

HOLY THURSDAY: HOMILY

In this Mass of the Lord's Supper we commemorate three principal mysteries, namely, the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the institution of the priestly Order and the commandment of the Lord concerning fraternal charity.

Our first reading from the book of Exodus tells us how the Lord God ordered the Jewish people to prepare and eat the Passover meal.

The Passover meal was celebrative meal eaten by the Jewish people at the command of the Lord before their departure from Egypt.

The reading ends by saying, **“This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord, as a perpetual institution.”**

It was within the celebration of Passover meal that Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist but with a new dimension. At his last Supper Jesus anticipated the deliverance of all mankind from the slavery of the devil, he would obtain it at the price of his own blood on following day on the cross, by taking bread, and by his power, changed it into his body, and by taking a cup filled with wine and changed the wine into his own blood.

Jesus did more than giving his apostles his body and blood. He gave them the power to do what he had done. They were to do it time and again.

In the second reading, St Paul reminds us of Jesus' words and actions on the night he was handed over. Jesus told his Apostles to celebrate the Last Supper in remembrance of him. **“Do this in remembrance of me.”**

“Doing in remembrance” means that Jesus self-gift is present at each celebration of the Lord's Supper.

This brings us to the second mystery we celebrate in today's Liturgy; the institution of the priesthood. Since the institution of the Eucharist, the Eucharistic liturgy has

been the heart of Christian gathering. It is the center of the entire life of the Church. It forms the bedrock on which the activity of the Church is founded.

Jesus instituted the ministry of priesthood in order that priests would continue to do what he did at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The priests are to renew in Jesus' name the sacrifice of our redemption whenever they set before God's family his paschal meal.

So we can say that the presence of a priest is an essential condition for the church's life and not merely for her effective organization.

By virtue of the ministerial priesthood, the faithful are made aware of their common or baptism priesthood and actualize it. The priest constantly reminds them that they are the people of God and prepares them to offer spiritual sacrifices. The priests are to lead God's holy people in love.

This point brings us to the third mystery we celebrate today; the commandment of fraternal charity.

Jesus always loved his own and showed it to the full when at supper from the table he got up and took towel then wrapped it around his waist, in a basin water poured, and then he began to wash the feet of all his friends. After the washing he told them:

“Know my brothers, what I have done to you. Lord you call me, it is what I am if then I, your Lord deign to wash your feet you should do the same and wash each other's feet.”

By this action Jesus teaches us that we should have sincere love for each other. We should render selfless service to our neighbors and the people we come into contact with.

The point is by sharing the Eucharistic Bread with our brothers and sisters of the church community, we feel compelled to render in haste the love of Christ into generous service toward our brothers and sisters.