

Holy Thursday C2025

Tonight is a night for remembering. We remember what the Lord Jesus did for us at the eve of his death. We remember what our Lord has asked us to do in return. This is an unforgettable moment and the celebration of a significant event that has marked forever the life of the disciples and that of the Church.

Today we commemorate the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Holy Orders, and the memorial of the washing of the feet where our Lord gave a high example of humility and service to mankind.

Everything that happened that night was of vital importance as an expression of the ultimate will of our Lord to his disciples and to the Church. That night, as our Lord gave an extreme example of self-surrendering to the will of his Father and of self-immolation for the salvation of mankind, he left us his body to eat and his blood to drink in order to have eternal life (John 6, 48-58).

Holy Thursday is rooted in the Old Testament, as it refers to the Passover the Israelites celebrated before leaving the slavery in Egypt. That night, the book of Exodus says, the Israelites slaughtered a blameless lamb; they applied its blood to the doorpost and the lintel of their houses. Thanks to the blood marking the place where they were, their life was spared and their houses preserved when God passed over to strike the Egyptians.

By eating the Last Supper with his disciples on the eve of the Jewish Passover, our Lord presents himself as the Lamb of God who washes away the sins of the world, and whose body and blood are given out as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world. This reference to the Passover gives to the Last Supper a highly significant meaning.

When our Lord took the bread and gave it to his disciples with the words, "This is my body that is for you", when 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 meant that by celebrating the Eucharist Christians perpetuate in an un-bloody manner his sacrifice offered on the cross.

Any time the Eucharist is celebrated, what we receive under the species of bread and wine, is the outward signs of an inward mystery of Christ sacrificed body and blood. It is for that reason that our Lord entrusted this sacrifice to the Church so that we may share in it both spiritually, by faith and charity, and sacramentally through the banquet of Holy Communion. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we are always united with Christ offering himself for us as a sacrifice to the Father.

In washing the feet of the disciples, our Lord shows that it is by dedicating our life to the wellbeing of our fellow men and women that we can resemble him. When he washed the Apostles' feet, he became their servant and gave them an example to be followed by all his disciples. As he poured out the water over their skin, 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 disciples to “wash one another’s feet”, he enjoined them to dedicate their lives to the service of their brothers, to treat everyone with equal dignity and to spread the Good News that all are God’s children and the Father loves them. That is why the priesthood, 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 means above all to be like Christ, to give up one’s life for the salvation of one’s brothers and his sisters in conformity to our Lord Jesus. “When the priest celebrates Mass, he honors God, gladdens the angels, strengthens the Church, helps the living, brings rest to the departed, and wins for himself a share in all good things”. Let us pray today for all our priests dead and living. May 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 be at the service of one another as we make the Eucharist the center of our lives.

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



Homily Date: April 17, 2025

© 2025 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

Contact: www.mbala.org

Document Name: 20250417homily.pdf