

## **Holy Thursday Homily:**

**Sacrifice: The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that a sacrifice is, “A ritual offering made to God by a priest on behalf of the people, as a sign of adoration, gratitude, supplication and Communion.”**

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**There is a universal sense that everything in the world works by an exchange of one thing for another.**

**Physically, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Economically, people trade money for items or services of equal value. Relationships between organizations or nations are spelled out in contracts listing expectations, rights and duties of all parties. You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.**

**People tend to think it works the same way in the supernatural world. Throughout the world and throughout history, people perform actions and offer things in order to get something in return from whatever spirits or forces with whom they are communicating.**

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**For the Jewish and Christian people, the ultimate exchange is Sacrifice. For us, Sacrifice is Not bartering or negotiating for something. For us, a relationship with God is not about an equal and opposite exchange. Everything we have has been given to us by God. In sacrifice, we give some of it back as a token of our desire to give our entire selves to God.**

**Sacrifice is the truest and most basic form of worship. Everything else people do for God – like prayers and hymns - flow from sacrifice and use sacrificial words like “offering” or “oblation.”**

**In the Old Testament, there were certain people who were priests saying prayers and offering sacrifices for the people. But at the same time, God wanted Israel to be a nation of priests. They were to be the means of everyone in the world to come to God.**

**And in Christ this was perfected when he gave us a His one Perfect Sacrifice on the Cross.**

**Just as in the Old Covenant, there are some people who are appointed to make sacrifice for the rest of the us. Just as in the Old Covenant, God has made all of us into a priestly people who are called to bring everyone to Christ. Just as in the Old Covenant, our lives are to imitate our ritual sacrifice - our lives are to be sacrificed for others.**

**As Christians, we are to imitate our Lord and offer our lives for everyone's salvation. Our lives are to flesh out the sacrifice performed at the Mass, which makes present His sacrifice on the Cross.**

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**The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Covenant with Israel is renewed and made present every year as a holy, intimate meal, the Passover.**

**Christ identified the Passover with Himself as a New Covenant. Acting the prophet, He established it BEFORE His crucifixion so that His disciples – then and now – would know how to interpret His suffering as a Sacrifice. It was a Sacrifice where the priest offers Himself, not something else, for others. Jesus established this ritual sacrifice as a perpetual re-entering into that one, true, Perfect Sacrifice.**

**And this new Passover is also an intimate event. Whether the Mass is in a small parish church, or with a million people on a field surrounding the Pope at a World Youth Day; it is a personal, close-knit, side-by-side time of Christ nourishing His people, binding us as family.**

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**The Last Supper was personal. Christ touched the Disciples face-to-face. It was personal on many levels: the washing of the feet, the feeding, the teaching, the praying, and the sacrifice.**

**Our Lord is still that close to us in the Mass. And we are invited now - and as we leave - to be that close to Him. This evening has a particular power because we are invited to pause even more than usual to draw close to Him.**

**As we prepare for Easter may we allow this special closeness with Our Lord cause us to pause, and speak and listen more intently to Him.**