

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
Holy Thursday, April 14, 2022

Holy Thursday is the first day of the sacred Triduum, Holy three days. Today, we begin to celebrate three holy days; three days but one continuous celebration from this moment into Good Friday and the night of the Easter Vigil. We celebrate the Paschal Mystery that is Jesus' passion, death and resurrection -- His dying and rising.

This evening, as we begin, we remember the gift of Jesus in the Priesthood and the Eucharist. The gift of Jesus Himself. Jesus, the Risen Lord, is giving Himself to us, to fulfil the promise I will be with us always.

The Gospel is taken from John, the only one that on the night of the last supper tells of Jesus washing feet. John saw the washing as so important that he featured the washing rather than the bread and wine of the Seder or Passover meal that the synoptics emphasized.

For John, the washing of the feet and the Passover Event with Jesus was one and the same. The foot washing, Eucharist, and Priesthood is all about the Paschal Mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus. And how does all this relate to you and me? Hopefully as we have been praying, fasting, and doing acts of charity our hearts are open more to this mystery we celebrate. With open hearts one can experience what this night is all about - service.

At this last supper with his disciples before His death, Jesus the teacher, wanted to make sure that His disciples and His believers, that is you and me, would never forget what this night is about.

John tells us that Jesus got down and became a foot-washing servant. Jesus taught them and us that our tendency to enjoy being served must die in order to be servant for others. This is a great act of Humility, serving others. It is so contrary to the way of our world and culture. Jesus the Son of God took the role of a slave, to serve. One has to be free within to serve like Jesus. There has to be this dying of self within us, in order for the rising Christ life to take place. When we stop and reflect on this teaching, we see that serving is what our lives as Christians are all about. If there is no service in our life, how can we say we are like Jesus? True followers of Jesus are ones who serve others. Jesus' gift of Himself is a life of service. Jesus modeled for his disciples and all of us as, Christians, service is

what our life is all about. Jesus came to serve, not to be served. We must seek humility in order to be free to serve.

The Seder-Passover, is celebrating the Jews' liberation from the Egyptian captivity. It was the Seder-Passover that brought Jesus to the upper room and what became the last supper. Jesus said earlier that unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But, if it dies, it can rise and be made bread. He also said that He was the vine, and His followers were branches who drew spiritual life from Him, the vine. Wheat dies to become bread; grapes die to become wine. We again must die to self in order for the life of Jesus to live within us. This is the gift of freedom that is remembered at the Passover for the Hebrews, however for us the gift of freedom comes with the blood of the true lamb of God, Jesus. Jesus gives Himself to us so that we can be free.

Here in the Bread and Wine, Jesus gives Himself, heart, mind, body and soul. At the Seder-Passover, Jesus took a piece of -bread and said: take and eat this is my body. Later in the meal Jesus took the third cup of wine – called the “blessing cup” – He took the cup, said the blessing, and said, “take and drink this is my blood.” The bread and the wine become Himself and we become partakers of this great mystery. We are what we eat, this is true but, we Christians may say, “We become who we eat.” How is Jesus being reflect in our lives who partake of this Eucharist, who partake of His body and blood? And if there are things in our life that is contrary to Jesus in the Bread of life we weaken the witness of the truth of this Holy night.

The Paschal Mystery of dying and rising is what we celebrate most especially during these three days of the sacred Triduum: Jesus, in his washing of feet both teaches and models the dying of our will in order for us to servant of Jesus and for others. Jesus, in his giving himself as bread that is broken and as wine that is poured out to nourish us by his presence. Jesus, in that moment of intimacy gifts us with what is the greatest of gifts: the gift of Himself. As we partake of this Holy night we too, must be humble and allow the Lord to free us in order to serve others. Remember our Mission at Holy Souls, is to Encounter Jesus, Serve Others.