

## **Holy Thursday Homily 2017**

**How long have you been coming to mass?**

**10 years**

**20 years**

**30 years**

**40 years?**

**50 years**

**60 years or over 60?**

**I ask this because today's gospel was written about sixty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

**Most of the first Christians were still Jewish. They would have been gathering to celebrate the Passover feast (as present day Jews in the Detroit area are doing right now).**

**But for Jewish and Gentile Christians, the meal was more than just the feast of the Passover. It was now the Holy Thursday Meal in which they celebrate the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples.**

**Two major changes in this gospel from John which was written decades after the other three gospels.**

**In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the last supper meal is on the day of the Feast of Passover.**

**But in John's gospel the last supper celebration took place on the day BEFORE the Passover.**

**Why did John make this change?**

**Had he forgotten what the other three gospel writers had written?**

**No, he had a very clear reason for placing Jesus' last supper the day before the Passover meal was to be celebrated.**

**We get an insight by remembering what was happening the day before Passover.**

**On the day before, all the lambs to be consumed at the Passover meal were being slaughtered at the temple.**

**At the very same time the lambs were being sacrificed in the temple, Jesus, the lamb of God was saying, "This is my body given for you. This is my blood, the of the New Covenant being poured out for you. Do this in memory of me."**

However, if you are like me, we may go as many as seventy years without noticing the reason for the change of the day for celebrating the Last Supper.

But John wanted to make it crystal clear the message Jesus intended to share at the last supper.

So John completely skips the words, “this is my body, this is my blood.” And instead inserts the washing of the disciples’ feet, the act of a lowly servant. He is simply saying, This is what it means to be God; this is what means to be part of the Body of Christ; to be servant to one another and the world.

Then after washing the disciples feet, he says, “As I have done for you, so you also should do. That’s John’s version of “Do this in memory of me.”

A few weeks ago Sr. \_\_\_\_\_ gave a talk at Generations of Faith entitled: Eucharist: Comfort or Challenge. She said something which struck me to the heart. When we only experience our Eucharistic celebrations as a comfort and not a challenge, we decapitate Christ.

**We cannot simply relate to the Christ in the Eucharist as one who washes our feet, cleanses our souls and brings comfort to our lives and at the same time ignore the Body of Christ (wave over the people) whose hearts and bodies need our healing touch. When we do, we decapitate Christ.**

**Jesus said, "This is my body given for you. This is my blood poured out for you. Go, do this in memory of me."**

**Or, as he said after washing the disciples feet, "As I have done for you, so you also should do."**

**John's message to us is very simple: Just try Jesus. He is our way to the fullness of life.**

**(comment before the first reading)**

### **Correcting an Abuse of the Lord's Supper**

**<sup>17</sup> In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup> for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!**

**First reading: the community had been gathering for 10-20 years to celebrate the Lord's last supper.**

**The early Christians believed they were the Body of Christ and were sharing the Spirit of the Risen Lord.**

**But they were not acting as the Body of Christ should act.**

**<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever**

**you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death  
until he comes.**