

Holy Thursday
9 April 2020
Saint Marcus Saint Lawrence

Gift

Tonight, we commemorate the beginning of the suffering and death of the Lord. We see the great generosity of the Lord as he begins His sacred passion. He begins with two gifts. The first is that of the Eucharist by which he feeds us with his Body and Blood, which he is about to offer for us on the cross, making it possible for him to give himself to us anywhere in the world. He also gives us the priesthood through the Apostles. Men he makes like himself to carry on what he has done. "Do this in memory of me!" This just doesn't mean we are to call it back to mind. No. He means: remembering with these symbols will make my sacrifice present for other so I can nourish them with My Body and Blood. As a result, Eucharist and Priesthood are inseparably linked. We see in the Passion of Jesus the all too human side of the Apostles. Yet part of the revelation of Christ's glory is that he strengthens these warm-blooded men to go and celebrate the mysteries he gave them. This is an incredible God given gift. This can also be a source of sadness for us right now in these times. Because of the common humanity we all share priests and people alike we are all subject to the weakness of being susceptible to sickness and disease. Especially when it is a new disease to which everyone, at least at some level, lacks proper immunity. This isolation, not just from each other but from the celebration of the Eucharist and the other Holy week mysteries, can leave us lost and disoriented. Yet finding ourselves in spiritual and physical disorientation is an opportunity also. We can still watch Holy Mass and the Holy Week mysteries and make a spiritual communion by opening our hearts at communion time and allowing Jesus to join his body and blood, His most sacred heart, with ours. It is also a great opportunity to allow our hunger to deepen. You know when you work in the field all day and have nothing to eat and then go in to supper the food tastes so good! Partly because you are hungry. So too in this situation, we can allow our hunger for celebrating the Eucharist to grow. Often these days in church life we allow ourselves to be distracted by things like Mass times, or parish configurations, or whether we like the priest or not. The reality is with all gifts is that they can be taken away. For now, we find ourselves in a situation where these great gifts have been suspended. This is an opportunity for all of us in this time of suspended public celebration of the Sacraments to see the gift that the Eucharist is, the gift that the priesthood is, and to realize how fragile it all can be because of our weak human nature. My Grandpa Philip always used to say to

me as a boy, “Joe you are only guaranteed two things in life, death and taxes!” He was right. The beauty of that statement is that we can then begin to see everything else we have, spiritual and material, as gifts. On this quiet Holy Thursday night let us enter the garden with Jesus with grateful hearts. He did this all so he could give us himself! Let us let our hunger for his Sacramental gifts grow so that we may taste the fullness of their beauty again when they are restored to us.