

HOLY THURSDAY - 2020

It's great that we have the technology to be united over the internet for this celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

In the midst of the current crisis and the uncertainty it creates, it is still Holy Thursday and the Church's celebration of her most solemn liturgies continue.

There is always a two-fold focus to today's commemoration of the Last Supper that Jesus "greatly desired to eat" with his closest disciples on the night before he died:

- ❖ The Institution of the Holy Eucharist, and
- ❖ The washing of the disciples' feet.

Because of the deadly pandemic plaguing our world at this time, you, the dear People of God have been unable to come to Mass and receive Holy Communion.

I know that this is a tremendous sacrifice for you. I would even call it a source of deep spiritual suffering.

And although I have the great privilege of being able to celebrate Mass and receive the Eucharist every day, your absence causes me great pain.

I don't think any of us will ever take for granted this precious Sacrament and the opportunity to participate in the Holy Liturgy.

Since we believe that God "makes all things work for the good of those who love Him" ... this renewed appreciation of the Lord's immense gift is one of the "good things" God is bringing out of our present loss.

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A cautious fear regarding the spread of the Corona virus has created another loss specific to this year's Mass of the Lord's Supper:

We are not allowed to wash feet (or hands, according to our parish's recent practice).

This rite is actually optional, but it is a powerful visual reinforcement of the message of tonight's Gospel:

"If I, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow."

The Eucharist we receive is given in order to strengthen us for the service of our brothers and sisters.

Without such service, we would be those who "eat but do not work."

Even though we mourn our proscribed absence from the table of the Lord, in the midst of these days of sickness, isolation, and death there are many opportunities to reach generously out to others.

I think of the doctors and nurses who sacrifice so much each day, some of whom have even died in the line of service.

But we should also remember the housekeeping staff in our hospitals as well as all those who work behind the scenes to support the sometimes desperate work taking place in medical facilities here and abroad.

There are the scientists who are searching for a vaccine, as well as the makers and providers of medical equipment.

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I also think of all those who put themselves in harm's way to provide for our daily needs and protect our communities ...

... such as those who work in our grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, restaurants, and the many other essential professions.

And, of course, our grateful thoughts and prayers go out to all of our first responders: the police, firefighters, and EMTs, as those who serve in our military and government.

But I am also thinking of all of you who serving and helping others by reaching out in so many other thoughtful and compassionate ways every day.

I am especially grateful to our parish staff who have had to learn a "new normal" with regard to procedures, not to mention the technological education we are getting.

I also want to thank in a particular way the small band of volunteers who have made phone calls to dozens of our parishioners who do not have access to the Internet.

To those of you who do, please continue to check out our parish website (where my homilies and other resources are available) as well as our Facebook page and - hopefully soon - our You Tube channel.

I have no doubt that all of you have been "washing one another's feet" through many acts of kindness which are both creative and selfless.

To the parents out there with children pursuing their studies at home, God bless you!

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And to our young people - especially those who are about to graduate - my heart goes out to you for the traditions you will miss and the uncertainty of your plans for your future.

You are all in my prayers.

I am also very mindful of those of you who may be home alone and feeling isolated or even depressed.

You can always call us at the office; we love to talk!

The gift of the Eucharist and the example of service is at the heart of our Christian faith.

Let us keep trying to discover new pathways for acts of kindness, and let us continue to pray for that day when we will once again be gathered around the table of the Lord's altar of praise. God bless you and keep you safe.