Holy Thursday

# MDP of God

Most stories of true heroism depict the hero, not as a person without fear, but as one who moves ahead despite fear.

To not be fearful in the face of danger is not a virtue.

One ought to be fearful when facing danger – it helps you protect yourself

When the Israelites joined for that first Passover – they had no idea what was in store for them- *so they were fearful of what might happen*

Moses had worked some magnificent signs, but Pharaoh was still threatening them

But despite their fear – Moses and the Israelites went forward in faith – and of course *that going forward changed their whole history*

They went from slavery to freedom – from bondage to a new life

By the blood of an unblemished lamb – they were set free

*It wasn’t through their wisdom* – or their strength – or their cleverness that freedom came

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It was through the grace of God – it was through the death of an unblemished lamb, **which they ate –** and whose blood was put on the doorpost in order to save them

And all of that was to prefigure how we were to be saved

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For Jesus, there was also fear

In the movie “The Passion of the Christ” – I think they did a marvelous job of depicting just how full of anxiety Jesus was as He awaited His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane

**He was fearful** – but He didn’t let that fear keep Him from moving forward

He trusted the Will of the Father and prayed, “Not my Will, but your Will be done”

And of course He knew long before the Last Supper what was going to take place what was going to happen

## Which makes His words and actions that night all the more powerful

My friends, we live in a world that tonight is filled with fear—we have this terrible pandemic throughout the world

As of yesterday as I prepared this homily—there were 1.5 million infections throughout the world—with 88,000 deaths.

In the United States there were over 400,000 cases and 14,000 deaths

*Just to put that into perspective*—the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 that plunged our nation into WWII took 2,403 lives

The 911 attacks that brought about the war on terror—there were roughly 3,000 people who died---as of yesterday there are more than 14,000 Americans who have died from COVID-19

*So people are afraid*

Just like the Israelites the night of that first Passover

Just like Jesus and the disciples on that first Holy Thursday evening

But just as with the Israelites—God has a plan today and He promises to draw our eternal good out of all of this----*if we let Him*

Just as how God was able to use the suffering and death of Jesus to bring the salvation of the world---God can and will use this pandemic to help us grow in the work of salvation---*if we let Him*

What do I mean by –“if we let Him”

The fact is *God will use this ultimately for the good of the world*---but whether or not this pandemic leads us personally to a deeper faith—leads us personally to a deeper trust in God—leads us personally to grow in the mysteries of our faith---*that depends on how we choose to respond*

We can respond with---“Lord, I trust you---not my will but your will be done”---just as Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane that night

Or we can get angry—God –how dare you allow this to happen—God have you seen my 401K lately—what am I supposed to do?!?

This pandemic can be an opportunity for all of us to surrender to God

Normally on Holy Thursday – I’d be washing the feet of twelve of our parishioners – re-enacting what Jesus did the night He was arrested

This past Sunday in the reading of the Passion from Matthew’s Gospel – we heard Jesus say how He had anxiously looked forward to eating the Passover with His disciples

He anxiously looked forward to showing His Apostles that He came to serve

He anxiously looked forward to giving His Apostles the gift of the New Testament priesthood—but most of all He looked forward to giving them the greatest gift in all the world – the gift of His own body and blood in the Holy Eucharist

My friends, in so much of what Jesus did, He called us to look at our assumptions about life

In a world where so many see power as something to use to Lord it over others – *Jesus who is the all-powerful God* – showed that those with power should serve others

In a world that encourages people to seek their own glory – Jesus humbled Himself in washing the feet of His disciples –and even more importantly- He humbled Himself to share His very life with us in the Holy Eucharist

In a world where people so often resort to violence to solve problems – Jesus in telling Peter to put away His sword – taught that violence is usually not the best way to solve problems

Jesus really wasn’t anyone’s idea of what an all-powerful King would look like- or how an all-powerful king would act

But Jesus by His words and example is challenging all of us to look at our attitudes about life – and in the Blessed Sacrament which He has given us – He gives us the grace to bring our lives more in conformity with His own

He gives us the grace to be people who are willing to serve – He gives us the grace to be peacemakers – He gives us the grace to be humble, as He was humble.

Humility – Service – Peacemakers – *these are the virtues that Jesus demonstrates for us in this celebration*

But fear, often stands in the way of our living these virtues that Jesus demonstrated for us

If we give ourselves in service – *we can be afraid that people will take advantage of us*

If we’re humble – *we can be afraid that people will walk all over us*

If we try to be peacemakers *we can be afraid that we’ll be rejected*

But this celebration and these readings from God’s Word are calling us to look beyond the fear that might keep us from being the people God calls us to be

Jesus is telling us in the Gospel – don’t be afraid to give yourselves in service

Don’t be afraid to be peacemakers- Don’t be afraid to be humble

In fact, our celebration tonight and over the next few days challenges us to ask – Is my attitude that of the world – or that of Jesus

Do I seek to serve as Jesus did – or do I prefer to be served – as the world says we should?

Do I seek to be a peacemaker as Jesus was – or do I prefer to lash out – to get back at – to get even as the world does?

Do I seek to be humble as Jesus is – humble enough to become one of us – humble enough to embrace the cross- humble enough to give us Himself under the form of bread and wine ---- Or do I seek to exalt myself as the world says I should?

The good news is, even if my attitudes are more like the attitudes of the world than that of Jesus

Jesus doesn’t give up on me—He doesn’t give up on us – He shares His very life with us in Holy Communion *so that we can more and more become what He calls us to be*

My friends, Jesus is the hero of our story

During these Holy Days, let’s open our hearts to the grace that our hero so freely gives us in the Eucharist so that we can become peacemakers – so that we can become humble of hearts – so that we can be willing to give ourselves in service as Jesus taught us

Let us open our heart to His actions in the world *so that we won’t be afraid*—but that we’ll see the circumstances of our lives today—with the pandemic and the economic uncertainty—as an opportunity to surrender to God—as an opportunity to pray and really mean—“Lord not my will, but Yours be done.”