

March 29, 2018 Holy Thursday

Tonight we realize something. But, before I get to that something, this week has been a week of holiness. A week of preparation for these three days, especially for Easter Vigil and Easter. On Monday, the chrism Mass was at the Cathedral. And of course, we had about 150 – 170 priests sitting up in the sanctuary of the Cathedral, with the Bishop. Being the “wisest” priest in the diocese, knowing how hot it gets in the sanctuary up there, I sat by the door back here because if the door outside was open, the wind blows through there. Also, it’s the closest door to the bathroom. I sat there with my former associate and he’s like, “Wow, I’m glad I followed you.” Bishop gave a stirring and inspirational talk for the priests, which happens on the chrism Mass, but there was a major difference from Bishop Kakanis. Bishop Kicanis, we call him the bishop of three homilies. At the chrism Mass, he’d give a homily after he walked in, at the regular time, and before we left. He could talk fifteen to twenty minutes for each one. It’s a horrible thing to sit there and go through three homilies. I hope you never have that opportunity. And I should tell you something, I don’t know if it will leave a bad mark on me or not. One time when I was in line to go into the procession, I was telling the priest next to me, “I hope the bishop doesn’t have three homilies again.” He was two people behind me, but I didn’t know it. So we got in there and at the end of Mass, Bishop goes to the end of Mass and he stops and he says, “And Father Branson doesn’t want me to give a homily at this point. Is that Okay Father Branson?” I go, “That’s perfectly fine Bishop.” When I got outside all the priests shook my hand and said, “Thank you.” He didn’t stop giving three homilies but he cut down the length. But anyway, the chrism Mass would last two to two and a half hours with him. With Bishop Weisenburger, hour and a half. We were in and out. For us priests, that’s great, because we have to get back to parishes and get ready for Holy Week.

Yesterday was Spy Wednesday, because Judas spied on Jesus, went to get the money and brought the chief priests over to arrest Him. Today is Maudy Thursday, Latin for mandate. And now I’m going to get in to all of that. The thing that is special about tonight is it begins with the realization that God wanted to complete something with us. Every human being has two needs; to love and to be loved. That’s because we are created in God’s image and God is love. Between the Father and the Son, the Son and the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and between each one of those. It’s held together by love. We can have all the money in the world, all the popularity, power, whatever, but if we don’t have love, or get a chance to love, we are nothing and we are going to feel horrible. Without love and the chance to be loved; it’s a two-part thing. We’re miserable. We are created to love. Jesus shows us in these three days, how much He loved us.

Tonight we begin the Passion of Jesus. We’re going to read it tomorrow, we read it on Palm Sunday. But, His real presence in the tabernacle, shows us how much love. Tonight we celebrate three things that are key and central to Christianity; two of these specifically to the Catholic faith. The first one we celebrate is Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist, at the last supper. This was supposed to be a Passover meal, but a Passover meal is for the whole family; men, women, children. But, this meal only had men. The Blessed Mother was at another satyr meal or Passover meal. Mary Magdalene was at another Passover or satyr meal. The reason was because Jesus knew what He was going to do. He was going to institute a whole new sacrifice. A whole new meal, we call it the Mass, we call it the Eucharist. So instead of taking the bread from the table and the meat of the lamb, He said, “This is My body, this is My blood that you are about to eat.” For over two thousand years now, we have participated in the Mass in reenacting the Passover feast. The way Jesus wanted it to be. So that we consume His body and

blood, not pita bread and lamb. He instituted a whole new sacrifice. At every Mass, we celebrate Calvary, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we celebrate it over and over again. Because with God, everything is present, everything is infinite. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we ask God to forgive our sins. And, until the last human being is gone, the end of time, quit sinning, then we will no longer need to celebrate the sacrifice. Then we can sit down to the meal which is going to be in heaven. I call it a buffet, but nobody waits on you at a buffet, so I have to take it back to banquet. We have to have somebody waiting on us, it says the Father's going to wait on us. Now, because He had all these men present, He instituted the ministerial priesthood; Catholic priests. The apostles were the first Catholic priests. Jesus showed them, at this meal on Holy Thursday, how to celebrate Mass. How to celebrate Mass for time eternity. We all do the same thing in all the different rites and parts of the Catholic faith, and Orthodox as well. We all say the same words in different languages, but the same words and we have not changed those words. You can change other parts of the Mass, you can use other prayers, but the central part of the Mass, the consecration rite, never changes. Has not changed for over two thousand years. This is what Jesus was showing the apostles at that supper, "You will be priests." And, He made a statement by not having anybody else but men there. People disagree with that today but, you know what? If Jesus had wanted the most important person on the earth to be there to be a priest, who would that be? His mother, and then we would have women priests. But Jesus wanted men priests. And we've got to go into a lot of whole other stuff for that and I don't have time to do that tonight. Besides that, I'm not that kind of scientist. So, He did that and He gave us the ability because He is God, to multiply Him. Every minute of every day, 365 days a year, Jesus is being brought to this earth, graces are flowing, because of the Mass. If the Mass stops in one place because of say, communism or Muslims, it continues in another part of the world. If you check Church history, there is a 500-year cycle. In this part of the world, for 500 years the Church grows strong, then its dying down or concurred. This part, for 500 years dies out or concurred. It keeps moving around the globe so that the grace of God, through the Eucharist, conected by the ministerial priesthood, continues.

The other thing that is just as important and key, and flows from the Eucharist, is what He told them to do. This foot washing in the time of Jesus, was for a slave or the youngest child. But here, the rabbi the master, bends down and does this horrible task, to show them that no one is greater than another. That we are called to serve. That's what the mandate is. We are called to serve. At the time of Jesus, people were barefoot or wore sandals and they walked through streets of dirt and sand and they walked through animal poop. So when they went into the house, they wanted to be refreshed from the heat and all that; they got their feet washed. We in Arizona; what happens when we go into somebodies' house? A beer or iced tea. That's our way of being open and being a good host. "You like a beer, you like ice tea, you like a water, what do you want?" First thing when you walk in a house, "What do you want to drink?" And that's a good thing. But what would happen if the youngest child in the family walked up and asked the guest, "What would you like to drink?" And then, Dad came out on his knees with a tray holding the drinks and offering it to them. What would he show that child? What would he show the people coming in there? That, yes, it's my house, this is my kid, but I'm not too great to show this child service, to show you service. We have come to serve one another. It would be like if I invited a bishop over to my house and we had a nice dinner, and he got up and ordered me into the tv room while he did the dishes. Or when my Dad was in the military, if the base commander, and he was a sergeant, the base commander came over, had dinner and my Dad said, "Okay, it's time for us to do the dishes," and the colonel said, "Sit down, I'll do them." My Dad would have dropped dead of a heart attack. But what would that be showing him? One of the greatest British generals, (I'm sorry I forget his name) when the troops were in battle, WWI, after a battle and they were back safely in the trenches, he

would go to each soldier, take off their boots, pull off their socks, check their feet for blisters, and make sure they were okay. If there was a blister, he would lance it, he would do first aide. Those men would have followed him into hell, because he was showing service.

That's where we get Maudy Thursday, the Latin, *mandate*. "This mandate I give to you, to love and serve one another." That's why it was so shocking in the gospel when the writers put in the foot washing, because it had never been done before. If you were a superior, you would never lower yourself. It would dishonor you. Jesus said, "No, to serve one another, to be the slave for someone, to be the servant for someone, is the greatest thing in the kingdom of heaven." And that's what we celebrate tonight. Those three things. Those three things that all go under that one title, God is love. We expect God to love us, hopefully, but we also need to love someone else, we also need to serve one another. And that, three things, give us what we celebrate tonight. And, it will go on, as I said, until the end of time.

God bless you