Homily

April 14, 2022

Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord’s Supper

26:06 -35:15

“And as on pilgrimage you shall celebrate this memorial as a perpetual institution.” Thus, the conclusion of our First Reading.

There are three perpetual institutions of which we have heard tonight. The first is “pesach,” Passover. The second is “Eucharistia,” Eucharist, in the Second Reading, the oldest recollection written down of the night before Jesus died.

And then the Washing of the Feet. Yes. That’s a perpetual institution. But it only takes place once a year. Passover takes place only once a year. But Eucharist? Every second of every day Eucharist is being celebrated somewhere in the world. Every second of every day.

Why do we do this? Because we were told to. “Do this in memory of me.”

Why do we do it? That we may participate in the very reality of that moment over 2000 years ago. It’s a living memory.

What we do here is connected to it. Literally. For the one who celebrates – us, myself, the ministers: well, we celebrate, but it is the Lord Jesus who presides, always. For you see, and I have said this before and you’ve read it (I hope) in one of the things I wrote: I do it – any priest does it – “*In Persona Christi Capitis*,” in the person of Christ who is the head. I present what the Lord is doing. Please, God.

In this year as we begin the three years of the Eucharist – this calling to mind the great gift that we celebrate tonight as a perpetual institution, I can’t help but ask us to reflect upon the ***real presence***. Now, when I say real presence, I have to go back to the document of the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which was the document on the liturgy.

In that document, very early-on it speaks about presence, real presence. But the first one it talks about is not (gesturing toward the tabernacle) the continual presence. The first Presence it talks about is the Word. The Word of God in Scripture, which is always here for us. On bookshelf and on Kindle and Tablet, we have constant access to that presence of God’s very Word.

It talks about the presence “*In Persona Christi Capitis*,” of the priest who is presenting, who is the very presence of – in one sense – of the Lord Jesus. And not only in this moment (gesturing toward the altar); priests and all ministers are to be the presence of the Lord, always.

It then goes on to talk about us, the people of God gathered. Recalling “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That’s a very real presence. Not only here, but out there. At home. In the workplace. At school. Caring for an aged father. You name it. Two or three, but most especially, here whenever we gather for Eucharist.

And then…you know Roman documents tend to leave the best to last. The very reality of the Lord’s Presence in the enacting of Eucharist and in the perpetual Presence that we have here (in the tabernacle). Especially for those who are sick. Especially for those who are dying. That Presence goes forth from here that they might be fed and know that the Lord is present in their full, real reality.

But have you noticed, all of these Presences actually go forth? Don’t you carry the Lord home with you? Don’t you have moments when you can be in the Lord’s Presence by reading the Scriptures, or celebrating some devotional, which is tied to the Scriptures always? Isn’t that Presence always with you? With your family? Your friends? It’s never departed. And when we take that Presence into ourselves by celebrating and receiving the Eucharist, we walk out of here carrying that Presence which began at our baptism, but now in a wonderful way feeds us and sends us.

The Real Presence of the Lord in Eucharist, enacted and waiting is a powerful mystery, and it makes us who we are. And continues to feed us, that we might be who we are.

So brothers and sisters – rejoice in that tonight and realize there’s one other place that that Presence can live: in our hearts. **In our hearts.**