

Holy Thursday

Services at St. Francis
Church, April 6/50.

Holy
Thursday

IP (1)

"Do This for a Commemorative of Me" - Luke, ch. 22

vs. 19.

IP1: Monuments to Men.

Men, my dear brethren, when they wish some event or some person to be remembered, erect a monument to that event or that person. Our world is dotted and strewn with monuments, the attempt of the past to have itself remembered in the future. Notable monuments are the great pyramids and sphinx of Egypt and the ruined temples of Greece and Rome. In Paris is the famed tomb of Napoleon and the Triumphal Arch. In London is the tall column and statue in Trafalgar Square in honour of Nelson. Our own Canadian Parks are dotted with statues to our Canadian heroes and statesmen and our graveyards are filled with stars and crosses in memory of our dead. Perhaps the greatest monument builders of all were the Moguls of India and the greatest of these was the Shah Jehan. He was a contemporary of Henry IV and Queen Elizabeth of England. In his own honour he built the great Mogul Palace at Delhi, one of the most magnificent buildings in the world. John L. Stoddard, the great travel lecturer tells us that no words are adequate to describe its sculptured loveliness. In it there are literally miles of garlands, wreaths, vines and flowers sculptured of precious stones. Its long corridors and rooms are paved, roofed and lined with purest marble. The throne ordered built by Shah Jehan for himself was the famous "Peacock Throne", one of the marvels of the world. Jewelers laboured for seven years in its construction and its value was no less than thirty million dollars. Then to entomb the body of his beloved wife Shah Jehan had built what is generally conceded to be the most stupendous structure in the world, the Taj Mahal. It is the one completely faultless edifice that man has reared. It was begun in the year 1630 and occupied twenty thousand men for twenty years. It is a delicately sculptured mountain of alabaster, supporting in its crest a sparkling dome. Into it were poured all the richest jewels and stones from the Mogul Treasury. The ring of the history of Shah Jehan is this: on the walls of his great palace he had inscribed

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in exquisite mosaic a Persian verse whose meaning is
"If there be a paradise on earth, it is here." Yet Shah
Jehan was never permitted to occupy his palace; nor
when the Taj Mahal was completed could he enter it to
weep beside his beloved wife's grave. His own son, the
son of her who was embalmed in the Taj Mahal, overthrew
Shah Jehan and confined him to prison where he spent
the last seven years of his embittered life. So passes
the glory of this world. And now, after over three
hundred years, incipient signs of corrosion are creeping
into the great monuments of Shah Jehan.

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IP 2

IP 2: A Monument to God.

My dear brethren, the Royal Palace at Delhi and the Taj Mahal at Agra are typical of most human monuments. No matter what their beauty nor what noble ends inspired them, they are dead things, built by man, and corruptible. They bear little or no relation to present life and very often they were built to satisfy a vanity that was defeated.

There is a monument and a memorial which bears none of these imperfections and the institution of which we celebrate to-day. This evening besides celebrating the anniversary of one of the truly great events in human history, we celebrate the institution of the greatest monument of all time.

To-day, as you know, my dear brethren, many Catholics follow the laudable custom of making a visit to seven different churches to visit our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist.

And if we were to examine the history of this devotion we would find that it goes back to early Christian times when the Christians of Rome on Holy Thursday visited the seven principal churches of Rome. And what was the inspiration of this devotion? It was that on the first Holy Thursday, the eve of the day of our redemption by blood, there was given to the human race the supreme monument and gift of God, Christ in the Eucharist.

Once more, on this anniversary we are naturally inclined to fix our attention on the solemn event of the Last Supper, which was also the first Eucharistic banquet.

Christ and his 12 apostles are reclining at the Paschal table. Our Lord knows as He sits there that within a day every drop of blood will be drained from His veins. He knows that the soul of Judas is already blackened with the sin of selling for silver the Son of God; and that already it has been agreed upon that He should be betrayed by a friend. Around Christ in the hearts of Judas, the high priests, the scribes and the pharisees the emotion of hate is swelling stronger.

The atmosphere around Christ is heavy with hate. Yet here is the seeming contradiction. While men were planning the greatest act of hate Christ gave us the greatest gift of His love. At the very moment when the Jewish leaders were trying to remove Jesus from among the people, Our Lord instituted the means by which He would stay with them until the end of time.

So surrounded by hate, in Christ Himself at the last supper there is only love. He says "a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." And then He says "With denials I have denied to eat this passover with you, before I suffer." And taking bread into His hands He says "This is my body" and taking wine He says "This is the chalice of my blood." and "Do this for a commemoration of me."

So it was that Christ made His last will and testament before He died, bequeathing to us the supreme memorial of the Eucharist - to stay with us until the end of time.

103: The Eucharist is the greatest of all monuments.

Let us see how the Eucharist surpasses all human monuments to an infinite degree.

1. The Eucharist is a memorial raised by God Himself. All others are the work of men.
2. Human monuments are but imitations of the original or buildings of stone, wood, plaster or metal, but the Eucharist is Christ Himself, in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, the same Christ who walked and talked in Palestine nearly 2000 years ago. On our altar this evening is the same Christ who as a baby shivered in the manger at Bethlehem, who as a boy played in the streets of Nazareth and as a man raised Lazarus to life, healed Bartimaeus the blind man, stilled the waves of the Sea of Galilee and healed the daughter of the Chanaite woman.
3. Human monuments are dead. But in the Eucharist we have Christ embalmed living on our altar.
4. Human monuments are corruptible. The once smoother surface of the pyramids is worn away, exposing the great rough blocks of stone underneath and there are cracks in the Taj Mahal. The Eucharist is incorruptible. It will be renewed from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof, as prophesied in the Old Testament, until the end of time.
5. Human monuments are built for the glory only of those for whom they are raised. The Eucharist was given us not only as a monument to Christ, but He instituted it also for us. It was instituted not to satisfy vanity, but charity. It is not something that bears no relation to our present lives, but something that can have a very powerful influence on our present lives and on our eternal happiness.

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P4: My dear brethren, when Christ said "Do this for a commemoration of me," what did He wish to recall to us, what did He wish to be commemorated by the sacrament of the Eucharist? To what is the Eucharist a memorial?

1. First of all, the Eucharist is a memorial to the love of Christ for us and the love of God for us. When one person loves another, there is a desire to be near that other person. God so loved us that He gave us His only begotten Son, and His only-begotten Son so loved us that He gave Himself to us, not only on the cross, but in the Eucharist that He might remain with us in a special way unto the consummation of the world. We do not need further proof of God's love than His presence in the Eucharist. His infinite kindness is beyond our understanding. All we know is that it is a reality, that God Himself dwells with us in the Host as He dwelt with the Israelites in the desert in a cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He dwells with us & helps us. He is, in the words of Father LeBuffle, "Our Changeling Friend."

2. Secondly, the Eucharist is a memorial to the Passion of Christ. Christ present in the Host is a living memorial to the history of our redemption by the cross. As the prayer says which the priest recites in giving communion outside of Mass: "It recalls the memory of His Passion." It recalls Our Lord sorrowful unto death in the garden of Gethsemani while His disciples slept. It recalls Christ our King standing before Pilate with after a night of agony, with a reed his scepter, a thorn piercing his flesh His crown and a soldier's coat his regal gown. It recalls the heavy lead weighted with lead which was put into His sacred body. It recalls the heavy cross cutting into His shoulder on the way to Calvary. It recalls the sound of the hammers beating the thick blunt nails into His hands and feet. It recalls the ^{gall} ~~spunge~~-soaked sponge being pushed into His mouth. It recalls

the spear being thrust into his side and the least drop of his blood, the ~~best~~ ^{first} payment for our sins, dropping to the ground of Calvary.

And when Jesus was hanging dead and bloodless on a criminal's cross they that passed by blasphemed and wagged their heads saying "Vah, those that destroyed the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

"In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients mocked him saying "If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross: and we will believe him."

My dear brethren, Christ did come down from the cross. He came down from the cross to our tabernacles. (Though we rejected him through sin, He returns this reject in by love for us) No monument, no pyramid, no obelisk, no statue or carving or painting or sculpture erected by the might and intelligence of man can we could compare with the memorial we have on our altar.

P5: May be there, what lessons, we may ask, are to be learned and what benefits are to be derived from the consideration of the Eucharist as a living memorial?

1. Considering that Christ is present in the Eucharist as a memorial to His love for us, we have in the Eucharist Christ a true friend to whom we should go of love in prayer. His special presence is a great help to our prayers. We know how much it helps our devotion in praying to the Blessed Virgin, or St. Theresa, or St. Anthony if we pray before a statue in their honour. It helps to realize their presence. In a still greater way our devotion to Christ is aided when we realize that He is truly present in the Eucharist out of love for us, waiting behind the tabernacle veil for us to come to Him with our problems, our worries and heart-aches, waiting there to receive our homage and thanksgiving. Reflection on this should help us to realize the value of frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament and frequent attendance at Benediction, Holy Hours, the Forty Hours' Devotion and other devotions in His Honour.

2. Considering that Christ is present in the Eucharist and especially at Mass, as a reminder of His Passion for us, we should as the Mass unfolds before us the sacrifice of the cross in an unbloody manner, recall the sacrifice of blood in Calvary. If we follow the Mass with a Memorial we will be continually reminded of this. In our visits to the Blessed Sacrament let the cross over the tabernacle recall that the Eucharist is a monument to the Passion and death of Christ. Let the Eucharist give us the strong determination to see that in our individual case the blood of Christ did not drip from the cross of Calvary to the ground of Calvary in vain. Let it give us the resolution to spread the true conception, meaning and import of the Redemption by blood to others: by prayer, mortification and good example. In this way, my dear brethren, the purpose for which the great memorial of the Eucharist was

instituted is fulfilled. In this way the last Will
and Testament of Christ made on the first Holy
Thursday and later signed with His blood is executed
and we fulfil the words "Do this for a Commemoration
of me."
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