

March 29, 2018

Thursday Homily

Today the Holy Thursday also called the Mundi Thursday is the Ecclesial beginning of the Holy week proper. On this Thursday we commence the solemn celebrations which starts with the Lords last supper, his arrest and appearance before the Sanhedrin. What concerns us mostly are the events that took place at the last supper. For the Jews it is the annual feast of the Passover, a ceremony which reminds them of their escape from Egypt and from slavery. Ex 12: 1-51. Jesus himself being a Jew came into Jerusalem with his disciples to partake of this feast of passover.

It was in the context of this Passover that Jesus instituted a new Passover with a new ritual and a new commandment. It is important as directed by the Mother Church that the principal mysteries which are commemorated in today's liturgy be well explained to the people of God. The core mystery we celebrate today includes: The institution of the Holy Eucharist, the institution of the Priesthood and the new commandment of fraternal love.

The Holy Eucharist was instituted as a meal of equal friends, eating around the table where everyone had access to the central dish and the same cup. The principal Eucharistic symbol is one loaf, one cup, one table, one people with a common destiny. The essence is to be at the same table with Jesus. To have a place at this table is to belong to the Fathers new people of the new covenant. Any one who partakes of this meal is not qualified by blood relationship as being the child of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob but of the water of regeneration. John 3: 1-16. In this Eucharistic community, water is thicker than blood, commonality takes precedence over hygiene. In this meal, Jesus became the lamb to be sacrificed for the salvation not just of the Jews but of all the world, no exclusion.

Even though this meal enjoys no exclusion, as inclusiveness is mandatory because Jesus taught: I am the bread of life...unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will not have life in you; Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him or her up on the last day John 6:48-60. The holy Eucharist is our thanksgiving to the Father for his gift of Jesus. It is also our food of strength as we journey to Him. Come and be part of this food of life.

It is customary for Jews to have a slave or servant who sits on the outside doors just to wash the feet of all who come into the house. Earlier the disciples quarreled on the issue of who was the greatest. James and John had requested to have the greatest place of honor; that is to be seated at the right and left of Jesus when he is made king. This caused indignation among the disciples. This situation is contrary to their vocation and undermines everything Jesus had taught them. Hence, it

was important to remind them by practice, everything they had learned until now. The first thing is humility. It was pride that destroyed Lucifer, so by washing their feet, Jesus taught them to humbly serve one another. He also taught them that the essence of the new covenant is love. He said to them: “a new commandment I give to you; Love one another as I have loved you...it is by loving one another that the world will know that you are my disciples”. (John 13: 34-35)

The institution of the sacred priesthood is aimed at two main offices, namely; to assure and perpetuate the commemoration of the Holy Eucharist and to be a constant reminder of the Lord’s commandment of love and humble service. The confusions of the Last Supper such as the quarrel regarding who was the greatest, Judas disappearing to betray Jesus, Peter’s instability, Jesus’s loneliness in the midst of the trusted disciples, are all meant to teach us God’s love. The truth is that despite our fragility and unworthiness, the Lord still calls us to behold the real presence in the sacrifice of the Mass, to serve one another and to take the evangelical risk of spreading the Gospel to all the nations.