

The Sacred Triduum

Holy Week

April 9, 10, 11, 2020

Fr. Tony Davis

Holy Thursday

So often we speak of longing for the Holy Eucharist, but we mean that in a devotional sense. Traditional Catholic prayers and hymns are filled with words of great reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ, which uplifts our spirits and make us feel connected to our savior's death on the cross. On this Holy Thursday in particular, however, that longing for the Eucharist has to take on a different meaning.

At tonight's liturgy at St. Matthias, we would have celebrated the mass of the Lord's Supper, washed the feet of twelve individuals from our community, and processed with the Holy Eucharist around our church, with a prolonged time for prayer and adoration after mass. This year, as our country tries to stand still to slow the spread of the coronavirus, we cannot do this tonight. What we can do, though, each from our own homes, is to ask ourselves how much do we really long for the Holy Eucharist? Have I reached the point where I just receive communion out of habit? Or without faith in my heart? Or out of pure sentimentality? Or without the desire to even get to mass every Sunday?

Tonight, a purely devotional longing for the Holy Eucharist is not sufficient. What is required is a real longing. Quite simply, our longing becomes real when we face reality. When we face the needs of our world with love, when we get involved in the issues that are important to our faith and basic human dignity, when we seek to be servants- not masters, when we feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually drained, that is when we truly long for the Holy Eucharist.

When we face reality, the real presence makes sense.

Good Friday

As we look upon the cross of Jesus, we think about what humanity did to him. We think of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who called for his crucifixion, the betrayal by Judas Iscariot, the trial of Pontius Pilate, and yes, even our own sins. On Good Friday, a wedge was driven between God and humanity.

But there was also another wedge that was driven on Good Friday. In his book *The Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann suggests that Good Friday wasn't just an event between God and humanity, but also an event between God and God; between God the Son and God the Father. He claims that not only Jesus suffered, but the Father suffered, too. He says, "the Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son." I can't help but think of a parent who lost a child. Is it not true that the parent suffers death, too, even though they still live? Moltmann continues, "the grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son...[God]...suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of his Son." (359) On Good Friday, God was torn apart. According to Moltmann, the cry of Jesus, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' at the same time is, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken thyself?' (220)

In all of this perhaps shocking and scandalous talk about God being torn apart, there is an invitation. The invitation is for us to stand in that opening, to stand between the wonderful love of God and God.

Holy Saturday

At sundown, at the start of the Easter Vigil, the liturgy begins with the blessing of the fire and the preparation of the Easter Candle. The words of the priest over the candle are powerful. He says: *Christ yesterday and today; the Beginning and the End; the Alpha, and the Omega. All time belongs to him; and all the ages. To him be glory and power; through every age and for ever. Amen.*

Jesus Christ is our constant in life: yesterday, today, and forever. He alone is our security point. Throughout the centuries, Catholics and other Christians have come to think that the church is our security point. While the church is an extension of Christ insofar as we are his body, the church itself is not yesterday, today, and forever. The church is subject to change and, in fact, should change! This is the pastoral vision of Pope Francis, who constantly pushes the church to go out itself and face the needs of the world today. In *The Joy of the Gospel*, he writes, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security...more than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security..." (49) While this language can make us feel uncomfortable, Pope Francis can speak this way not because he likes to cause confusion among the faithful, but because he finds his security in Jesus Christ alone, yesterday, today, and forever. The paradox of our faith is that more that we have Christ as our security point, the less afraid we should be of change.

Christ is our anchor; the church is our boat. As we move through the darkness of this night and look forward to the resurrection of Easter morning, let us remember that even an anchor allows a boat enough slack to move about on the waves.