did at the Last Supper. Then lastly we dealt with showing the practical part of the symbolic meaning of the Eucharist in the way the first Christians lived their lives and made Christianity in their day relevant and inspiring. Therefore, we saw that the principles recorded in Luke 22:14-20 were applicable and transferable from their 1<sup>st</sup>-century context up to our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world.

Thus, this was a foundation for the next chapter, which was to focus on how the recorded principles in Luke 22:14-20 can be of importance and relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world.

The last chapter looked at the message of Luke 22:14-20 and its application. It pointed out the situation of Zimbabwe and how it has affected the Christian life and how that has built in people a faith-based on attending the Eucharistic celebration but are left unchanged when they go to live in their societies. Then the rest of the chapter focused on a practical way to live the Eucharistic life in our societies for the betterment of everyone. Therefore, we saw that the message contained in Luke 22:14-20 perhaps is even more relevant as in those days of the first century. We also saw that early Christians who lived in unity in the Christian communities shared their lives with others. This is what this third chapter sought to encourage the Christians of Zimbabwe of the need to be able to bring out the real presence of Jesus within their community so that through their way of life they may also inspire the outer world so that as a people they may take care of each other and seek what is good for others despite the situation of the country. This chapter also promoted the idea that we should make the first start to seek solutions so that as Christian communities we become the change we need to see and this will reveal the Christ we receive in the Eucharist to others and as it springs out of the Eucharist we share, it will be extended out to our societies through the way we express our Christian values and slowly the situation of Zimbabwe will change as people will learn to know the importance of the other human person and be able to take care of each other.

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