

Holy Thursday C2022

Today we commemorate the last supper our Lord Jesus had with his disciples at the eve of his Passion and death. This is an important event that will mark forever the life of the disciples and that of the Church. Holy Thursday is the commemoration of the institution of the sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist.

That night, as Jesus was at table with his disciples, he gave them an example of extreme humility and abnegation by washing their feet. What he wanted was to give the disciples an example so that they too serve their fellow human beings in the same way as he did. We too, as his disciples, are invited to serve one another out of obedience to our Lord.

That night, as our Lord was about to self-surrender to the will of the Father by accepting the cross and to self-immolate for the salvation of mankind, he left us his body and blood to be celebrated as a sacrament in memory of him.

Holy Thursday is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. It refers to the sacrifice the Israelites offered the night of their liberation from Egypt. As they slaughtered a blameless lamb, they applied its blood to the doorpost and the lintel of their houses in sign of their belonging to the people of God. As the blood of the killed lamb was used in order to save the sons of Israel, so is the blood of Christ poured out on the cross for the salvation of the world.

By placing the Last Supper with his disciples at the occasion of the Jewish Passover, Jesus presents himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and whose blood is poured out to save mankind. When our Lord took the bread and gave it to his disciples with the words, "This is my body that is for you", and, when in the same manner he took the wine and gave to them saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood (...) drink it, in remembrance of me", he was replacing the sacrifice of old by establishing the new.

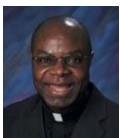
When we offer the sacrifice of the Mass, we unite ourselves to our Lord who offers himself perpetually to the Father in order to save the world. What does lie in the institution of the Eucharist is a profound mystery. Our Lord willed to precede the consummation of the Last Supper with the washing of the feet. By doing so, he was showing that it is by dedicating our life to the wellbeing of our fellows that we resemble him. So, he became their servant and gave an example to be followed by everyone who wants to become his disciple.

As he poured out the water over the skin of his disciples, he purified them, cleansing them of their sins. As he used the towel around his waist to dry their feet, he wiped away any wrong doings, giving them a new beginning. When he asked his followers to "wash one another's feet", he enjoined them to dedicate their life to the service of mankind, to treat everyone as equal and to spread the Good News that all are God's children and the Father loves them.

That is why the institution of the priesthood we commemorate today, which is equally the ministry of the consecration of the body and blood of Christ for the salvation of the world, is first of all, a service and not a privilege. To be priest is to be like Christ, to give up one's life for the salvation of one's fellows.

Let us pray today for our priests so that they live by the example of Christ, totally given to others and to the service of God's kingdom. Let us pray for the leaders of our Church that they be guided by the Spirit of Christ in leading rightly and without error God's people to the fullness of salvation. Let us pray for one another that the Lord help us to be at the service of one another as he did. God bless you all!

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-15



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