

Reflection Thursday of the Lord's Supper

First Reading: Exodus

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel: John 13:1-15

Did you ever hear that tune from the 70's written and sung by Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan, then sung in the 90's by Amy Grant, and in 2009 by Counting Crows (never heard of them – too old) “**Big Yellow Taxi**”? I had no idea who sang this song until I Googled it this week! Most of you will be familiar with the lyrics of the song:

“Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone

They paved paradise

And put up a parking lot”

I always liked this catchy tune when they played it on the radio. I would sing along in the car; how could you not!

I think this is true - *we don't know what we've got until it's gone*. We have a tendency to take a lot for granted: God, faith, spouse, our children (darn kids - just kidding), friends, parish, school, school activities, sports and so on. Then we were told to stop almost all of it, and we miss it very much; *we don't know what we've got until it's gone*.

Tonight, we are celebrating the *Mass of the Lord's Supper* where three main things are happening. First, Jesus shows us how to act as Christians. He washes the Twelve Apostles' feet. This is the lowest of jobs! In fact, this was the job of a slave. They only wore sandals back then and the “streets” were very dirty. Jesus humbles himself and stoops down in front of humans and cleans their dirty feet showing that He came to serve, and not be served. In this time of crisis, many of you have followed Jesus and served others. You have kept in contact with family, friends and parishioners and are ready to help when needed.

Second, Jesus institutes the Eucharist. Jesus did ascend into Heaven, but he did not abandon us. He remains with us in the Eucharist! He remains with us by giving us his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity under the appearances of Bread and Wine. He is truly present with us when the priest, who in the person of Christ, consecrates the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This, however, has been taken away from us since March 15, 2020. This is where the catchy tune seems say how we feel; *we don't know what we've got until it's gone*.

Third, Jesus institutes the priesthood. In the Second Reading, St. Paul quotes Jesus at the Last Supper and says, “*This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. . . This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*” The priest is ordained to continue to offer this one-time sacrifice in memory of Jesus. St. John Vianney, Patron Saint of Parish Priests, gives us his beautiful reflection on the gift of the priesthood. He writes:

“O how great is the priest! If he realized what he is he would die... God obeys him: he utters a few words and the Lord descends from Heaven at his voice, to be contained within a small host. Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we would not have the Lord. Who put him there in the tabernacle? The priest. Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of life? The priest. Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for the journey? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest - always the priest. And if the soul should happen to die (as a result of sin) who will raise it up, who will restore its calm and peace? Again, the priest. After God, the priest is everything. Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is.”

On this night, Jesus gives us the gift of serving others, gives us the gift of the Eucharist in the Last Supper, and gives us the gift of the priesthood so we can “do this in memory of me (him)”. Yet, we have been cut off from Eucharist and the priest, which means we have been cut off from the Sacraments. Again, this is where this catchy tune seems to say how we feel; ***we don’t know what we’ve got until it’s gone!***

However, Jesus never leaves us. These are extraordinary times which call for extraordinary grace. I don’t know why this is all happening. Many have their thoughts as to why, but what I do know is that we will appreciate each other, the Eucharist and the priesthood when we return. Soon we will be back, and we will know “**what we’ve got**” and maybe appreciate it a little more.

Also, let us continue to pray for those infected with this virus and all those who are affected indirectly – especially our healthcare workers, cleaners, and all those who are considered “necessary” workers. We humbly ask, Lord, for those of us out of work, that we may safely return to work very soon. May God protect you and bless you. Amen.

God bless,
Fr. Mark Speitel