

My Dear People,

*“Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.”* With these words, St John the Evangelist begins the narrative of the great drama of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, of which he was a personal witness. Alone among the Apostles, he remained at the foot of the Cross with Mary. The Passion narrative begins with the Last Supper, it cannot be broken or separated with what happens the next day on Good Friday, it is tied, joined as one single act. What Jesus does to save us involves tonight, Friday, and Sunday. All three are necessary for the life of our Faith, all three form essential parts of God’s infinitely wise and mysterious plan. All three are joined and explained by the very first phrase of St John’s Passion narrative: Love. It was love that caused God to take upon Himself our human nature, to be born of the Virgin Mary in a stable, to live in obscurity, to teach for three years, and for three hours to redeem us upon the Cross. It was love, the infinite ocean of eternal life and light *that is God Himself* in the heaven of the Blessed Trinity, that caused God to create humanity, and indeed the entire universe. Love is the explanation of everything, it is the source and summit of our life as Christians. We are from God, and our job on earth is to go back to Him. Jesus came to show us back, since we, as a race and as individuals, had lost our way by sin. The three days we are about to enter into are days when the powers of sin and diabolic rebellion against God and His Anointed One reach a climax of titanic proportions. It is a struggle unto death. Indeed, it seemed that the victory was on the part of the devil. But all the evil of the world, all the evil of hell, is a drop compared to the ocean of divine love which is all powerful. These three days are days of love, and yet, nonetheless, they are as Christ said, the hour of darkness. We must contemplate this strange juxtaposition, not just in what happened 2,000 years ago, but what is happening this Holy Week 2020.

St John’s Gospel does not, unlike the other three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist. We can reason that, as this scene was so well known by the time he wrote his Gospel, indeed known by heart by all Christians, that he leaves it out and includes details which the other Evangelists, not present at the time, left out. Our Lord’s words to His Apostles, known as His ‘discourse’, as so tender and so illuminating. I encourage you to read them today if you can, or in the next days, chapters 14 through 17 in John.

In the Institution of the Eucharist, Our Lord not only makes Himself sacramentally but really present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, but He gives a means whereby to perpetuate His Sacrifice on the Cross the next day. His saving act of love and obedience is re-presented, mystically but truly, every time Holy Mass is validly offered. The Mass is not only the renewal of the Last Supper, but it is the renewal of what the Last Supper itself accomplished: the eternal Sacrifice of the New Covenant in His Blood. *This is the Chalice of My Blood, of the New and Eternal Covenant, shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

This year we are prevented from being present, physically at the Mass, and from receiving Jesus in Communion sacramentally. What a strange situation! But, we are in no way prevented from loving Jesus in the Eucharist, and from being grateful, to the core of our being and soul, for the gift of the Eucharist, and of our belief in the power and efficacy of the Mass itself. Cannot God use this strange situation to make our love stronger? Yes. Can He not use this to make our Faith in the real presence deeper and greater? Yes again. Let us ask for this gift which can turn this odd circumstance into a triumph and victory of heaven, and not a moment of darkness and discouragement. No moment was darker than the eve of the betrayal of Jesus, yet no moment was more luminous when the love of God for us overcame time and space in the Institution of the Eucharist.

To continue His Presence and His Sacrifice, Jesus gave the Church priests. In the New Testament, there is, properly speaking, only one priest: Jesus Christ Himself. But, He shares His Priesthood in a special way *so that what He did then can be done daily for His sheep until the world ends*. How much the world needs more priests, because the world needs Jesus! But, in saying this, we have to say, how much the world needs holy priests who are on fire with the love of Jesus as were the saints. Holy Thursday is the Feastday of the priesthood itself. So, it is a moment when all of us have to beg Jesus to send into the world more priests. For this to happen, the hearts of those young men with potential vocations have to be converted. God chooses to use human instruments, just as each of us has to freely know and love Christ. Human instruments are not machines, they are people, and sinful people. These present-day Apostles whom Jesus calls need to follow this invitation. It also means they have to overcome the obstacles to it, including sin and fear. The modern world keeps our young people away from Christ with its thousand distractions and illusions. We can all pray for the light of Jesus to pierce this darkness, and enflame with love those He calls to serve Him in a unique way for the greater good of the Church universal.

I also ask you, not only to pray for this intention, but for all priests, that they may let Christ “wash them all over” as St Peter asked when Jesus washed his feet. In these next days, the floodgates of mercy and heavenly power are open at full capacity, pray, pray, pray! The holiness of priests is so important, since they have to carry His light and love to the world. Pray that they keep their gaze on Christ so as to be transformed into His instruments of salvation.

The greater the darkness, the greater the light of Christ shines in this darkness. Hold on to this, cling to it, believe with everything inside of you. Our Faith is powerful, more than we know.

*Having loved His own, He loved them to the end.* Even if you cannot assist and participate in the Liturgical ceremonies of the Triduum as normal, you can follow in your heart the love story that is being re-lived in these next few days. You can follow Jesus, you can show Him your gratitude, you can renew your Faith. Our Faith is a gift from God. He has given it because He has chosen you and me to follow Him. Let us follow Him, with Mary, through His suffering. This year is a Holy Week like no other. For better or worse. It is our love and faith which can make it ‘for better.’ That is not optimism or positive thinking, it is Hope. And that, my dear people, is what Christ’s death gives us.

Fr Walter