

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre; Conferral of Promotions and Memorial Mass

Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre

Conferral of Promotions and Memorial Mass

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Oct. 25, 2019

Introduction

The worship aid refers to this Eucharistic liturgy as a “Memorial Mass” and it upon that phrase that I would like to base my reflection this evening. For we have gathered to remember the Death and Resurrection of the LORD, and to remember and pray for the beloved dead of our Lieutenancy. We have also gathered to remember the good works flowing from faith that in the lives of those upon whom promotions were conferred this night.

The human memory is a wonderful thing. It enables us not only to recall names and faces and pertinent information, but also to remember the persons and events that we regard as important, if not crucial, for the course our lives have taken. Memory permits us to reminisce about times past, and, in a certain sense, to relive them, almost as if we had brought the past into the present. Memory also allows us to recall our loved ones who have gone before us in death, to experience again something of their friendship, their warmth, and their laughter. Nonetheless, our memories are not pure and limpid. As each of us knows only too well, our memories are clouded by sin and by the wounds of our existence.

How, then, does the Church remember? Since Mary is the all-encompassing model of the Church, we may say that the Church remembers as Mary did. As Mary witnessed and took part in the events in the life of her Divine Son, Scripture tells us that she

“treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.” She did not merely recall what had happened. Rather, in the power of the Spirit, she participated in these saving events more fully, and penetrated them more completely than any other human being who ever lived. Like Mother Mary, Holy Mother Church treasures every word and deed of our Savior and ponders them, reflects on them, probes them, celebrates them in her heart. Indeed, the Church refers to these events as mysteries, because these words and deeds of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, reveal the hidden and supremely loving heart of God the Father.

When Mary remembered the words and deeds of Christ, they were present to her in all their reality in the power of the Spirit. So too when the Church remembers the saving words and deeds of Christ, she does so in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that those events of the past become present; they are re-presented to us in a living way so that we can participate in them, so that we share in them, so that we can be spiritually formed by every word and deed of Christ but especially by his saving death and resurrection.

The Eucharist: Do This in Memory of Me

And so it was that we listened attentively as Christ spoke to us in St. John’s Gospel. We heard Jesus speak of himself as “the living bread that came down from heaven”. We listened as Jesus spoke with utter realism about his gift of self in the Eucharist: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you”. When the Church herself hears these words, she is overshadowed by the Spirit. In the Spirit’s power, Christ’s Paschal Sacrifice becomes present anew, in all its saving power, upon the altar the sacrifice. And by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and words of consecration uttered by the priest, mere bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. That is why St. John Paul II famously said that, in the Eucharist, you and I partake of the Cross and thus taste and digest the secret of the Resurrection. That, my friends, is how the Church remembers!

Remember Our Beloved Dead

How, then, do we remember our beloved dead, our comrades in the Equestrian Order, with whom we shared the Order’s spirituality and its mission? ... Our beloved

dead, with whom we shared friendship, interests, and faith? Do we remember them merely as friends who have passed from this earthly scene? Or do we not remember them as those who are alive in Christ Jesus, those on whom the hope of eternal life has shone? As we recall their names in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist we affirm our hope that, just as Risen LORD lives in the glory of the Holy Spirit, so too our beloved dead also live the power of that divine love flowing from the glorified humanity of the crucified Savior. Isn't that why we take to heart this night the inspired message of the 2nd Book of Maccabees, where it says that it is a good and a noble thing to remember our beloved dead, to pray for the happy repose of the dead, and to do so, in view of the hope that the resurrection from the dead affords. We remember our fallen knights and ladies as those who were baptized into the LORD's Death and Resurrection and nourished by the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation throughout their lives. It is in union with them and for them that we enter into the LORD's Paschal Sacrifice in this Eucharistic Liturgy.

Good Works Flowing from Faith

Lastly, we remember this night with gratitude the good works flowing from faith of those to be invested on the morrow – and thus we blessed their capes and insignia. So too we joyfully remember the fidelity to the mission of the Order of those of you upon whom promotions have been conferred. In remembering your character, their faith, and their good works, we are not merely rejoicing in human accomplishment. Rather, we are rejoicing and giving thanks for what the LORD has done and is doing in you and through you for the Church, for the Holy Land, and for the world. We take note of your good works as an extension of Christ's own. In our rejoicing we express our thanks, not merely by investing and promoting you; rather, we express our thanks by offering your good works to God the Father as part of his Son's Eucharistic Sacrifice, his gift of self on the Cross. In this way, your good works are remembered eternally for they are written in the Book of Life.

Conclusion

It turns out that the Eucharistic memorial is the depository in which all our memories are linked to Christ's Death and Resurrection and thus purified made a part of the eternal harvest. In remembering and indeed reliving the One Sacrifice of

Christ, may we lift up those in our Lieutenancy who have died and may we also lift up those who have been promoted and those to be invested. And God bless us and keep us always in his love!