

## 2020 Holy Thursday

1. **"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD;** throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance **forever.**" (Exod 12:14) Like the Jewish people who have celebrated the Passover for thousands of years now, the Church has been celebrating the Mass of the Lord's Supper for over two thousand years. This year is unique because the whole Church is conscious of not being able to celebrate this day together. Yet just as he gives his command to the Jews so also to us he says, **"Do this as a memorial of me!"** **The "forever" of the first covenant has lost none of its force in the second.** It was to remain for the people of Israel a permanent watermark on their memory of God's love for them. It was a continual offer of salvation as they journeyed through history. He who instituted the first, now on the night of his Passover institutes the New Covenant. One was established on the tablets of the memory, the other is established in his own person. It will no longer depend upon our fidelity but on his. **In the Eucharist, the whole order of salvation changes.**

2. **After Jesus washed their feet,** he blessed the bread and broke it saying: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, this is my body which will be given up for you." The Apostles take the bread now changed into the body of Christ and eat it. Jesus enters into them! He is no longer just with them at table, but in them, in their souls. **They are no longer just companions, they are in him, within him; it is the first time he has called them "inside" the mystery of his passion which is about to unfold.** Through the Eucharist Jesus unites each one of them personally with himself, to all the unfathomable events that are about to unfold. **In a similar way, as each of us receives the Blood of the Covenant he participates in the sacrifice and the shedding of the Blood of the Divine Lamb.**

3. **The apostles themselves will not always accompany him through the trials of his passion;** they will desert him! But they will be united to him, nonetheless. Their participation in his sacrifice will be hidden even from their eyes. In their very cowardice, as they witness the crucifixion of the Lamb of God from a safe social distance, they will still be mysteriously united to the Shepherd and High Priest! The memory of that day will become a living presence within them: **"Do this as a memorial of me." He carries them there!**

4. **Jesus knew that we could not live without the Eucharist!** The Eucharist is the divine sap that inundates not just our souls but the whole of creation, because it is the life of God himself! To us he says: "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink his Blood you will have no life in you." (Jn 6:53) **Those who just fed on him, who were the first to desert and betray him, were his priests, not the ordinary lay folk.** Of those who were outside the Cenacle that first Eucharistic night, a few found strength without the Eucharist to follow him even to the consummation of his sacrifice on Calvary: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Clopas. Without the strength provided by the Eucharist, they accompanied him to Calvary. **Mary carried them, for she carried him as a memorial from her Immaculate Conception. Let her carry us there!**

5. **Mary's condition of being at the Cross without the Eucharist resonates with so many of the Church's faithful,** who today like here are asked to ascend the mount of Calvary without the comforting strength of the Eucharist. But we can mount up with her, in her company, as did the three other disciples. **We can be nourished by her presence as he once was by her and she by him on the way to Calvary.**

**6. There is a deep link between the Eucharist and Mary at the Last Supper,** even if Mary is not present! Jesus institutes the Eucharist on the night of the Last Supper for the whole Church, his Bride. Yet the Eucharist was instituted first and foremost for her, Mary! **She is a figure of the Church, who in her Immaculate Conception already received the fullness of divine life that will become the treasure of the whole Church at the Last Supper.** Mary personally will share in a unique way in the offering of the Lamb on Calvary. Like the Church she will “drink” from the Blood and Water flowing from his side at his crucifixion. By her union with him she will be nourished by him and die with him. **The Church lives from the Eucharist as Jesus once lived from her.**

**7. As we enter the mystery of the Last Supper, the whole order of salvation changes.** Let us allow her to teach us how to enter into the “forever” of the New Covenant, which like the Divine Love that upholds the universe now becomes the space for you and me to live in. Like her, **in him we offer him, through him we offer him and with him we live for him.**