

Holy Thursday Readings April 9, 2020

FIRST READING: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

A reading from the Book of Exodus:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month shall stand at the head of your calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a family is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest household in procuring one and shall share in the lamb in proportion to the number of persons who partake of it. The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole assembly of Israel present, it shall be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. That same night they shall eat its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. “This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the LORD. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the LORD! But the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thus, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you. “This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institution.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18.

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

How shall I make a return to the LORD for all the good he has done for me? The cup of salvation I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones. I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds.

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. My vows to the LORD I will pay in the presence of all his people.

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians:

Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: John 13:1-15

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection Holy Thursday Evening

Faith is a gift from God to us. Our trust in God may feel like our gift back. Yet trust in God is part of God's gift of faith. The ancient Israelites faced the Angel of Death and an uncertain future. God saved them through lambs' blood smeared on the lintels of the doors to their homes. Death passed over them. God saved them. Their lamb and its blood was the Passover Lamb slaughtered and eaten at the first Seder Meal. At night, the Angel of Death passed over their homes as they ate lamb. The first born son in each Egyptian family died. The Israelites then fled Egypt and passed over into the Promised Land.

In the story of Exodus, God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to lead them to the Promised Land. In the gospels Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin and to lead us into eternal life. Jesus is the Lamb of God. By his blood he has saved us from sin and death.

We face the Angel of Death too. In the COVID 19 pandemic we face the possibility of death. We pray that it will pass over us before we pass over into Eternal Life. Today, we share the Israelites' anxiety and fear as we face uncertainty. It is important for us to face this pandemic with responsibility. As we protect ourselves, we protect one another. Stay at home. Go out for food and medicine only. Keep at least six feet apart from others and wear a mask, bandanna or a scarf across your nose and mouth. Wash your hands and disinfect the surfaces you touch. When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with a tissue. Don't touch your face. If you feel sick, stay home. There is nothing miraculous about these actions as in the book of Exodus. These actions show our commitment to faith. May God help us to do these things. God isn't speaking to us through Moses, God speaks through our officials. To remain well, we must all cooperate.

In John's gospel there is no story of the Eucharist. There is no bread or wine. Jesus speaks no words of institution either. In this gospel Jesus washes apostles' feet. It is surprising that Jesus washed the feet of Judas too. Judas left after Jesus finished the washing, as dinner began. The next passage of John's gospel tells that story.

On Holy Thursday we celebrate the first Eucharist and the commissioning of the apostles as priests. Since this all occurred at a meal, the Eucharist is implied. Jesus, as Lord and Messiah, did the deed of washing. We all do our best to serve God. Here God served the apostles. Jesus, when finished, commanded them to do the same to one another. This seems to be a universal, not a specific command. We hear Jesus words too. He speaks to all of us as well. This implies that Jesus has not just commissioned the twelve but all of us.

Each of us, at baptism, was anointed with Chrism on the crown of our heads as priest, prophet and king. A priest offers sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. A prophet preaches the Word of God. A king rules. When Jesus returns, he will establish his kingdom. We will rule together with him. Everyone knows there can be no mass without a priest. Except for extraordinary times like these, a mass must also have a congregation of at least one. The congregation answers the call of the prayers. Today we celebrate the fullness of the priesthood. There is the priesthood of the

baptized. From that priesthood comes mine, through ordination. If I had not been baptized, I would never been ordained a priest. Eucharist and priesthood are forever joined. We celebrate, on Holy Thursday, the institution of the Eucharist and the fullness of the priesthood; yours and mine.

Since we are all separated, an inconvenience to us separately, we must remember that it is for the good of all, not just our family, parish or municipality but for the good of every human being on the face of the earth.

Faith equips us to find sense in the senseless and meaning where there seems to be none. Faith allows us to entrust one another into God's hands.

Be well and help keep others well too.

James D. Beath
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