

Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper: A Living Memory

Frank was 92 and quite happy in the assisted living home. It was not the ideal, but after the little kitchen fire he put out and the bathroom flood of which he was totally unaware, and with his granddaughters's taking turns to clean and cook for him, he knew it was time to move. He found the place himself. It gave him the freedom of coming and going as he wanted. It provided him with a good cooked meal everyday, but most important, Frank, always an independent man, had the freedom of not feeling he was a bother for his children and grandchildren. Very often various members of the family would visit or bring him home for dinner. Frank always led the grace before meals. After all, he was the patriarch of the family. One Sunday one of his granddaughters and her husband brought him to their home. Frank stayed in prayer after grace. When the granddaughter asked what he was praying so fervently over, Frank told her, "You may not realize it, but today is your grandmother's and my wedding anniversary. On our first wedding anniversary your Grandma and I began a tradition of thanking God for our year together and for giving us each other. We did this every single year. Sometimes we'd point out particulars, I remember the anniversary that we thanked God for giving us your mother. I remember the anniversary we thanked God for your birth. Sometimes we'd just say thanks for each other. Now, Grandma left us 12 years ago; but I know that when I thank God for her on this day, she's here also thanking God for me."

Grandpa had a way of keeping the memory of Grandma alive. His prayer made Grandma's presence real for him.

I present this little story to you as an analogy of our celebration this evening and every time we pray the Mass. "Do this in memory of me," the Lord said. This action of celebrating the New Passover, of sharing the bread and wine of the Lord, is a living memory of all that Jesus did for us. When we eat the bread and drink the wine He is really present in an infinitely greater way than Grandma was present during those anniversary celebrations.

Remember, remember. Remember the Lord's suffering and death. Remember his emptying of himself symbolized by the washing of the feet and realized on the Cross. Remember, receive the Body and Blood of the Covenant and Remember.

"Make my presence real," the Lord says. "As I share my body and blood with you, share yourselves with others. What you have seen me do, so also you must do." He washed feet. He gave the Eucharist. He died on the cross. These actions are intertwined in our living memory of Jesus Christ.

Today we celebrate the redemptive presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus' Eucharistic presence is the renewal of His presence in the Upper Room and on the cross, offering Himself for us. Do this in memory of me. This evening we begin a three day remembrance of all that Jesus Christ did for us.

The Mass, the cross, the empty tomb. The Blood of the Covenant. During this past Lent we have reflected quite a bit on the concept of covenant. We heard about the covenant the Lord made with Noah, the covenant of the rainbow, the covenant that reminds us that God will never give up on his people. We heard about the covenant God made with Abraham, the covenant of faith, and we were reminded that if we put our faith in God he will care for us even if our lives are full of turmoil. We heard about the covenant made with Moses, the covenant of the ten commandments. The Covenant of Sinai was a call to holiness, a call to be separate from a world that looks towards satisfying itself instead of living for God and for others. It was called the holiness code because to be holy means to be set aside for the Lord. A little past today's first reading we hear how Moses read the book of the covenant in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient. Moses then took the blood of sacrificed lambs and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "See this is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." This was the first blood of the covenant. Two weeks ago we heard about another covenant. This was the prophesy of Jeremiah, the prophecy that there would be a new covenant which would be written in the hearts of the people.

This evening we celebrate the blood of the new covenant. When we celebrate the Eucharist we celebrate the one action of Jesus dying and rising for us, sealing us with the Blood of the Covenant. When we receive communion we accept the new covenant written in our hearts. The Blood of the New Covenant is far deeper, infinitely more profound than any of the previous covenants. Within our hearts we celebrate the presence of Jesus Christ. We consecrate ourselves to making the presence of Christ real in the world. Each time we receive communion, we proclaim our commitment to the Blood of the New Covenant.

The gift of the Eucharist necessitates the ministry of select individuals who have been called to make God present for his community. The Lord told his disciples to do this in memory of me. Bishops and priests proclaim the living memory of Jesus Christ every time they act in the person of the Lord and celebrate the Eucharist. Deacons make the Lord present in their service as well as their proclamation of the Word. Therefore, this evening's liturgy celebrates not only the gift of the Eucharist but also gift of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

These are the days of a living memory. We can never forget what Jesus did for us. As we kneel tonight before the Blessed Sacrament, we remember. We are the people of the Blood of the New Covenant written in our hearts, keeping alive the mystery of the Lord's presence in the world. We remember. We remember, and the Lord is present.