*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story, those He redeemed from the hand of the foe, those He gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry, and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. He turned the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into flowing springs; there He brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. They sowed fields, and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest.*

Psalm 107:1-7; 33-37

*On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying: “Where do You want us to make the preparations for You to eat the Passover?” He said: “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him: ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” So, the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, He took His place with the twelve disciples, and while they were eating, He said: “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” And they became greatly distressed and began to say to Him one after another: “Surely not I, Lord?” He answered: “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” Judas, who betrayed Him, said: “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.” While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, saying: “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you; I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.”* Matthew 26:17-29

*A businessman ordered flowers to be sent to the opening of his friend’s new branch office. When the businessman got there, he was shocked to see the flowers with the inscription. “Rest In Peace.” He was so outraged that he stopped at the florist to complain.*

*“It could be worse,” the florist said, “Just think: Today someone was buried beneath a floral arrangement with the inscription. ‘Congratulations on Your New Location!’”*

The Table

1. Today, I would like to focus on the element common in the celebration of the Passover and of the Communion, however this element is neither bread nor wine, but something that despite of being there, largely remains unseen, if not insignificant. I would like us not only to see this element but also to realize how important it is. for This element is the *“table.”* It is probably one the most important of all the furniture’s we use, and yet we often do not seem to realize how functional and how important this furniture is for our daily living. We do not pay too much attention to the need of the one until we are about to eat. Sure, we can eat standing up and holding a plate, but how comfortable is that? When we are camping, especially when this is the *“primitive”* way of camping, we use the ground to place our plates on, but when we return home, how grateful we are for having a table to sit at.

2. It is not by chance that the table remains us of home. After all it is home where our daily meals are being served. This furniture also connects almost all of the most important events of the human history. It is not however the shape or the kind of the table, but the function of it. Let me use just a few examples. In ancient Rome the so-called law of the Twelve Tables, described the fundamental laws of the Roman Empire; in the period of the Enlightenment (end of 17th century to early 19th century), the table was attributed to the free conversations, good food and the atmosphere of tranquility. Over centuries the table served as a place where many events whether of the old days or the modern days took or take place, this includes political discussions, academic discourses, exchanging of the ideas. Even our modern *“desk”* where most of us spend such a significant amount of time working, is nothing else but a form of a table. Where do you think most of the important meetings take place? At the business lunches!

3. Do you remember the time you were courting someone or the time you wanted to talk to your friend you haven’t seen for a long time? Almost 9 out of 10 of such events take place at the restaurant or at home with the so-called *“candlelight”* dinner. Every time any of these events take place, the table is at the center. From the historical perspective, the table also emphasizes the tragic moments of the history. I have seen many paintings depicting suffering people, gathered around the table for some sort of a meal. One of them shows the political prisoners on their way to the Tsarist’s Siberia where they celebrate Christmas far away from their families and friends, and they share with each other the food and the tears.

4. The story of the Exodus shows the Hebrews gathered at the table, sharing the Passover meal with the family and friends, ready to embark on the most important journey of their entire history. Gathering at the table on that night was to remind them of the unity, love, and preparation for the moment of leaving the slavery of Egypt, as well as to indicate their reliance on God, who promised to guide and to protect them. In today’s the story as presented in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus and the Twelve, were at the table ready to share this most important of all the Jewish celebrations: *“The Passover meal.”* This meal emphasizing the unity of the Hebrews, emphasizes also the unity not only between Jesus and His disciples, but the unity with the entire population of God’s people, wherever they are.

5. In this small Judean room, something very significant was taking place. The last Passover meal of the Old Testament became the first feast of the New Testament, the *“Communion.”* It was the last Passover meal because from now on the old Law has been fulfilled and the time for a New has come. Jesus’ death and His ultimate sacrifice has served the purpose, which until now was served by the Passover lamb. What remains with us from the old are the values of the Passover feast which in fact were not changed. This is still the time of unity and love, time of fellowship with each other and with God. Time in which we celebrate protection and guidance of God, but not through the blood of the sacrificial lamb, but through the blood of the *“Perfect Sacrificial Lamb”* – Jesus the Christ.

6. There are many other instances in the Bible where the meeting around the table is not only significant but important. (Matthew 9:10-12) *“And as He sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples: ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when He heard this, He said: ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.’”* What Jesus shared with Levi at the table was equality, where a sinner has been transformed by the very presence of Jesus. At the table, the old man – the tax-collector, said *“farewell”* to his old life and to his former friends. From now on, he became Matthew, the writer of the Gospel by this name. From the time of their feast, the time of sharing the table with Jesus, he begun a new journey through a new life.

7. In Luke 10: 40-42 we read of Martha come to Jesus and ask: *“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered her: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed, indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”* Mary chose to listen to Jesus and to learn from Him. I believe it would be appropriate to believe that since Martha was preparing dinner, they must have been sitting at the table, while Jesus spoke and Mary listened. In that encounter the *“Word of God”* was shared.

8. *“When He was at the table with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, and He vanished from their sight.” This is what Luke wrote in his Gospel 24:30-31.* Following the resurrection of Jesus, on the way to Emmaus, He appeared to the two of His disciples, but they recognized Him only when He broke bread at table and shared it with them. From that very moment they knew and shared with others that Jesus is alive. This has become a moment of joy not only for Cleopas and the other disciple, and eventually for the rest of the disciples. There is another encounter in John 21:12-13 where we read: *“’Jesus said to them: ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared ask Him: ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.’”* At the shore of the lake where Jesus met His disciples and where He forgave Peter, John tells us that they shared a meal. They may not have a piece of furniture called a table, but they shared *“at the table,”* at the place where they shared the meal in the presence of the Lord.

9. There are many other stories of Jesus sharing the table with others and I believe it is important to realize what the table in each of these stories imply. Jesus shares His time with others, and in that sharing there is always unity, love and peace, as well as the teaching and learning time. Jesus always offers His time to anyone who seek Him no matter who it is, whether it was: Matthew, Mary, Peter, the disciples, or anyone else. I believe it would be safe to say that the table reminds us of Jesus in the midst of His people. He is here today with us as well. After all this is His table and this is the place where He said: *“This is my body broken for you; this is my blood, shed for you.”* As we come to *“His Table”* today, let us come and share at this table and share it with unity, love and peace, for this table belongs to Him, our Lord Jesus Christ.