

Prelate's Homily on Holy Thursday

"The Eucharist is Jesus Christ himself, really present and given for us." Words from Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz's homily in Our Lady of Peace in Rome, on 29 March 2018.

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“Having loved those who were his own in the world, he loved them to the end” (*Jn* 13:1). These words from Saint John’s gospel are as it were the entrance way to the Pascual Triduum. We have arrived at the

center of the liturgical year, and the Church wants to remind us that everything we relive during these days—the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus—is a manifestation of our Lord's immense love for us. If we open wide our eyes and listen more attentively, and above all prepare our heart, we will discover during these days how Jesus also loves us “to the end,” to the extreme of giving his life for us . . .

We should each ask ourselves: what place does Jesus occupy in my life? Who is He for me? In order to answer these questions, let us start with another, more fundamental one: who am I for Jesus? He himself gives us the answer with the words and gestures we contemplate in the Last Supper. For Him, we are his friends, and He loves us as we are: with our defects and our need for purification, just like the apostles as they celebrated the Passover with

Jesus in the Upper Room. Our Lord admits into his presence people with limitations, and introduces them into the intimacy of his life and makes them his friends.

In the eyes of Jesus, our life is so important that, to make us his friends, He has given over his Body and allowed his Blood to be poured out. Moreover, He has wanted to perpetuate this self-giving in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, whose institution we commemorate today. As Saint Paul in the second reading from the Mass tells us: “the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which 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” (1 Cor 11:23-25).

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ himself, really present and given for us. In the Eucharist, He shows us in a special way his friendship, and his desire to accompany us each day in our life. May each of us, on realizing how close our Lord is to us, react as Saint Josemaria suggests: “Be filled with wonder at God’s goodness, for Christ wants to live in you. Be filled with wonder too when you are aware of all the weight of your poor flesh, of your wretched flesh, and all the vileness of the poor clay you are made of. Yes, but then remember too that call from God: Christ, who is God and Man, understands me and looks after me, for he is my Brother and my Friend” (*The Forge*, no. 182).

Jesus wants to be present in our lives. But how do we respond, by offering to accompany Him, taking

part in the Holy Mass, spending time with Him in front of the tabernacle or in an act of Eucharistic adoration? What place does the Eucharist have in my life? . . .

Experiencing Jesus' company in the Eucharist spurs us to overcome our selfishness, our fear to complicate our lives with the concerns of those around us. Therefore I invite you to pay heed to God's call, who is asking us to accompany our friends: dedicating time to them, listening to their problems or simply being with them when they are discouraged or are suffering . . .

Let us ask our Lady that we may recognize Jesus' presence in our lives, especially in the Eucharist, and encourage those around us to accompany Him each day.

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