

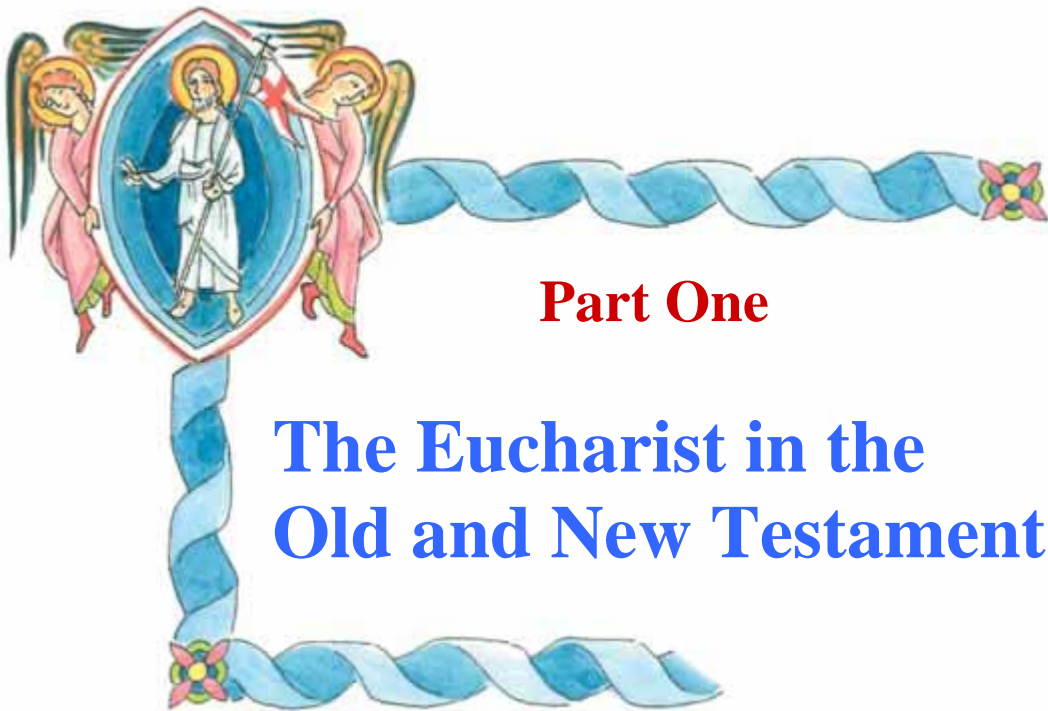


Chapter II

The Holy Mass







Part One

**The Eucharist in the
Old and New Testament**

4 What are the signs that announce the Eucharist in the Old Testament?

There are many meaningful signs that foretell the Eucharist in the Old Covenant, that is, the Old Testament. There are various objects that speak about Christ: animals, events and persons, and who tell us about his sacrifice and the Eucharist. These illustrations are just some of the many ways in which Christ and the marvellous gift of the Eucharist that he left us are prefigured. In fact the Church affirms that the whole history of the People of Israel prepares and prefigures the coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus who is God made man, who lives among us and who offers himself in sacrifice to save us.

1 Some of the *objects* that prefigure the Eucharist are:

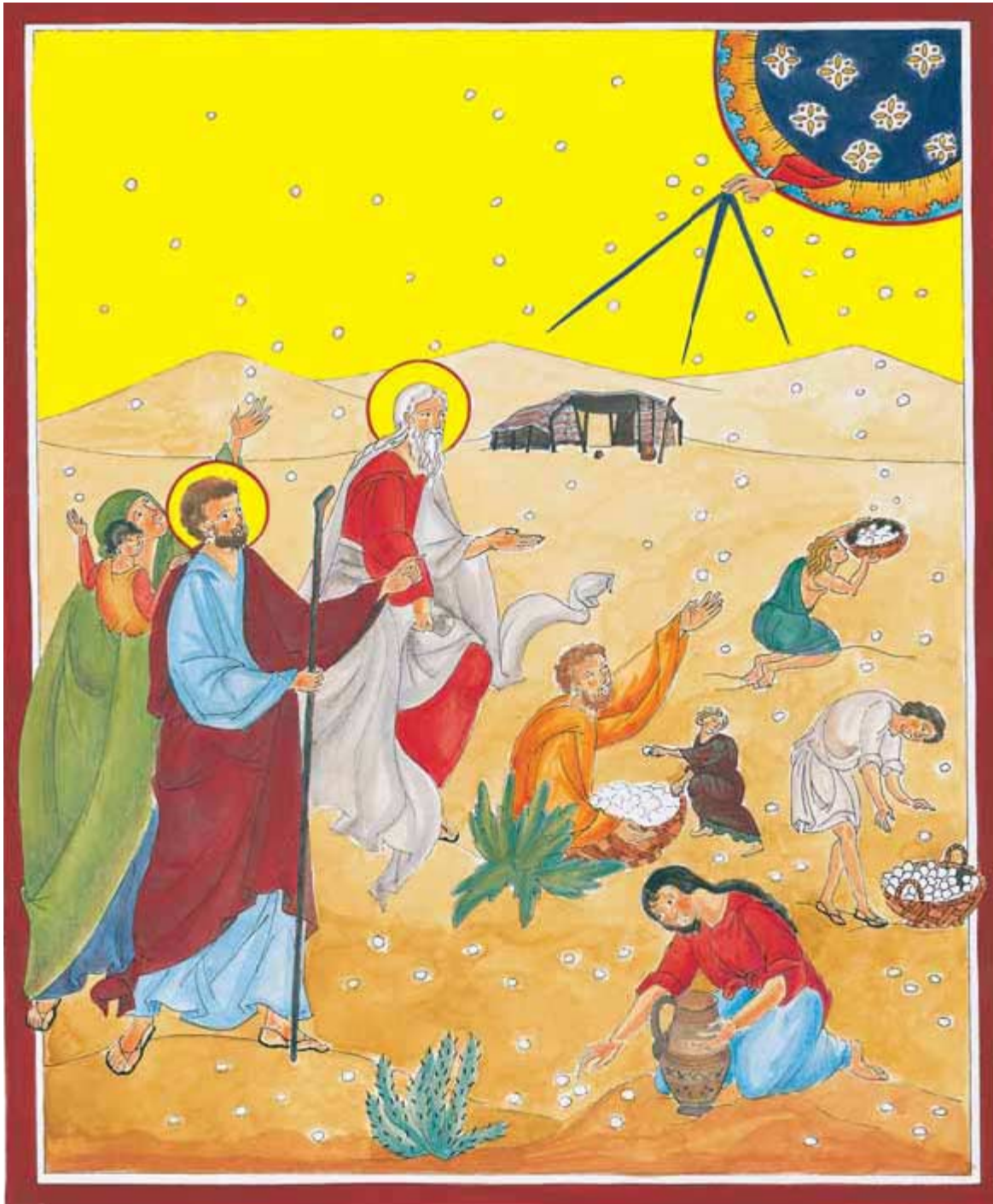


The **bread** and **wine**, which are offered in sacrifice by the people of Israel as the first fruits of the earth, a sign of their gratitude towards the Creator.



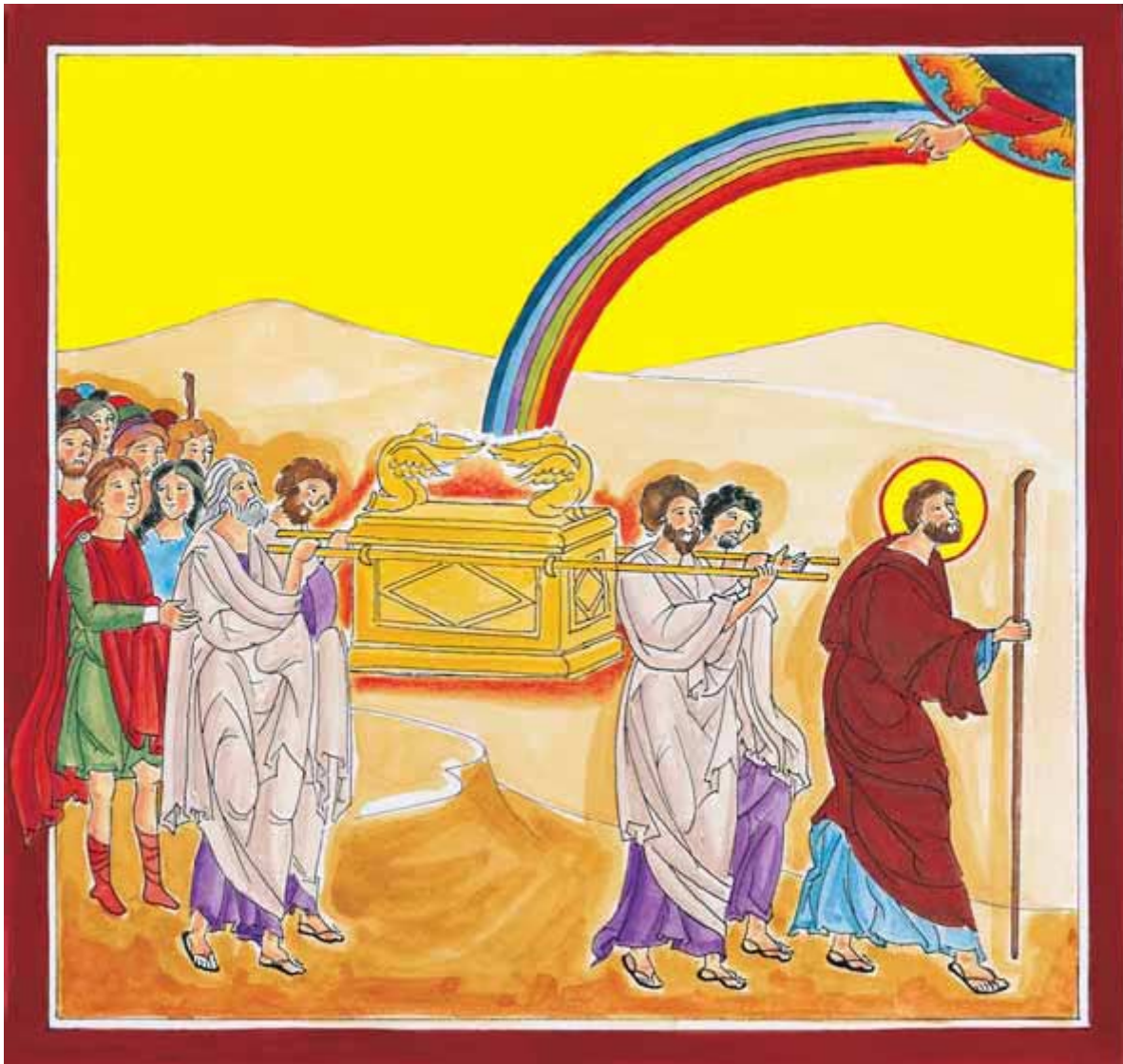


Manna (a Hebrew word that means what is it: *Man-hu*) is a food that the people of Israel ate while they were in the desert (read *Ex 16, 11-15*). It was nothing more than a form of material nourishment for them. Jesus said: **“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world”** (*Jn 6, 48-51*).





The **Arc of the Covenant**, is a sign for the Jewish people of the presence and the dwelling place of God during their wandering in the desert. It foretells Jesus' dwelling in his body and blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist, present in every tabernacle in the world: **“And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world”** (*Mt 28, 20*).





The **unleavened bread** (without yeast), that is eaten by the Jews every year at Passover, symbolizes the haste with which they had to escape from Egypt, a place of slavery, and make their way towards the Promised Land.

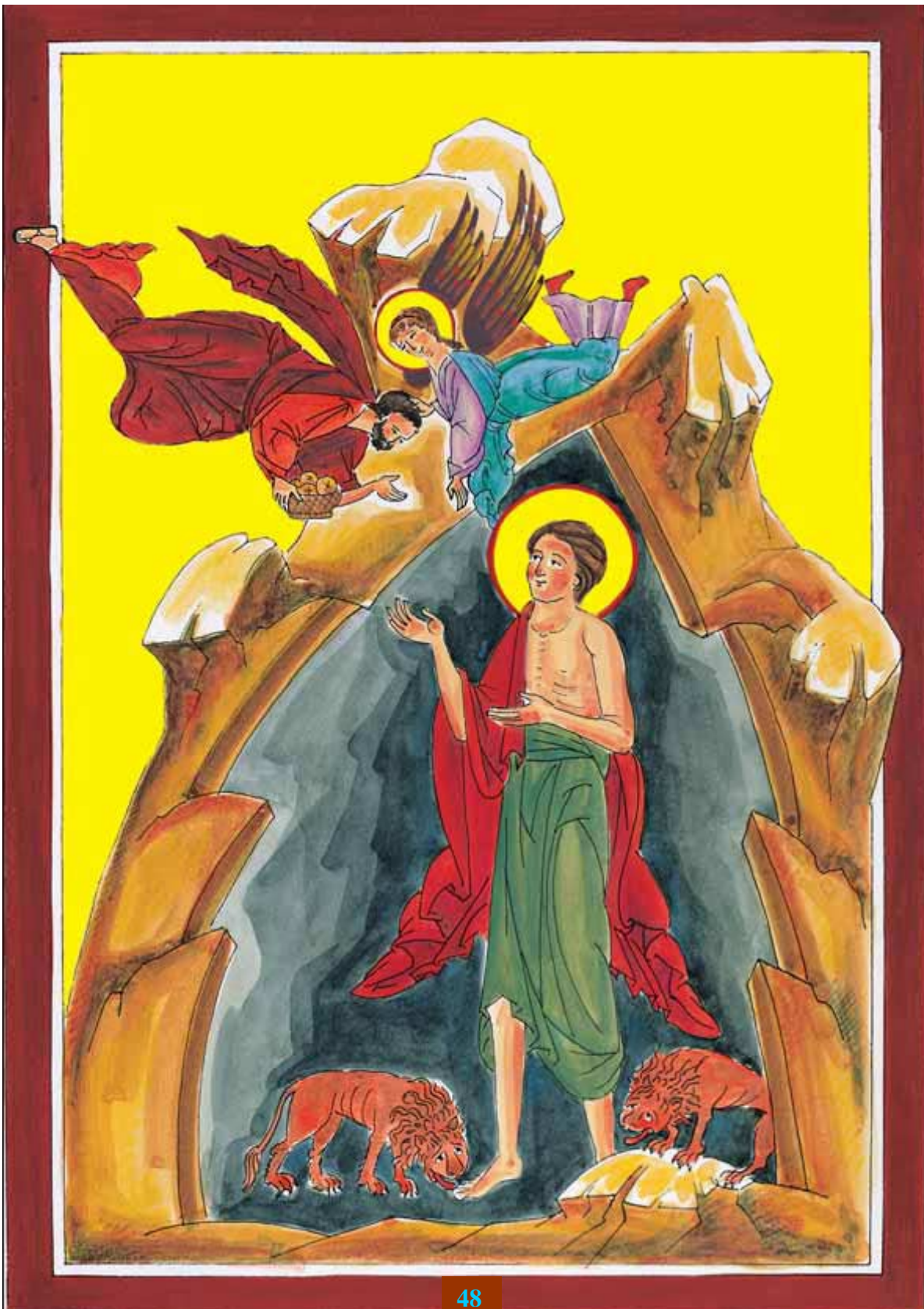


The **bread cake** (read *1 Kg 19, 4-8*), that the Angel brought to the Prophet Elijah to eat when he was hungry and disheartened, gave him strength to continue his difficult journey to Mount Horeb.





God gave the Prophet Daniel **bread** for his nourishment when he was a prisoner in the lions' den (read *Dan* 14, 33-39).

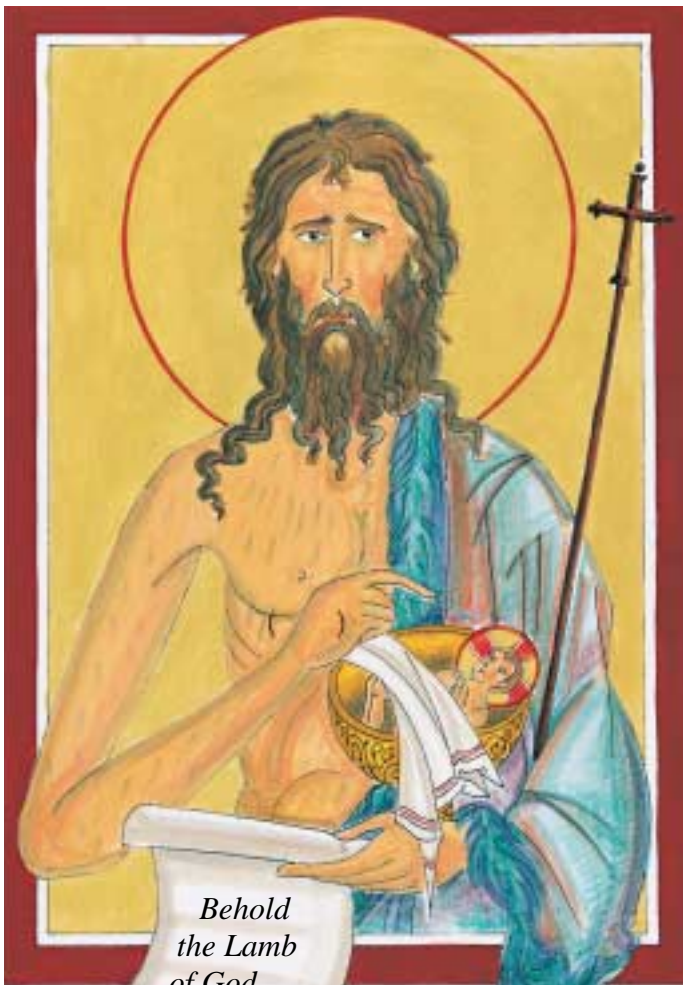


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Some of the *animals* in the Old Testament that foretell the Eucharist are:



The **lamb**, because of its docility and innocence, is frequently used also in Christian art to represent Christ, who offered himself in Sacrifice as “our food and our drink” in the Eucharist. For this reason the Sacred Scriptures speak about Christ in this way: “**He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he does not open his mouth**” (*Acts* 8, 32); He is innocent “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn* 1,29), “**as a lamb unblemished and spotless**” (*1 Pt* 1,19), “**led to slaughter**” (*Is* 53,7).



St. John the Baptist was the first person to point out Jesus to his contemporaries using the following words: “**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.**”

This image points to the Eucharist in his gesture of holding a chalice in his left hand that contains the Infant Jesus in a gesture of blessing. Jesus is the Lamb of God who is slaughtered for the salvation of the world.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
(*Jn* 1,29)

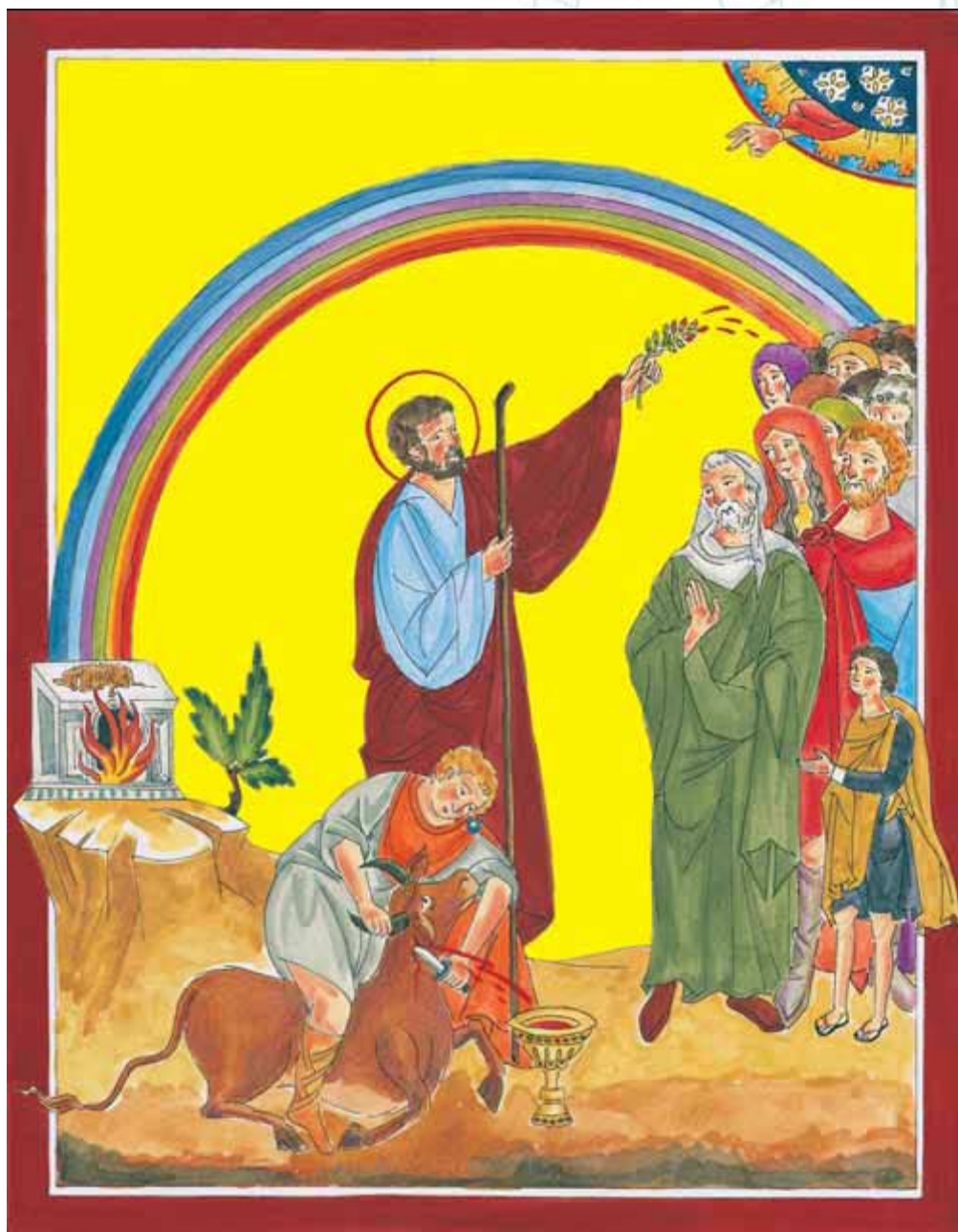


The **serpent** lifted up in the desert is a symbol of Christ who was raised up on the cross to save all of humanity by his Sacrifice. The Lord said to Moses: **“Make a saraph and mount it on a pole and if anyone who has been bitten looks at it, he will recover”** (*Num 21,8*). In the Gospel Jesus says: **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life”** (*Jn 3,14-15*).





The **blood of animals**, that Moses sprinkles on the people as he said: “**This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his**” (*Ex 24, 7-8*).



3
4

There is a particular event that foretells the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the Eucharist in the Old Testament. It is this:



The **Passover meal** of the Jews (read *Ex 12, 1-11*). This evokes the occasion when the people of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt and entered into the Promised Land.

In this Jewish meal, during which a lamb was sacrificed (and whose blood was sprinkled on the door posts of the people's houses as a sign) and unleavened bread and wine were consumed, the Christian Faith sees a sign that prefigures the Eucharistic meal at which Christ sacrifices himself and becomes our food and drink.





There is, however, a fundamental difference between the Jewish meal and the Eucharistic meal. In the Jewish meal meat was eaten (lamb) and the liberation of the Jews from their slavery in Egypt was recalled as well as their entry into the Promised Land (Palestine). In the Eucharist, however, we eat the Body and Blood of Christ (the Lamb of God) and we celebrate, in the death and resurrection of Christ, our freedom from sin as well as our entry in a new life as God's sons and daughters. We will be called one day to share the joy of the ultimate Promised Land: Paradise.



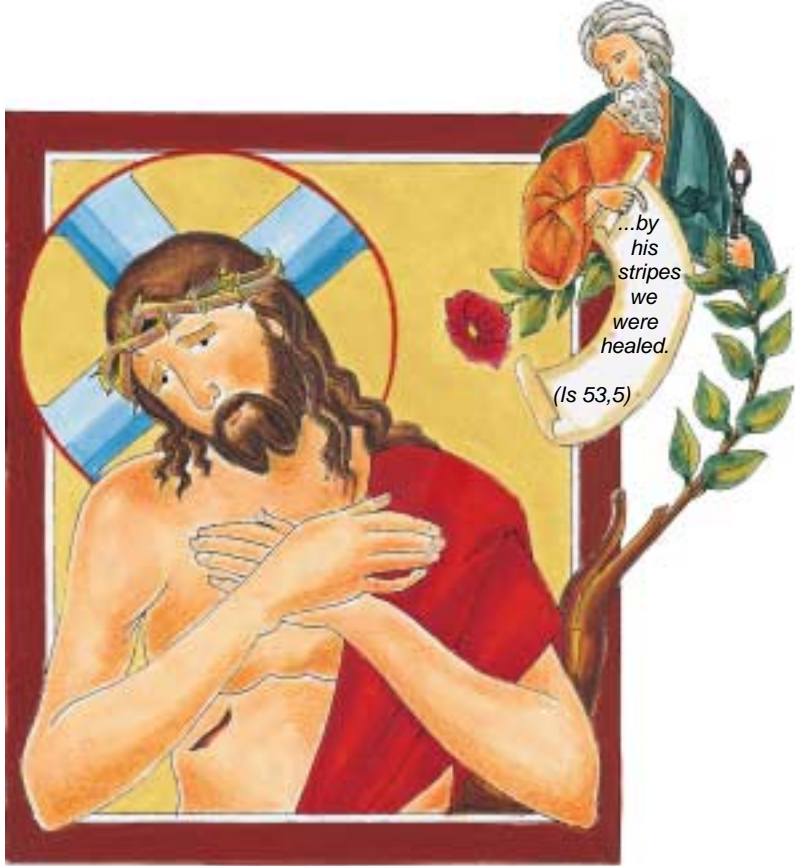


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In the Old Covenant there are also some persons who prefigure Christ and his Sacrifice, such as:



The **suffering servant**, who was described by the Prophet Isaiah approximately seven hundred years before the coming of Christ in these words: **“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”** (read *Is 53,7*).





Abel who, though he was innocent, was murdered by his brother Cain out of jealousy (read *Gn 4*).





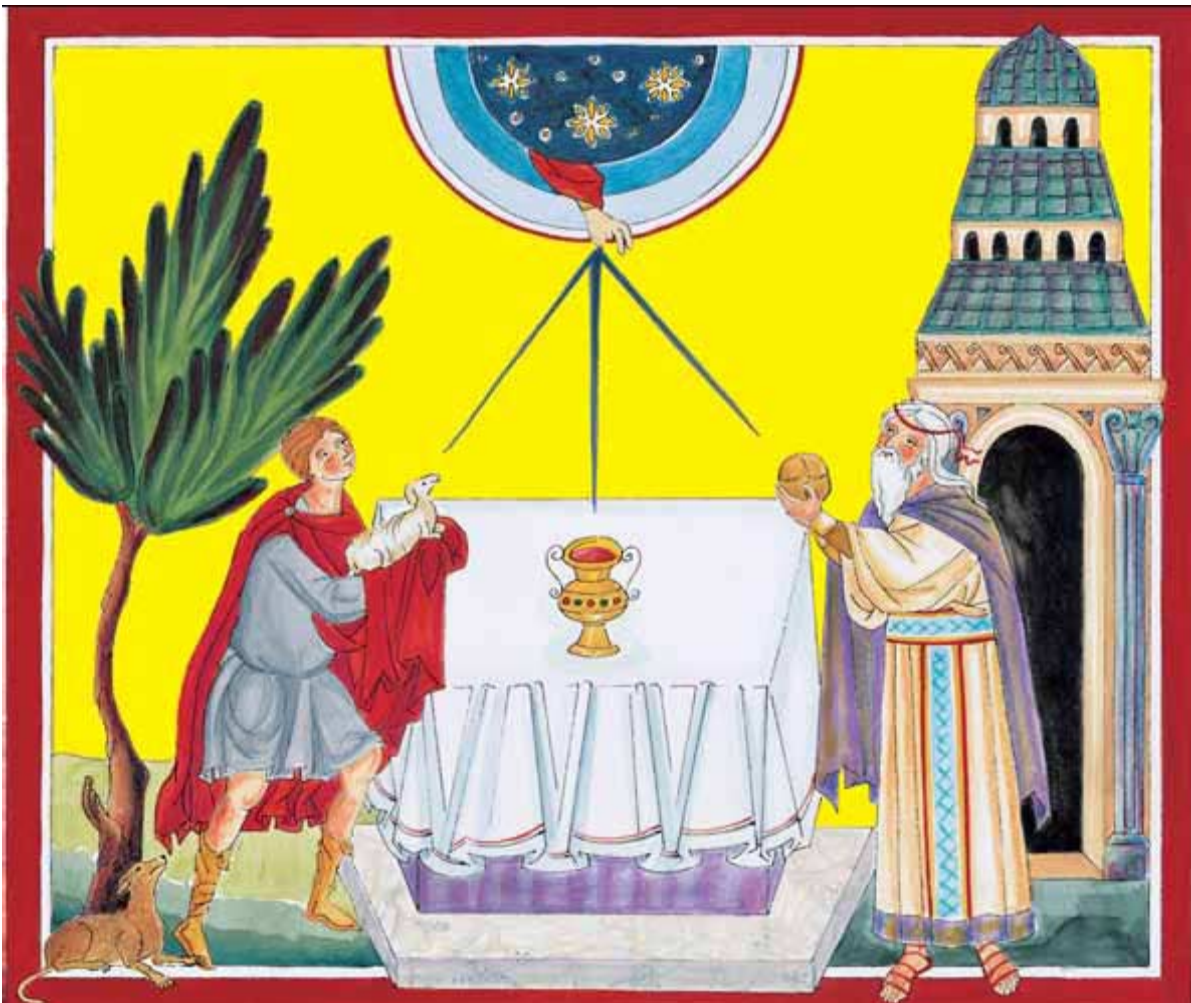
The Patriarch **Isaac** (see *Gn 22: 1-18*), who, just as he was about to be sacrificed for the honour of God by his father Abraham, was saved by God himself.



God did not spare the life of his Son Jesus, but instead handed him over to death, death on the Cross, making him into an oblation (victim) of the perfect Sacrifice.



The priest **Melchizedek**, *priest of God the Most High*, put into practice a particular type of priesthood: in his action of offering bread and wine (read *Gn 14:18*) the Church sees as a pre-figuration of its own offering of the *bread and wine* during the Consecration of the Mass.



In the icon Abel and Melchizedek are represented. The lamb that is offered in sacrifice by Abel pre-figures Christ's sacrifice, the Lamb of God. Melchizedek, a priest of God the Most High, instead offers bread and wine. Both offerings are clear pre-figurations of the Eucharist.

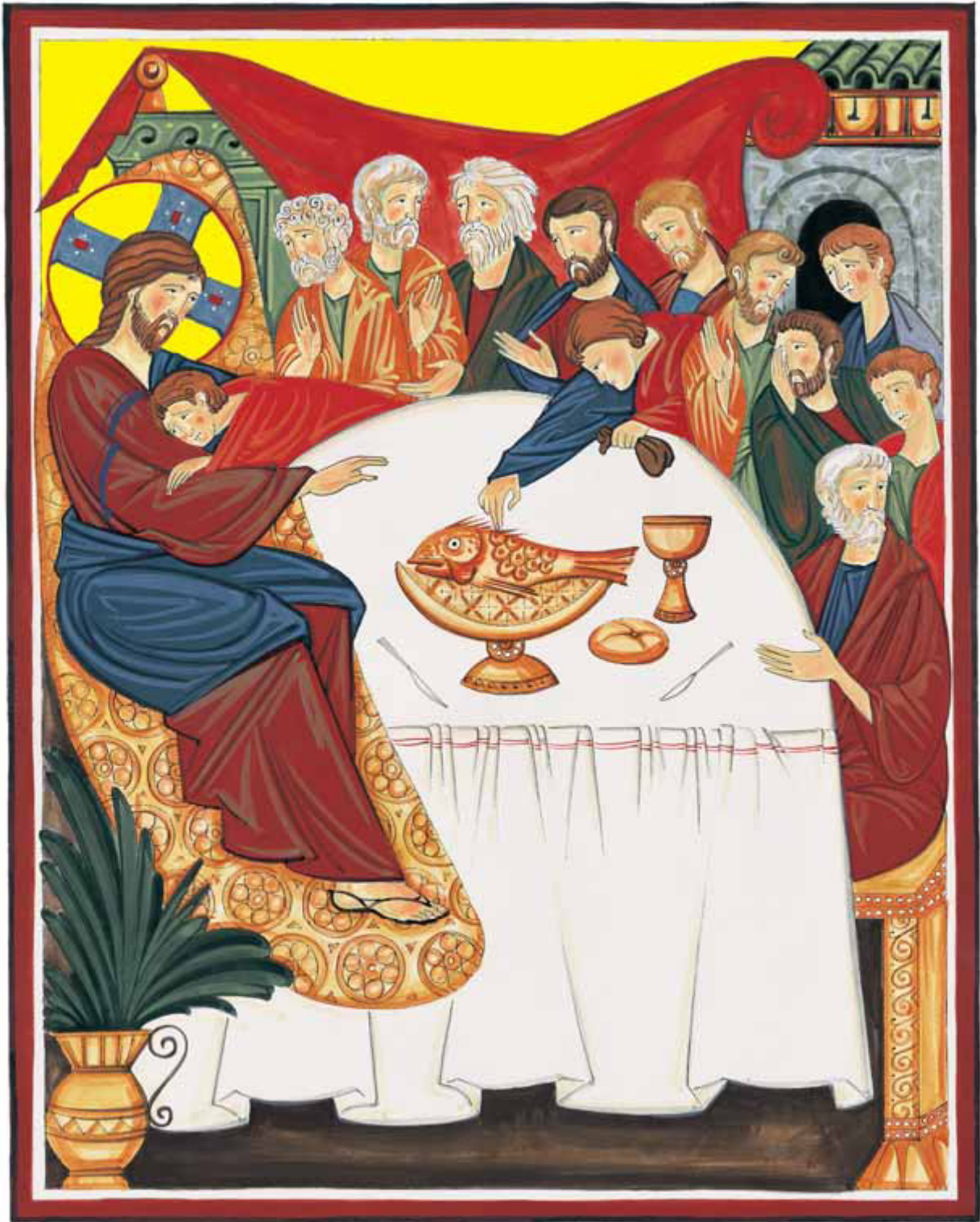


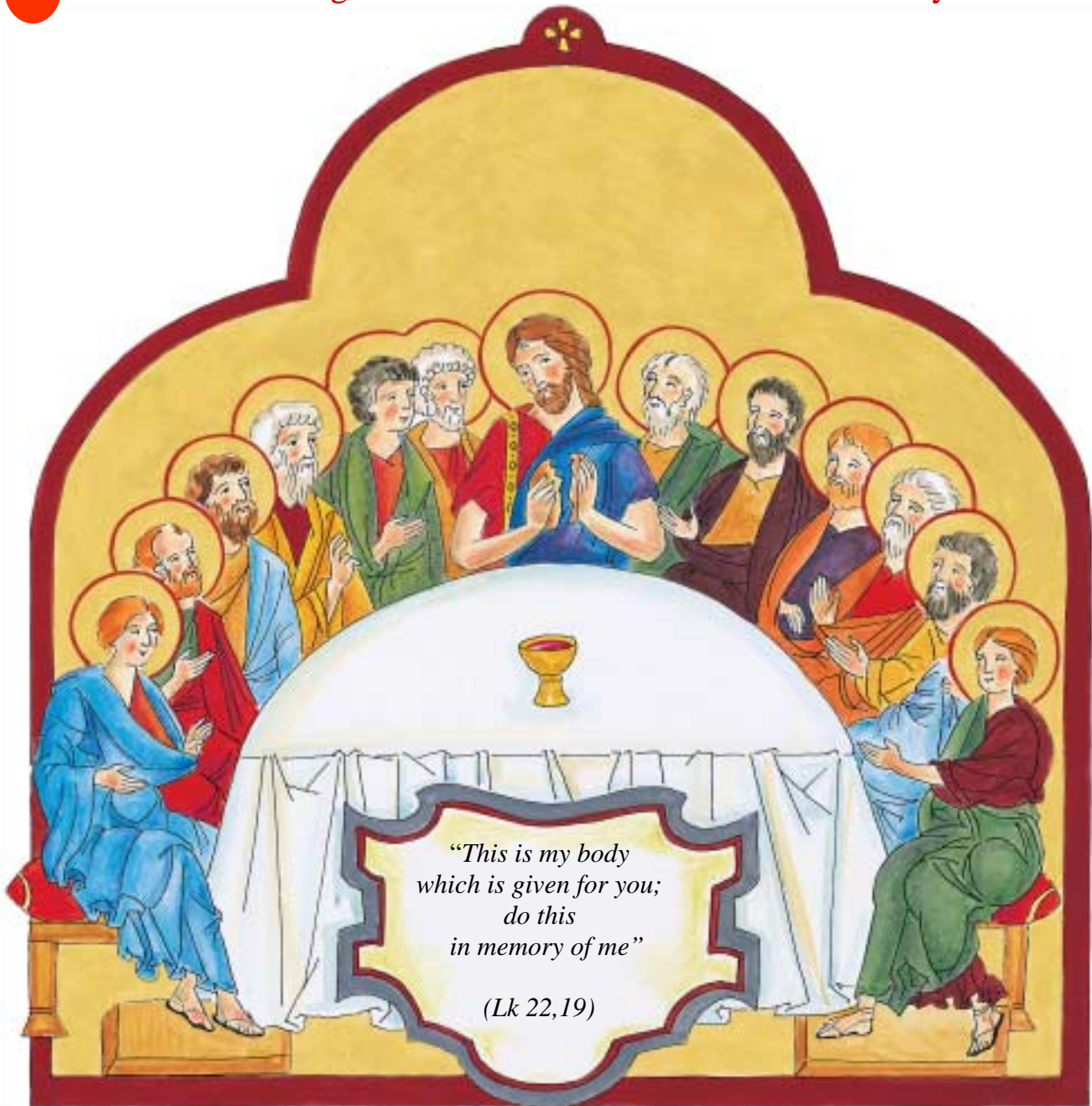
The examples that are given above are just some of the many pre-figurations of Christ and of the marvelous gift of the Eucharist that he bequeathed to us. Nay the Church affirms that the whole history of the People of Israel is a preparation and a pre-figuration of the coming of Jesus Christ, who is God-made-man, and who dwells among us and who offers himself in sacrifice to save us.



5 Who instituted the Holy Mass?

Christ the Lord instituted the Holy Mass on Holy Thursday, the night in which he was betrayed.

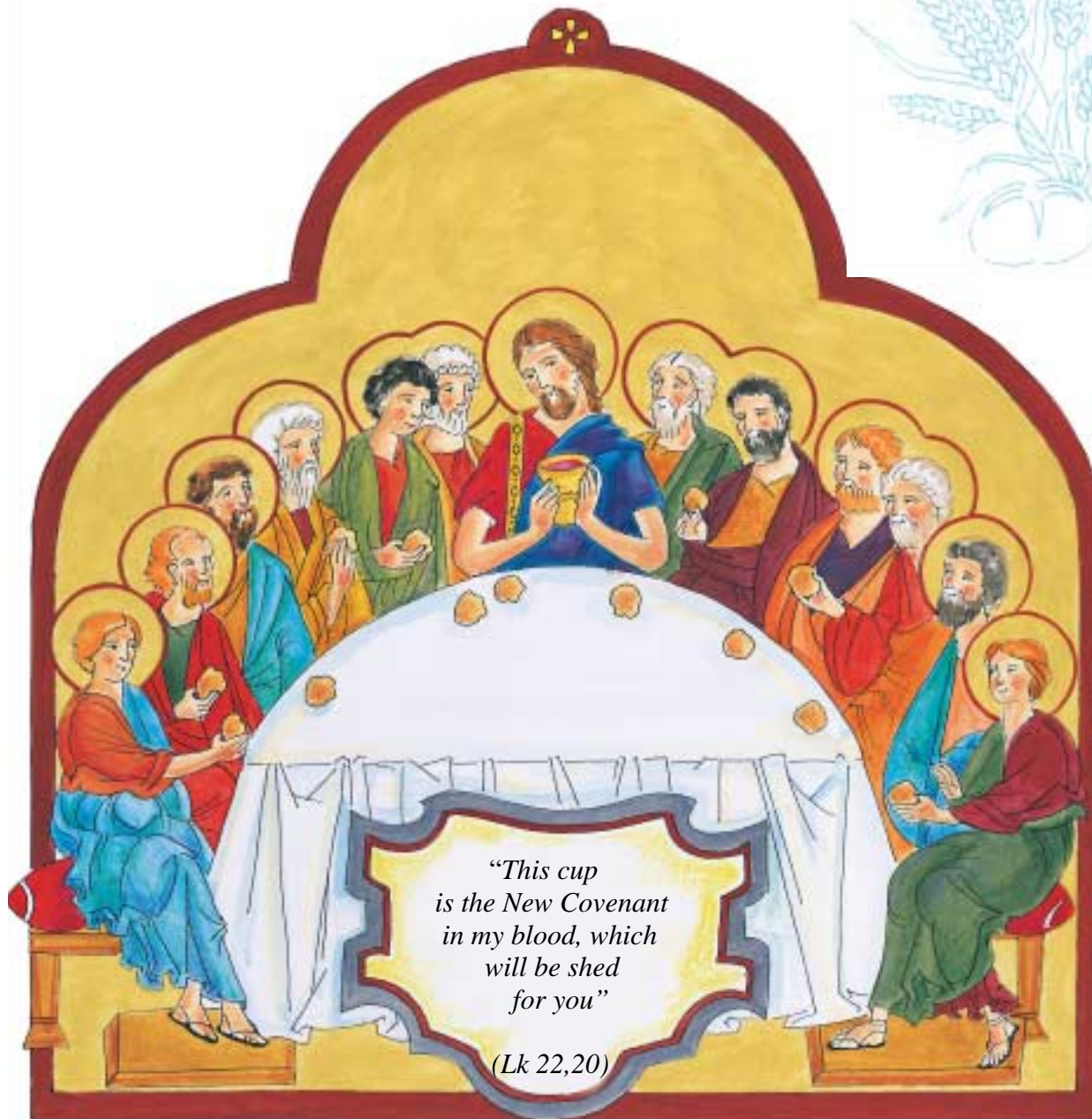




We read in the Gospel that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying:

**“This is my Body
Which is given for you;
do this in memory of me.”**

(Luke 22,19)



In the same way, after they had eaten, he took the cup said:

**“This cup
is the New Covenant
in my blood, which
will be poured out for you”**

(Luke 22, 20)

Did Jesus foretell the Holy Mass before he instituted it?

Yes, on various occasions and in various ways.



In particular, when he performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves – a miracle which itself is a sign that pre-figures the Eucharist (read *Jn* 6, 11-13) –, he said: **“For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him”** (read *Jn* 6, 55-56).





When Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana (read *Jn* 2, 1-12) he showed his power to transform things.





In the raising of
of Lazzarus
(read *Jn* 11, 1-44),
when He shows his
power to give life.

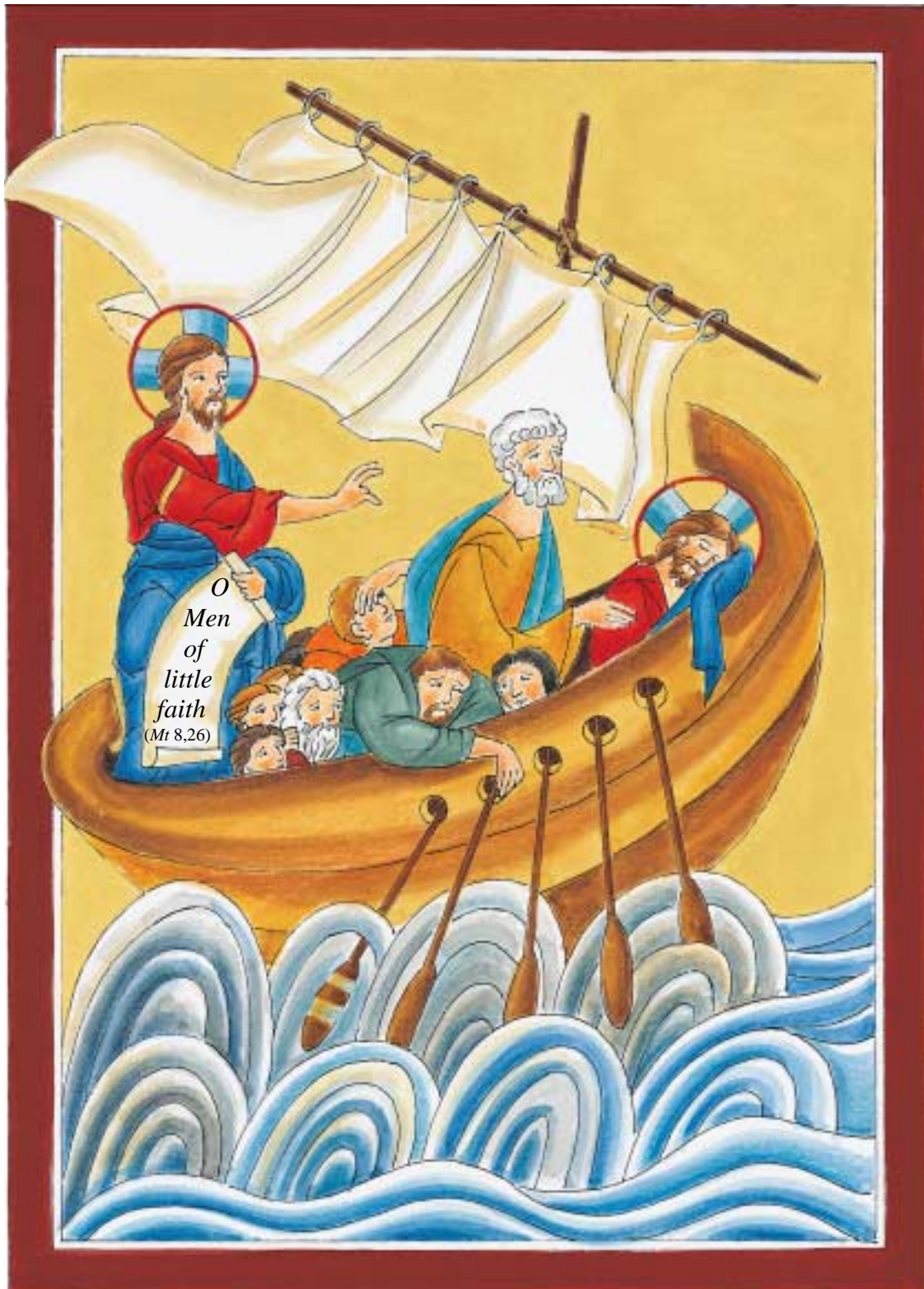


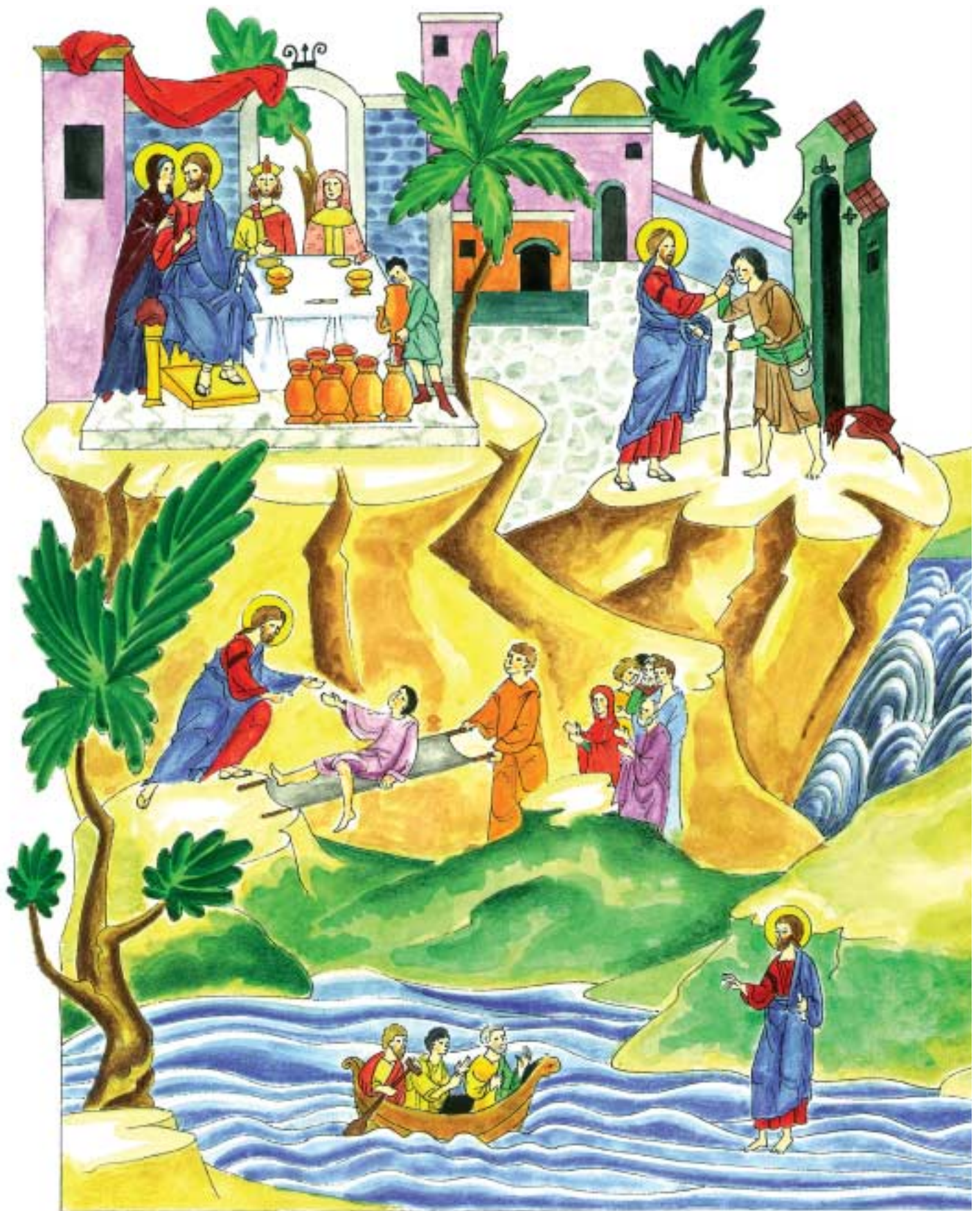
In the healing of
the man born blind
(read *Jn* 9, 1-41),
when Jesus shows
that he is able to
give sight to the blind.

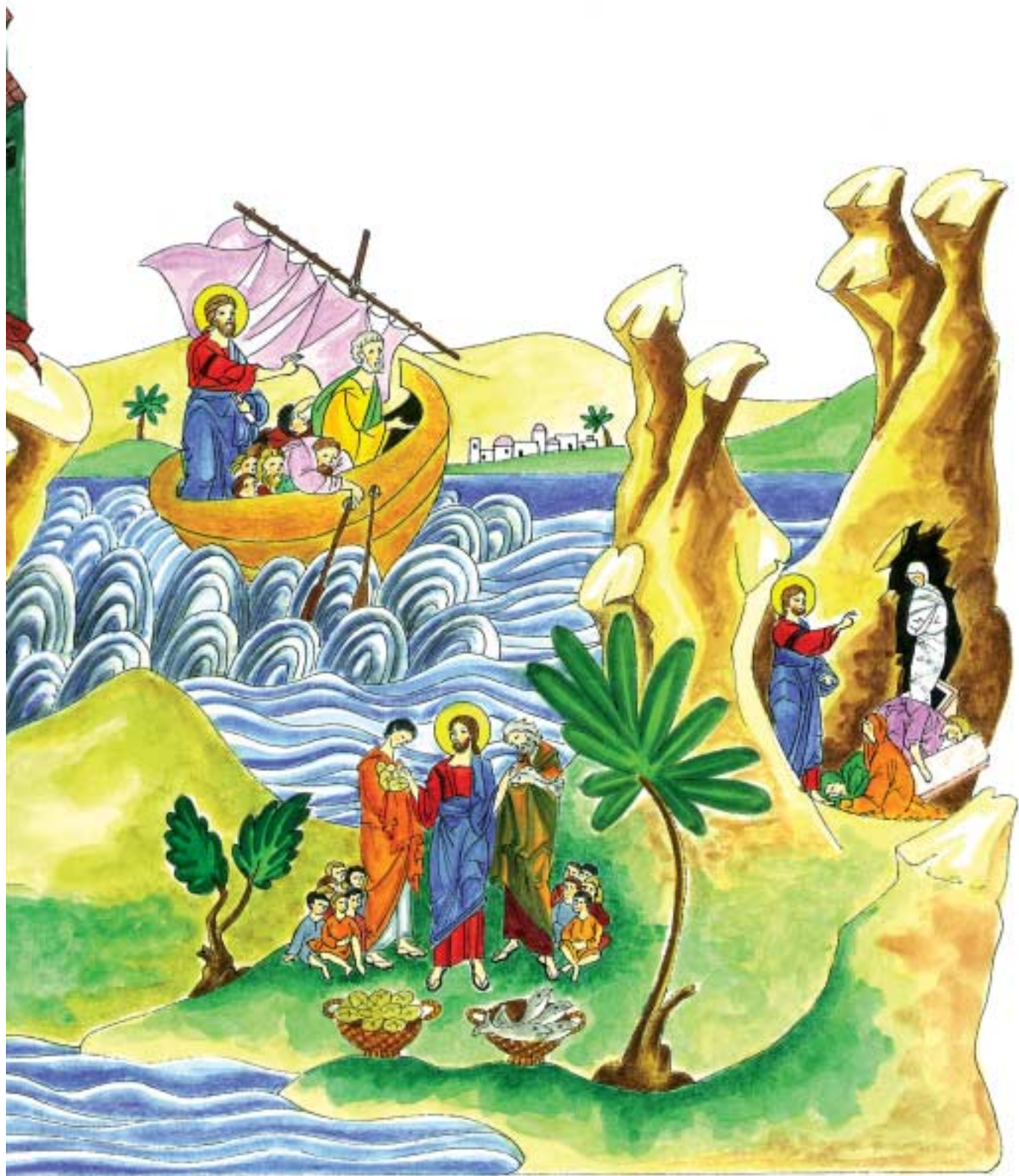




In the episode when Jesus calms the storm at sea (read *Mt 8, 23-26*), Jesus shows that He is able to dominate the powers of nature as well as to calm his disciples who, overcome with fear, had exclaimed: **“Who is he that even the winds and the sea obey him?”**









*Jesus truly accomplishes
all this in the Eucharist:
he transforms the bread
and the wine into his Body
and Blood, in this way
giving his life to the world.*

