

Our Lady of the Airways Parish

Holy Thursday, 2020



Dear Friends in Christ,

We begin our Easter Triduum celebrations this evening with the Mass of the Lord's Supper. This Mass is important to our faith because of the mysteries which are commemorated in it. On the eve of his Passion, Jesus gathered his apostles in the upper room and there instituted the Eucharist. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI beautifully capture the reality of that evening, when he said: *"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22:15). With these words Jesus began the celebration of his final meal and the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus approached that hour with eager desire. In his heart he awaited the moment when he would give himself to his own under the appearance of bread and wine."*

During that same meal, Our Lord also instituted the priesthood. The basis of the Sacrament of Holy Orders can be seen in the foot-washing scene as described by St. John the Evangelist: *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded" (Jn 13:3-8).* By washing his apostles' feet - a task that was usually reserved for the lowest slave of the house - Jesus wanted to impart on them the very essence of the ministerial priesthood, a call that consists of a life of humble service.

One of the most beautiful dimensions of Holy Thursday takes place at the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. According to *Paschales Solemnitatis*: *"After the final prayer, a procession forms, and the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by lighted candles and incense, is carried through the church to the place of reservation, or the chapel of repose."* Traditionally, the faithful are encouraged to spend some time during the night in the church in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. This has been our custom since ancient times; that is, until this year. Given that our churches will continue to remain closed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, there can be the temptation for the people of God to forgo this wonderful, pious practice. But I would beg you to please reconsider. While it is true that you cannot be physically present before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, there is nothing to prevent you from coming to Him in spirit. With a simple act of faith, you can come and prostrate yourself before his Eucharistic Presence. You can still offer him many acts of love, tenderness and affection, just as if you had come in person. The Lord, who can read the minds and hearts of each one of us, will undoubtedly be pleased with your pious acts and offerings.

In his book titled, *The Eucharist, Our Sanctification*, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa offers a similar thought: *"...In our hearts we can stay in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.... Jesus said that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. Our greatest treasure in this world is Jesus in the Eucharist, and none other. May our hearts be there, may they return there after our night's rest, may their dwelling place be the tabernacle. It is possible to spend, in spirit, hours and hours on our knees before the Most Holy Sacrament while still working or travelling."*

Father Cantalamessa's words are appropriate at any time, but particularly during these exceptional and difficult times. Although our churches will continue to remain closed for the foreseeable future, the faithful can still come and adore the Eucharistic Lord, in spirit, at any moment of the day. I believe that nothing would give the Lord more pleasure than these spiritual and pious acts of love.

May Jesus Christ, truly present in the all the tabernacles of the world, bless you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Rev. Fr. Thomas Lim".

Fr. Thomas Lim