

Maudy Thursday

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Date: 14 April 2022

Preacher: Fr. Paul Beutell

[0 : 00] For I receive from the Lord that which I also deliver to you, words from this evening's epistle lesson in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. What we are doing this evening is nothing new or innovative. Well, on the night of the first Maundy Thursday, when our Lord instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, something new and in a sense innovative was established.

For us, it is not. By the time St. Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, the Eucharist had been established in the church for at least 25 years.

We know from Acts chapter 2, verse 42, that each Sunday, if not more often, the Apostolic Church continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, in the breaking of bread, the Eucharist, and in the prayers, the liturgy.

Chapter 9 of the Didache, written around AD 100, gives simple, clear instructions on what the celebrant was to pray at the consecration and to whom the Eucharist was to be administered to.

[1 : 14] Would certainly, then, it could be said that what we are doing this night and do every time the Eucharist is celebrated is not innovative or novel, and it shouldn't be.

What we are doing here this evening and in every Mass is the least innovative part of the church's worship. While the daily offices of the prayer book and the other liturgical forms of worship we do through Lent can be quite edifying, they cannot supplant the Holy Eucharist as the source and the center of the church's worship.

It is the only means of worship Jesus himself gave to the church. Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 through 22 states, Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us to the veil that is his flesh.

Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Jesus is the one who directly commanded his apostles and through them commands his church and commands us to do this. Jesus is the one who gives such importance to this sacrament. We do what Jesus has commanded us to do.

[2 : 52] Why did Jesus give such importance to the Eucharist? Because when we partake of it, we become partakers of his very life. In St. John 6, Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

He who comes to me shall never hunger. He said, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. The Eucharist is the means Jesus has given to feed upon his life and for us to be made one with him.

In the canon of the Mass, in the prayer that follows the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the celebrant prays that we and our others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion may be made one body with Christ, that he may dwell in us and we in him.

Our mystical union with Christ, established at Holy Baptism, is strengthened each time we partake of the Holy Eucharist.

[4 : 08] In a way unlike any other, that union becomes stronger each and every time we receive the body and blood of our Lord in the Eucharist. This is why our Lord, his apostles, and all their faithful successors have emphasized the importance of this sacrament in the church's life.

It is the ongoing means Christ has given to his church to draw us to him and into him as intimately as possible while we are still in these bodies here on this earth.

When we eat of this bread, which is his body, and drink of this cup, which is his blood, he comes to dwell in us and we in him in a mysterious, yet absolutely real way.

Our Lord was not using a metaphor when he said, this is my body. He was not making an analogy when he said, this is my blood. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said.

As Queen Elizabeth I is reported to have said, Christ was the word that spake it, he took the bread and break it, and what his words did make it, that I believe and take it.

[5 : 32] Because it is Christ the word who spoke at the Last Supper, the church Catholic painstakingly preserves his words, as well as the proper administration of the sacrament, throughout history.

And it is why we must continue to use so until he returns in his glory. So then again, brethren, what we are doing this evening, and doing every Mass, is exactly what our Lord has commanded us to do.

We are not being innovative or novel. We are being obedient and faithful. We are doing what our Lord delivered to the apostles, and what the apostles have delivered to the church to be handed down and practiced throughout the ages.

Particularly on this night, let us remember this fact. Let us also pray for greater insight from the Holy Spirit into this mystery. We will never fully understand the great mystery of the Eucharist.

We will never fully understand how it is Jesus' body and blood. We can, and we need to, believe it is what Jesus says.

[6 : 51] That it is his body and his blood. We only need to understand enough, and more so believe enough, to prepare and properly partake.

So let us now prepare ourselves to partake of the Holy Eucharist. Partake of the Lord Jesus himself, to the building up of our union with Christ and with one another, within his Holy Church. In the name of the Father, in the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.