

Homily for Sunday Mass
Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord’s Supper
April 9, 2020
Year A – John 13:1-15
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

Today I would like to break our homily in two parts, that of the events and meanings of the Passover meal and how we celebrate it yet today as Catholics and also one of the great gifts of social action ever given to the world through the Passover actions of our Savior.

Passover

Did you know that our second reading today is the oldest written account of Lord’s Supper that occurred only a couple decades before Paul wrote about it to the faithful in Corinth? Paul received this account from oral tradition and it most likely included the actions and words of Jesus. Tradition – a key component of our faith coupled with the Gospels that bless us to this very day as a living memorial in our Eucharistic Liturgy and our faith. Now more than ever let us not allow our traditions to fall away but rather embrace them and celebrate the rich history they give us – in our faith as well as in our social and private lives.

In our times of drastic change, we may think everything is just up in smoke but oh no my dear friends. Let us take a look at the Jewish traditions that came out of the Exodus that Jesus celebrated during the Last Supper which the Jewish faithful still live in their Passover.

As we recall the exodus story, it is also interesting to note that history does not often present itself with neat linear lines of events but often overlaps and builds upon itself and our exodus story does this as well. This layering does not replace the former with the new nor does it diminish the new history as something stolen or less than its ties to the past. As an example, ancient Arab nomads, centuries before the Exodus, would prepare to break their winter camps each spring and travel. This gave them great anxiety and the evening before the journey they would sacrifice a lamb, spread its blood over their lodging entries to keep evil and/or death away, and prepare the meat only with the herbs of the ground (bitter herbs) and even eat it fully clothed at night so as to be prepared to immediately depart after the meal. They continue this practice even today including the consumption of unleavened bread.

The Israelites, in their place in history, did not superimpose their tradition on an ancient one but adapted it as God lead them to do in a beautiful memorial of faith. The fears of evil are replaced with the promises from God who is calling them to embark on their own journey to the wilderness to communion with and worship Him and free themselves from the bondage of slavery. What is God’s call to you that can free you from your bondage of sin and self-doubt today?

As history continues its march ever forward, we see a final overlapping of events from the Passover Seder as the Jewish people ‘relive’ the events of the Passover and that of Catholics as we memorialize Christ’s passion invoking imagery and symbolism where we come to the table of unleavened bread and wine with the promise of deliverance and salvation with God through the Eucharist.

So, when we celebrate the Eucharist, we not only meet Jesus in person in that special moment, but we also travel on an ancient timeline of hope, faith in the unknown, and deliverance from

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persecution, bondage, and death. We can apply this to our current condition as well in that we may not be together to receive the Holy Elements of communion but Jesus is still with your right now, in your living room, on your couch...or maybe that chair next to you. The rich tradition of the Bedouins, the Jewish people, right up to our Eucharistic celebration also can teach us that in times of dark difficulty and fear there will be light. There will be salvation and we will come through it. Maybe with slightly different ways than our past has dictated but getting through this and prospering once again. So, as Paul wrote to Corinth, “...clear out the old yeast [of sin and fear], so that you may become a fresh batch of dough...that of sincerity and truth” (I Cor 5:7,8).

Call to Action

Part of this rich oral tradition Paul gave us, and John wrote about in his Gospel, is the recalling of Jesus washing the feet of his friends that night in the upper room. And I know...and YOU know...that all of your right now are thinking in the back of your VERY aware traditional minds, maybe online Mass ain’t so bad...I don’t have to live with the threat of Father trying to get me to touch others feet....

But there is the point to it all, is it not? Jesus performed this amazing act of servanthood that lowered him to one of the lowest levels of his society and then gave us a great social justice teaching point. Jesus said, “you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (JN 13:14-15). May I get an AMEN? Really...give me an amen! Okay. That’s better.

Here is the point my beloved friends. Jesus is calling us to act and perform tasks that are not always easy, that are often beneath us and our perceived positions in life and that take us way outside of our comfort zones. Like a great leader he is teaching by his actions here and showing you that if GOD can lower himself than none of us have even the slightest reason why we cannot lower ourselves into service of all of humanity. Acts of kindness, compassion, forgiveness of wrongs, putting away judgement, hatred, angers, prejudice, and distrust. Showing compassion to those we do not like or know.

A worker, you see, received a call the other day to inform her that a coworker was hospitalized and tested positive for COVID-19. She was asked to stay home for 14 days in self quarantine as she most likely had close contact with him. Sir, she said to the HR professional on the call, there is no issue here. I hate that man and would not come within 20 feet of him. Maybe the lesson here, and certainly Jesus’ lesson in that upper room, is to move past our petty issues and serve with extreme love and charity for all people – our neighbors He calls us to love.

Thus, as the Jewish people tonight will live the Passover experience and Christians will experience Christ’s passion in the Eucharist. Two faith traditions, one great God.

The Passover marks the fleeing from slavery, pain, and sadness and marks a new covenant that God sets with his chosen people, while the Eucharist marks our salvation from the pain and sadness of sin with the new covenant, we encounter in the communal meal with Jesus Christ

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once again back in that upper room so long ago. Shed your pain and sadness from sin my friends and get to washin your neighbors' feet. Lifting them up and saving yourselves in the process.

Have a blessed Holy Week and prepare ye, "...the way of the Lord" (Is 40:30)! AMEN

---Citations---

The New American Bible: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010

ISBN 9780529064844