

32_ IS THE CHURCH THE SAME THING AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

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Sharp Faith: talks on the Church

Is the Church the People of God? (May 12)

Is the Church the Body of Christ (June 2)

Is the Church the Temple of the Holy Spirit (June 16)

Is the Church the same thing as the Kingdom of God? (June 30)

SUMMARY OF THE CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE

Church as the Body of Christ

1. It expresses the novelty of the Christian community: the personal bond with Christ
2. Emphasis on the interior dimension of the Church: people become members of the Church because they have been incorporated into the resurrected body of Christ through baptism and the Eucharist
3. Crucial role of the sacraments to belong to the Church: based on baptism and the Eucharist
4. Key role of the ministerial structure of the Church: without priestly ordained ministry there are no sacraments
5. Emphasis on the hierarchical structure of the Church: there is a head and a body - Christ, apostles, bishops, priests.
6. therefore, while underlining the internal dimension, the image of the Body of Christ emphasizes the visibility of the Church since the relationship with Christ creates a centralized and well organized group
7. the fundamental place of visibility of the Church is the Eucharistic celebration: there is only one body because there is only one bread (emphasis on consecration)
8. problems
 - 8.1. Christological and descendant line
 - 8.2. the emphasis is on the diversity of functions
 - 8.3. pyramidal structure (sacraments, ministry, hierarchy)
 - 8.4. static, a-historical image

Church Temple of the Holy Spirit

9. The *instituted* church exists only if it constantly *constituted* - in the Eucharist not only consecration, but also epiclesis (invocation of the Holy Spirit).
10. without the Spirit who calls individually, freely, the church would not have members, nor pastors, ministries, and charisms
11. the Church receives life from above, from Christ, but is constituted from below, by the Spirit who acts freely in every person
12. valorization of local churches, of collegiality - no center - each place is responsible and co-responsible for all the others - not pyramidal, but circular
13. the visibility of the Church shifts to the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace etc... - above all charity, holiness, religious life
14. the institutional aspect is not enough – the charismatic, prophetic aspect is needed too
15. unity based on difference
16. problems
 - 16.1. it is about the Spirit of Christ – never forget the reference to Christ
 - 16.2. the charisms are at the service of the body – they are not opposed to the institution, but renew it, vivify it, transform it.

The Church as the People of God

17. Continuity with the people of Israel – unity of God's plan of salvation
18. Centrality of God's action, especially through the Word:
 - 18.1. Church (*ecclesia*) means “summoned”
 - 18.2. the church is an assembly only if it allows itself to be constantly ‘con-vened’
 - 18.3. the Church is a ‘Creature of the Word’.
19. A people is constantly in a journey towards the promised land: integration of the eschatological dimension
 - 19.1. the provisional nature of ecclesial institutions is emphasized.
20. emphasis on the historical dimension of the Christian community – this makes change and renewal easier
21. fundamental equality of members:
 - 21.1. the individual is part of the people because he/she is baptized
 - 21.2. it is a people of priests, kings and prophets
 - 21.3. co-responsibility

Church, Eucharist and Trinity

22. Trinity
 - 22.1. **People** summoned by the Father and returning to the **Father**
 - 22.2. through **Christ**, with whom the People becomes one **Body**

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22.3. because the People/Body receives only one **Spirit**, the Spirit of Christ, as in a **Temple**.

23. Eucharist

23.1. People summoned through the Word

23.2. which thanks to invocation of the Holy Spirit becomes a single Temple of the Spirit (epiclesis)

23.3. because it is nourished by the one body of Christ (consecration and communion).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The term Church in the Gospels

1. While the term *ecclesia* is used more than 60 times in the Pauline letters, it is absent in the synoptics and appears only twice in Matthew

Mt 16.18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Mt 18¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

1.1. Luke does not use it in his Gospel, but it recurs 20 times in Acts

1.2. in John, the gestures through which Christ establishes the Church take place after the Resurrection

Jn 20 19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

John 21 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'¹⁶A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'¹⁷He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when

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you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

2. Therefore, if the Church as we know only appears after Jesus, can its origin and institution be attributed to the actions of Jesus himself? There are two ways of looking at this issue:
 - 2.1. the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.
 - i. The proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom and the call to conversion
 - ii. the Word of the Kingdom (the Gospels, the Good News that the kingdom is *here*)
 - 2.2. the gathering of a messianic community (that is the ‘community of the end of times’)

THE INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The proclamation of the Kingdom and call to conversion

3. Just after his messianic investiture (baptism) and the temptations in the desert, Jesus begins his preaching with these words

Mt 4.17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

Mk 1 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,¹⁵and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.
4. Jesus’ mission is at the service of the coming of the Kingdom of God- that is the decisive act through which God finally makes himself present, intervenes, acts in the history of his people in a new and definitive way.
5. From a philological point of view, the Hebrew term *malkuta* designates
 - 5.1. not the realm, i.e. "the territory over which the king's power is exercised", but
 - 5.2. the ‘kingship, rule, sovereignty’, i.e. "the **act** through which the king reigns ”.
6. One could resort to the image of a kingdom that has long fallen into the hands of enemies and in which there is anarchy and slavery and the people are dispersed.
 - 6.1. The person to whom the right to reign belongs, the king, decides to exercise his sovereignty, that is intervene to regain possession of his territory (realm).
 - 6.2. Since he is a just king, his reign re-establishes peace and justice.
7. The kingdom is established thanks to the action of Jesus in the Holy Spirit

Mt 12.28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.
8. To way in which we welcome Jesus’ kingdom is conversion and faith. The meaning of conversion and faith can be visualized by noticing how, in the Gospel of Mark,
 - 8.1. immediately after Jesus has proclaimed “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1.5)

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8.2. he calls the disciples who immediately leave everything and follow him

Mt 1 16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

8.3. conversion means leaving everything and start following Jesus

8.4. to believe is to adhere to the person of Jesus – indeed the word ‘believe’ in Hebrew (*he'emin, aman, amen*) indicates precisely ‘lean on someone, to adhere to someone’ - grant unreserved trust to someone's word and to their person.

9. By proclaiming the Kingdom Jesus asks his listeners to take a stand with respect to his own word and his own person. He asks faith:

Mark 2 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’

Mark 5 He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’

9.1. this faith makes everything possible

Mark 9 ²³Jesus said to him, ‘If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.’ ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’

9.2. cf. the images of faith that moves mountains (Mt 17, 20) and uproots trees

Luke 17 The Lord replied, ‘If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea”, and it would obey you.

10. in addition to conversion and faith, the Kingdom of God requires poverty of spirit

Mt 5.3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

10.1. poverty of spirit contains the meaning of the other beatitudes

10.2. In Matthew, a clue to understanding the meaning of poverty of spirit is the attitude of Jesus in the temptations of the desert which immediately precede the sermon on the mountain: it is about not relying on oneself but on the Lord alone, waiting for the Lord to act.

2. The Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom

11. Jesus brings good news (Gospel) to the people: the Kingdom is here, God has started to *reign* in a new and powerful way:

11.1. the kingdom is already present because through Jesus God reigns, that is, God acts, intervenes, as everyone can see by witnessing the healings and exorcisms performed by Jesus.

11.2. the Gospel, that is Jesus’ proclamation of the Good News, is the Kingdom, since God reigns through his Word (just as he created the world through the Word)

Mt 4.23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and

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proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Mt 9.35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.

Mt 24. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.²

12. The "gospel of the Kingdom" or "the Gospel *which is the Kingdom*": God makes himself present, intervenes, acts decisively in history through the Word heard, understood (sown), cf. Mt 13, 1-23 (and Mk 4), believed. There are obstacles to the presence and action of God in history through his word
 - 12.1. the activity of the evil one
 - 12.2. inconstancy, which causes one to fall during trials and persecutions
 - 12.3. the worries of the world and the seductions of riches.
13. The characteristics of the kingdom are presented through parables which figuratively illustrate some of its characteristics:
 - 13.1. **the weeds**: there are two stages of the presence/intervention/decisive action of God in history: the "growth" and the "harvest". During growth, those who accept the kingdom and those who reject it are mixed and cannot be separated - it is one of the "laws" of the kingdom: the two must coexist, there must be scandals and injustices (Mt 13, 29; 38 ; 41). The moment of truth is the harvest.
 - 13.2. **the mustard seed**: the presence/intervention/decisive action of God in history grows like a seed (the Word, the Gospel) apparently modest, small, insignificant. However, this same seed grows until it conquers everything (Mt 13, 32)
 - 13.3. **leaven**: the presence/intervention/decisive action of God in history, like leaven, raises the dough by hiding itself in it (Mt 13, 33). God's action is often hidden.
 - 13.4. **treasure in the field and precious pearl**: God's presence/intervention/decisive action in history is hidden, has to be discovered, deciphered. Once discovered, one willingly (with "joy") gives everything for it since it is a treasure greater than any other (Mt 13, 44ff)
 - 13.5. **a fishing net**: same message as the weeds - the announcement of the good news of the Kingdom brings good and bad believers into the community and the separation between them will only take place at the end of time (13, 48).
 - 13.6. **the forgiven servant who refuses to forgive**: God's presence/intervention/decisive action in history is manifested in the forgiveness of sins which is authentic only if it leads us to forgive in our turn (Mt 18, 23-35)
 - 13.7. **the workers of the last hour**: God's presence/intervention/decisive action in history turns our point of view, our way of doing thing upside down (Mt 20, 1-16)
 - 13.8. **the wedding dinner and the wedding dress**: presence/intervention/decisive action of God in history often are not recognized and welcomed by those for whom they were intended (Mt 22, 2-14)

THE GATHERING OF THE MESSIANIC COMMUNITY

14. The prophets of the Old Testament describe the sinful situation of Israel (and of humanity) using the image of scattering - and the salvation promised by the Lord is expressed with the image of the gathering of the flock

Jer 23 ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

Ez 34. ¹¹ For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

15. Jesus brings this prophecy to fulfillment

Mt 15.24 He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Luke 15 ⁴'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

Mk 6.34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

16. The title that Jesus most willingly attributed to himself was not that of "son of God" (generic), but "son of man".

16.1. Many characters of the Old Testament, especially kings, were called 'sons of God' – so the title did not mean that the person so called really was God – only the he or she had a special connection to God.

16.2. On the contrary the title 'son of man' referred specifically to a mysterious character with a unique relation to God and anointed (hence 'messiah', 'christ') to be the instrument of God's decisive action in history:

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Dan 7 ²I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night [...]

⁹ As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One took his throne [...]

¹³As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed. [...]

¹⁶I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: ¹⁷'As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever.' [...]

²¹As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, ²²until the Ancient One came; then judgement was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom. [...]

²⁷ The kingship and dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

16.3. Jesus is the 'son of man' personally (he is the messiah) – his role is to summon the people of God (the messianic people)

16.4. This gathering of the messianic people at the heart of the definitive and final intervention of God in history which is God's kingdom ("they will receive the kingdom", "the kingdom, power and greatness will be given to them")

The Twelve

17. As soon as he begins his preaching, Jesus surrounds himself with a group of disciples chosen by him. They become an itinerant community based on adherence to the person of Jesus, they follow him (conversion and faith).

17.1. It is a little flock

Luke 12.32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom..

17.2. which represents the "rest" of Israel, in reference to the OT theme of a holy community that remains faithful to Yahweh, fears him and lives on his blessings

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- 17.3. the constitution of a faithful "remnant" was common at the time of Jesus: the Pharisees considered themselves this remnant – and so did the Essenes

cf. Is 10.20 On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

Is 37.32 For from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

18. Within this group of itinerant disciples Jesus chooses the Twelve

Mc 3 ¹⁶So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

- 18.1. The verb used for "appoint" (epoiesen) is unusual in this context and has no equivalent except in the OT for the institution of priests or when Moses and Aaron are appointed to their role

2 Chr 13 ⁹Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be consecrated with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods.

1 Sam 12 ⁶ Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of the land of Egypt.

- 18.2. Clearly, the number 12 has a symbolic significance in relation to the 12 tribes of Israel

Reminder: it is customary to affirm that this is the beginning of the new people of God. But from an ecclesiological point of view we have seen that the theme of the people of God in the NT is aimed not at emphasizing the novelty, but the continuity with the people of Israel (the NT speaks of a 'new covenant', but never of a 'new people'). Therefore the institution of the 12 is aimed rather at stating the continuity of God's election of his people, but a change of modality: no longer only based on race (the 12 patriarchs), but on election (the 12 who are called).

19. Jesus associates the Twelve to his mission of inaugurating and proclaiming the Kingdom of God on earth and of gathering the eschatological community:

- 19.1. they must proclaim Jesus' call

Mt 10 ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near."

- 19.2. Jesus gives them the power to preach, cast out demons and heal the sick

Mt 10.1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

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- 19.3. after the Resurrection, the Twelve are formally given this mission and sent throughout the world ('Apostles' means 'sent'):

Mt 28 ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

- i. it is important to observe that even though he sends the disciples, Jesus states that the authority still remains with him "All power has been given to me..."
- ii. and in any case Jesus does not go away – he is present and acting now: "And behold, I am with you".

The Promise to Peter

20. In the confession of Caesarea Philippi, Peter recognizes the messianic identity of Jesus

Mt 16 ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah

- 20.1. this is the only case in which the word *ecclesia*, that is 'church' is found on Jesus' lips in the synoptics (along with Mt 18, 17) and some exegetes think it is an anachronism that cannot be attributed to Jesus himself.
- 20.2. this means that the episode of Caesarea was interpreted after Easter as being one of Jesus' key actions of establishing his church. The historical authenticity of this episode though seems confirmed by the fact that it contains various Semitic expressions which testify to its pre-Easter origin
 - i. Simone known as *bar Jona*
 - ii. the expression "flesh and blood" and
 - iii. and the expression "to bind and to untie".
- 20.3. This passage attributes to Jesus himself the will to "build his church"
- 20.4. it is significant that the same authority conferred on Peter in the Caesarea passage is later conferred on the other disciples too - and this in the only other passage of Matthew's gospel where the word *ecclesia* recurs:

Mt 18 ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
- 20.5. the 'keys' (and being a 'foundation stone' and a 'shepherd') are a messianic attribute and remain a prerogative of Christ

Is 22.22 (of the Messiah) ²²I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.

Rev 3.7 'And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:
These are the words of the holy one, the true one,
who has the key of David,
who opens and no one will shut,
who shuts and no one opens:

- 20.6.** The fact that these are the keys "of the Kingdom of heaven" and that they are given to those who are called the "stone on which to build the Church" confirm that there is a relationship between church and kingdom - but this does not mean that the two are identical.

The Last Supper

- 21.** The Last Supper is in close relationship with the messianic and eschatological community instituted by Jesus. Jesus' order to repeat this gesture "in memory of me" is an invitation to continue to gather the community of disciples on the basis of the life given by Jesus.
- 22.** The Last Supper is also linked by Jesus to the Kingdom:

Mark 14.25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22 ¹⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

- 22.1.** 'which means that the celebration of the Last Supper is both the constitution of the community (of the church) and an anticipation of the kingdom often represented in the as a celestial banquet, both in the Old Testament and in the Gospels

Is 25 ⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear.

⁷ And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death for ever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹ It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the LORD for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Luke 14 ¹⁵ One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' ¹⁶Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. ¹⁷At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now."

CONCLUSION

23. The theme of the Kingdom of God places the Church in an eschatological perspective, according to the double meaning of the word eschatology:
 - 23.1. 'decisive', 'ultimate' intervention of God in history - in this sense it is synonymous with "action of God"
 - 23.2. 'final' destiny, that is, what happens at the end of the story.
24. Jesus did not speak of the Church (in the Gospel this word is attributed to him only twice as the result of an interpretation of Jesus's actions by the community after the Resurrection) – instead Jesus spoke of the *kingdom of God*, that is of God's intervention in history. Not only did he speak of this intervention, but he was its instrument, indeed *Jesus is the decisive (eschatological) intervention of God in history and in him everything is accomplished – Jesus himself is the Kingdom of God.*
25. However, an aspect of this decisive intervention of God in history is the constitution of a messianic community: Jesus gathered disciples with his ministry but it was the Holy Spirit that "created" the church when he spread love in the hearts of the disciples at Pentecost. This is why the word 'church' properly appears in the New Testament only after the resurrection of Jesus.
26. The stages in the constitution of the messianic community by Jesus are the following:
 - 26.1. the call of the disciples
 - 26.2. the choice of the Twelve
 - 26.3. the promise to Peter in Caesarea Philippi
 - 26.4. the last supper which stipulates the new covenant.
27. Finally, the Church does not announce itself, it does not work for itself - but, like Jesus, it announces the Kingdom of God, it is at the service of the Kingdom of God - the extension of the 'sovereignty' of God is greater than that of the Church, even if it includes that of the Church.

a.