

Homily for Thursday of the Lord's Supper

9 April 2020

Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

“We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.”

Reading 1 – Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

Psalm 116 – **Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.**

Reading 2 – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel – John 13:1-15 *Jesus loved them to the end.*

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this Thursday we find ourselves beginning our journey through the Sacred Paschal Triduum. During these three days in the church, we will encounter Jesus gathering with his disciples as the Eucharist is established for us by Jesus himself. Jesus also gives us the example of how we are to live our lives in service to one another.

On Good Friday we once again hear the Passion of Jesus. These words that lead along with Jesus during his final hours on earth. We stand with Mary, this year even more so, alone and helpless at the foot of the cross calling out to our Lord to save us.

Finally, we arrive at Saturday evening, where once again a sacred new fire is lit and blessed as we light the Easter Candle for this year. This pillar of fire, whose light is Christ's light, leads us throughout our world each and every day. This pillar of fire's first great act will be to continue to lead us through

these uncertain days as we continue to navigate through this COVID-19 pandemic. This pillar of fire will also be lit at every mass through the Easter season and will carry out its yearly job of helping to guide those newly baptized in the Church through their lives. The Easter candle will also be the light that will lead the dead over the waters of death to new life with God in Heaven.

Our first reading this Holy Thursday is one that is a reminder of how to celebrate the Passover meal. These directions were given to Moses from the Lord and this meal is meant to be celebrated each year as a reminder of what the Lord God did for the Jewish people, by leading them out into the desert and bringing them from the slavery the Jewish people were forced to live under the Egyptians. This is the story of their freedom.

As a Christian people, we have a similar story. While the Passover meal was meant for the Jews, we have our own meal that is presented to us this day, the Eucharist. As Jesus was gathering with his disciples to celebrate this Passover meal that reminded them where they came from, Jesus made the meal slightly different. He blessed bread and broke the bread and gave the bread. He did the same with the wine. He said to us "This is my body, this is my blood that has been given up for you, do this in remembrance of me". This is the meal Jesus commanded that we are to carry out until he comes in glory to call us to be home with him and the Father in Heaven. This meal is one that we still participate in even today. Even though we cannot at this time gather together to witness this meal being carried out and to share in the one bread and one chalice that is given, the Mass is still be carried out each day around the world

in all our parish churches. There is a difference between the Passover meal and the Eucharist. The Eucharist fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the Kingdom.

I think that the hardest part through all that we have been experiencing with the COVID-19 Pandemic is that we as Catholics cannot come to this table to be nourished with the Body of Christ, particularly on this day that celebrates the inauguration of this great event. I hope that during these days of social isolation as we are staying home, even staying home from weekday and Sunday Mass, that we will have a great appreciation for the gift that we receive from Jesus in the Eucharist and that we will have a renewed devotion in attending our services and will take every opportunity that we can to gather with the Lord to be nourished by his word and sacrament and to never take this great gift that we have for granted.

The second part of our Holy Thursday celebration, that sadly mostly will be omitted this year, is the Washing of the Feet. This is often one of the most moving parts of the Holy Thursday liturgy. The priest strips off his garment, the chasuble, ties on an apron and then washes twelve people's feet that are chosen from the community. This is reenactment follows what Jesus did for the twelve that we hear in the gospel. It is an example to the people of how we are to serve on another.

As we hear in the gospel, some of the disciples do not want to have Jesus wash their feet. They don't feel that they are worthy. How can this man lower himself to wash the feet of his disciples? This is something that was never

done. Only a servant would wash another person's feet, not a teacher, not someone that is upstanding in the community. This again, is another place where Jesus turns things upside down and calls for a change in society and the way that we live and relate to one another.

The priest follows the example that Jesus gives to us by doing what Jesus did. The priest, the pastor serves his community and leads by example. In my own priesthood it is a way that I can be an example of service to the community. I am here to serve, we are all here to serve, and in particular we are here to serve one another.

During these days of the COVID-19 pandemic we have had many opportunities to serve one another. We have a number of parishioners that are willing to help out others that might be in need during these days or that maybe do not feel comfortable going out to the store. A number of our parishioners have been continuing to man our Food Pantry and serve those that are in need here in our community of Gervais. We also have had a number of our parish family come and do some extra cleaning in Sacred Heart Church, helping to keep it safe for those that want to come and pray and so that the church will be ready for when public mass can resume. Our teachers are finding new ways to serve and educate our children since they will not be returning to the school building for the remainder of this academic year. These are just a few ways that our parish community follows Jesus and the example that he set out for us in how we are to serve our brothers and sisters.

Friends, let us today take some time to give thanks to God for this Eucharist that Jesus gave to us as nourishment. Let us give thanks for this Sacrament that so often we take for granted and maybe we don't always make the effort that we should to take advantage of the opportunities to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist that is given to us. Let us also give thanks for the example of service that Jesus gives to us. May we be willing to strip off our garments, put on the apron and get dirty. There is much work to do here in the kingdom. Let's get to work.