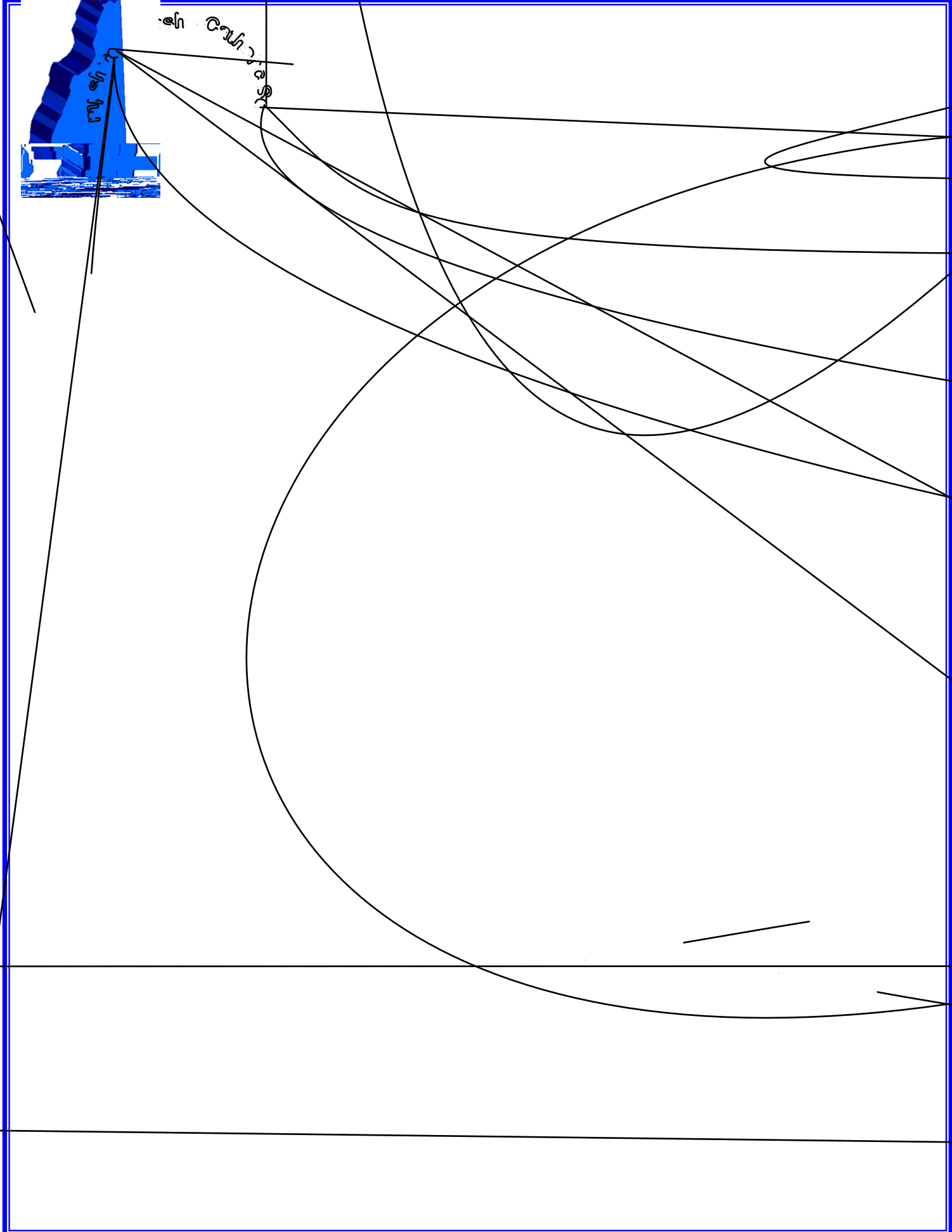


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Christians and Respect for the Seder

In recent years, some Christians eagerly pursuing their Jewish roots have taken a modern Jewish *haggadah* and turned it into a dramatization of the Last Supper. Such misappropriation disrespects the Jewish tradition. It is also historically inaccurate since the Seder has developed over time. For example, some elements of today's Seder arose in response to Christian oppression of Jews. Many scholars believe that the medieval Seder adapted to a Christian accusation that Jews ritually murdered a Christian child at Passover to use its blood to make unleavened matzah bread. Jews began to open the front doors of their homes during the Seder to welcome the possible arrival of the prophet Elijah, but also so Christians could see for themselves that no evil was being done.

From a Catholic perspective, the Seder is a Jewish tradition that Christians should honor and experience only when they are privileged to enjoy the hospitality of Jews at the Passover table. Catholic guests at Jewish Seders should not imagine that they are reenacting the Last Supper, which after all occurs at the Christian paschal meal, the Mass. Rather, they are blessed with a chance to experience the profound and related spirituality of the Jewish people, a graced moment that not only enriches Christian faith, but also energizes Catholics to take up the commitment of Pope John Paul II "to genuine fellowship with the People of the Covenant."⁴

What should Jews expect about Catholic guests at interfaith Seders?

Jews who invite Christians to share in a Seder can expect that the Exodus story is familiar to them. The Jewish conviction that at

