

# Homily Notes for Holy Thursday, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, Mar29, 2018

(Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; I Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15)

1. On Holy Thursday we celebrate three central aspects of our faith:

- 1) the institution of the Holy Eucharist (indeed of the entire Holy Mass,
- 2) the establishment of the ministerial priesthood in order to perpetuate the Holy Mass, To convey God's forgiveness to repentant sinners and preach the Good News of Salvation, and
- 3) the proclamation of the New Commandment of Brotherly Love. "*Love one another As I have loved you.*" Today we remember how Jesus transformed the Jewish Passover into the New Testament Passover.

2. While Jesus transformed the Jewish Passover into the Christian Eucharist, the Jewish Passover was, in fact, a joint celebration of two ancient thanksgiving celebrations. The descendants of Abel, who were shepherds, used to lead their sheep from the winter pastures to the summer pastures after the sacrificial offering of a lamb to God. They called this celebration the "*Pass over.*" The farming descendants of Cain, however, held a harvest festival called the *Massoth* in which they offered unleavened bread to God as an act of thanksgiving.

**3. The Passover feast of the Israelites** (Exodus 12:26-37), was a harmonious combination of these two ancient feasts of thanksgiving, commanded by the Lord God and celebrated yearly by all Israelites to thank God for the miraculous liberation of their ancestors from Egyptian slavery, their exodus from Egypt and final arrival in the Promised Land.

## 4. Scripture lessons:

In the first reading, God gives the Hebrews two instructions: prepare for the moment of liberation by a ritual meal and make a symbolic mark on your homes to exempt the families within each from the coming slaughter.

In the second reading, Paul suggests that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was an unbroken tradition from the very beginning of the Church. By it, Christians reminded themselves of the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Today's Gospel describes how Jesus transformed the Jewish Passover into the Eucharistic celebration. After washing the feet of his Apostles and commanding them to do humble service for each other, Jesus concluded the ceremony by giving his Apostles his own body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine as spiritual food and drink, in addition to serving the roasted Paschal lamb.

## 5. Life Messages:

1) A challenge for humble service. Our celebration of the Eucharist requires that we wash one another's feet, i.e., serve one another, and revere Christ's presence in other persons. In practical terms, that means we are to consider their needs to be as important as our own and to serve their needs, without expecting any reward.

2) A loving invitation for sacrificial sharing and self-giving love, a full spirit of stewardship. Let us imitate the self-giving model of Jesus who shares with us his own body and blood and who enriches us with his Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. It is by sharing our blessings – our talents, time, health and wealth - with others that we become true disciples of Christ and obey Jesus' new commandment: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" Let us especially apply this in our marriages and in our families.

3) An invitation to become Christ-bearers and Christ-conveyers: "Go forth, the Mass is ended," really means, "Go in peace to love and serve one another." We are to carry Jesus to our homes and places of work, conveying to others around us the love, mercy, forgiveness and spirit of humble service of Christ. Let us especially communicate the profound value of worshipping God as we do. Let us also take seriously the importance of a Catholic School Education.

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