

HOMILY FOR THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER 9th April 2020

A TIME FOR LIBERATION

A TIME FOR COMMUNION

A TIME FOR SERVICE

LIBERATION:

Like Abraham, our wandering Aramaean father in faith;

Like Moses and the Israelites after the moment of Passover from Egyptian captivity,

We are wandering in search of a safe homeland.

How will it differ from the accessible comforts of globalisation? We should fear that our consumer goods, our consumer entertainment, our consumer education and sport will spring back to tempt us like the biblical fleshpots of Egypt.

How will the post COVID 19 world align with God's plan for our salvation? Are we prepared to leave behind our fleshpots to form an interdependent fraternity of nations in solidarity? This is the vision of Catholic Social Teaching for the past 120 years. Pope Francis, in giving his blessing to the world on 7th April, prayed in God's name with these words:

"Our vulnerability uncovers false certainties we have constructed. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity."

Let us pray that our world may exit the crisis less prone to our sins of greed, and pride, and lustful self-absorption.

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COMMUNION

We sang a few minutes ago: “Our blessing cup is a communion with the blood, and body, of Christ.”

St Paul handed on from Jesus his wish that we partake of his body and blood as a memorial of him. Jesus lives uninterrupted through the rolling centuries in every village and every metropolis as we make memorial of him in the celebration of the Eucharist.

This year, our physical distance from one another rears up as an obstacle to our communion in his body and blood. But need it be?

We are, St Paul teaches in another place, the Body of Christ, and each of us singly is a member of the Body. We are bound together as the living cells, the chemical harmonies and physical machines that make up our bodies are unified in our spirit, our soul.

The gracious love of Christ animates us even at a distance from one another and from the sacrament of his Body and Blood. The Holy Spirit of the Body of Christ sends us to one another while still at a distance. Pause and think of whom I miss most on this night, think of whom I neglect most in the Body of Christ and form a spiritual communion with Christ, and, in and with Christ, have spiritual communion with them.

I think of our sick and housebound parishioners, of the residents in aged care who now have missed three visits from the Lord with the help of Sr M Joseph, Sr M Therese, Florence and Judith.

I think of five families who are mourning the loss of a spouse and parent, and a precious granddaughter.

I think of the eight generous servants of our parish who have assembled with me to celebrate the Eucharist. It is a joy to have them beside me as we do the church's work – the meaning of the word 'liturgy'.

I think of you, the viewer whom I do not see.

Let us be the living Body of Christ. Nothing can prevent us from being his Body, for the upbuilding of his Church, and for the world.

SERVICE

Jesus took off his outer garments, leaving only a loincloth, the dress of a slave; he washes their feet; he enlightens Peter that this is his goal – loving them to the end, to perfection; Jesus MUST wash the feet of his disciple, Peter must not prevent God from revealing his identity as the slave of his own creatures.

His goal is to reveal the nature of God, of his Father. Seeing his action, onlookers see the face of God.

The goal, the purpose of the gift of his body and blood is to reveal the truth about divine loving, that it is total service.

You who are viewing cannot eat of his Body and drink of his Blood tonight. However, you can be his body and blood for your neighbour, his real presence in extraordinary circumstances. If we have ever partaken of his body and blood we are vowed to be slaves of one another. Communion with Christ is service of one another.

You and I will have moments as the weeks and months of isolation unfold that will require us to be imaginative and creative in loving one another.

Speaking of Christ's service, we must prayerfully remember one more group tonight.

Lord Jesus, who gave your life for us, strengthen and protect the medical and first responder professional women and men who, with brave care, tend to you, for it is you who suffer again in the sick and dying victims of this pandemic. For you are the God of love who live and reign for ever and ever. AMEN.

REMEMBER

The Israelites recalled each year that God was their friend and saviour, freeing them from captivity.

St Paul recalls what Christ handed on to him, and implicitly commands us to remember the Lord's action at the Supper.

How will I remember the season of COVID 19?

Will it remain a heavy lament for the suffering of multitudes?

Can it be a trusting song of thanks to God who gives life, who raises the dead to new life?

A saintly Carmelite nun, Ruth Burrows, wrote: The day itself is blessed by God. Guided by her faith, may we receive the grace of enlightenment to see that, even now, the day is blessed by God.