

Holy Thursday

Begin with the sign of the Cross:

In the Name ☩ of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Now have someone read the opening collect:

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility: mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience, and so be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Liturgy of Word

Now have someone read the following passages of Scripture (all standing for the gospel if possible)

Exodus 12:1-8 & 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-15

Admonition

I often like to think about how our Lord could have done things, but did not. I do this because it helps to see better the choices that God did make, because we know that His choice is always the best way to do things (even if we do not understand it). God could have chosen to do a miracle without the intervention of any human, but He did not when it comes to the Eucharist. He wanted for it to be done by means of the hands of men. Whatever His purpose was, we cannot ignore that this is what He chose, and therefore, this is what we must be obedient to. In other words, as we all know, it is not right for anyone to presume (or try to argue) that the Mass can be said by anyone other than those whom Jesus has ordained and given authority and power to perform what He wants done. It does not mean that we have to like it, or even that we have to understand it, but that is what He has chosen for us. This means that there is a process by which a man is chosen for this role, and that process must have a clear “separating” action that takes that man from what he used to be, and changes him into a priest. On that Holy Thursday when Jesus celebrated the last supper with the Apostles, he washed their feet. This was His act of ordination of the Apostles for the task that He was assigning to them (primarily to lead God’s people and to provide the Eucharist for them). Yes, ordination looks quite different for us today, but that is what the original footwashing had to do with, and that is how we should remember it.

Yet, someone might ask, why does Jesus use these fallen men to serve as His priests? Even after they are ordained, they still sin and make mistakes (sometimes really big mistakes!). There is an important lesson that Jesus is teaching us by doing things this way. First, He wants us to see that He can work even with broken things (because to Him, everything is less than perfect). Second, He wants us to realize that clergy are not “superheroes”, but merely men who are like the rest in need of salvation. And, thirdly, He wants us to see that He wants the Eucharist to be personal. He wants it to come right from someone’s hands. Not just anyone’s hands, however, but from the hands of one who is appointed to represent Jesus Himself, so that we all can feel a personal connection to Jesus our Lord.

That is what this Mass is all about. Yes, we think of it often as being just about the Eucharist, and that is an important aspect of the Holy Thursday Mass, but that is not the whole picture (Corpus Christi is more about the Eucharist itself). Jesus clearly wants us to think about the great gift of the priesthood that He bestowed on us. Think of the priest who baptized you, or the Bishop who confirmed you. Think of how Jesus was working through them and using their hands to accomplish His will. Though there are some today who think that it would be a good thing if God just dropped all His grace and sacraments

from the sky directly into our hands, with no mediator at all, but that is impersonal and cold. He wants us to connect to one another, and to help one another. He wants us to sense His physical presence with us, and through the priest, for us to recognize the presence of Jesus in our own midst. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Now pray this act of spiritual communion together:

As I cannot this day enjoy the happiness of assisting at the holy Mysteries, O my God! I transport myself in spirit at the foot of Thine altar; I unite with the Church, which by the hands of the priest, offers Thee Thine adorable Son in the Holy Sacrifice; I offer myself with Him, by Him, and in His Name. I adore, I praise, and thank Thee, imploring Thy mercy, invoking Thine assistance, and presenting Thee the homage I owe Thee as my Creator, the love due to Thee as my Savior.

Apply to my soul, I beseech Thee, O merciful Jesus, Thine infinite merits; apply them also to those for whom I particularly wish to pray. I desire to communicate spiritually, that Thy Blood may purify, Thy Flesh strengthen, and Thy Spirit sanctify me. May I never forget that Thou, my divine Redeemer, hast died for me; may I die to all that is not Thee, that hereafter I may live eternally with Thee. Amen.

Translation and Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Altar of Repose

At this point in the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is ordinarily taken from the altar and moved to an alternate location. This symbolizes the taking away of Jesus from the disciples when He was taken to His trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Meditate briefly upon what it felt like for the disciples to see Jesus taken away from them by the cruel unbelievers.

The Stripping of the Altars

After the Holy Thursday Mass is ended, the priest and servers strip all the cloths off of the altar. This symbolizes what happened to our Lord when He was taken captive and abused; especially when He was stripped of His garment at His scourging. Offer up a personal prayer of thanks for the great work that Christ endured in your behalf.

Now have someone say the closing prayer:

O God, who art the only assistance of our mortal frailty: show forth, we pray thee, upon thy servants in their sickness the might of thy succour; that being delivered by the help of thy mercy they may be restored in safety to thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclude with the sign of the Cross:

In the Name ✠ of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.