



## **Holy Thursday (Year B)**

### **Homily**

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton  
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**Thursday 29 March 2024  
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

The three days of celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus is one continuous liturgy.

We begin with the church gathering this evening around the table of the Lord, and this first part of the liturgy of the Triduum will end as we spend time in prayer at the Altar of Repose for the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus Himself, with His disciples left the Passover table in the Upper Room to walk out of the city of Jerusalem and to enter the Garden of Gethsemane. There He stopped to pray in the olive grove. And this is where we leave the liturgy, to return tomorrow to celebrate the next part of the Easter Triduum: Good Friday.

These three days are the occasion we take to celebrate the mighty love and mercy of God, who seeing our frailty, chose to intervene personally, to restore us to the relationship with Him as he intended from the beginning.

We say “celebration” and we use the word “festival” when referring to these days of remembrance, even though we follow the awful events of Christ’s betrayal, condemnation, cruel torture and inhuman death on the cross in Jerusalem.

There are different ways of looking at these events: we can feel great sadness and empathy for Jesus, and at the same time be amazed and joyful that God should go to such lengths for us out of love for us.

I was speaking to a man recently who grew up in Ireland. He remembers Good Friday as being a very solemn day, with fasting, keeping one’s eyes downcast, no smiling or laughter. His town was blanketed by a dark sense of sadness. In most of the countries that we come from, this experience would be quite common.



But this first evening of the Triduum is a wonder and a celebration. It brings us to the room where Jesus gathered His disciples with Mary for a Passover meal.

He knew what was ahead of them the next day. So, it was with the change He instituted to the Passover that He would provide a passage from death to life for them, and for us; This the gift of the Eucharist. This evening, we are invited to celebrate the mystery whereby we continue to do what Jesus did: to take bread, to bless it, to break it, to share it. And to remember that we dare to do it only because Jesus commanded us to. We priests and bishops have felt this daring!

The disciples would begin to realise that the Eucharist is the source of our strength every day from that evening, because they came to know the presence of Jesus when they broke the bread. They also came to realise that they were empowered to renew the Eucharistic presence of Christ, the Bread of Life, from then on and down the ages.

In doing what Jesus has commanded, we firstly recall when the first Eucharist was given to us, in the Upper Room, but we also come to meet Jesus in our life, aided by each Eucharist, and we can believe that he will be in our life tomorrow. This is the wonder of the Eucharist, given to us at the Last Supper and entrusted to the Church.

This is the wonder that we can contemplate. As we conclude this Mass of the Institution of the Eucharist, we will have the chance to spend some time to contemplate the mystery of the presence and gift of Christ.

Earlier this week, I attended a meeting with several ministers from Christian Churches that support school chaplains in the government secondary colleges. One of them discussed with me the treasure we have in liturgy where there is time for quiet prayer and contemplation. He comes from an evangelical church which has a different style of worship. He has from time to time visited more traditional churches, such as ours, in search of that space for quiet prayer and reflection.

At Mass, our prayer may include our desire to know more clearly what God is asking of us today; where has he been asking me to look so that I can understand myself better; what do I have to address so that my Christian life has integrity? During the Mass and in our prayer in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the Lord, who can quieten the busy mind, can speak to us.

Shortly, we will have the chance to observe the Washing of the Feet. Again, this is what Jesus has done, and He expects of us: He has given us an example to copy. The disciples observed the humility of Christ and realised that humility was needed in the mission Jesus called them to after the resurrection.

Let us observe and learn from this service.