

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Mar 27th 2024

Be a ray of light and hope to your neighbor

As we walk along the days of Holy Week, various events occur that directly lead us to what will take place on Good Friday. Among these events was the fateful betrayal by Judas. This action earned him the title of “spy” by medieval Christians. Judas secretly watched for a chance to turn Jesus over to the chief priests, and so the medieval Christians labelled the day before the Holy Thursday as the “Spy Wednesday.”

Matthew omitted irrelevant details of the customary Passover Meal, and focussed simply on those elements which had been preserved in the community’s later celebrations of Eucharist.

According to the custom, the head of the family would say a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God’s liberating actions and presence among His People. But Jesus radically broke with custom in identifying the bread as his body. In the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke, the word body would have meant, his living and personal self.

Jesus broke the bread before giving it to the disciples. His gesture anticipated the violence that the powers of this world would soon exercise towards him. They would break his body. By eating his broken body, his violently murdered self, although without them recognising it at that time, the disciples expressed their solidarity with Jesus in his non-violent resistance to the aggression and brutality of the world.

Jesus identified the wine in the cup as his blood, the blood of the covenant. In the Hebrew mind, blood was a synonym of life. Blood of the covenant recalled the blood that Moses sprinkled on the Hebrew people to seal their acceptance of God’s offer of love and protection

Jesus saw his imminent death guaranteeing the future Kingdom of the Father. He would die in hope. For his disciples, despite the persecutions and torture they faced in this world, Eucharist would anticipate the future reign of God and affirm its certainty, whatever might be the present experience of the community. Every Eucharist would be a reminder that the kingdoms of the world and their values will oppose the values of God’s Kingdom because the Eucharist is the visible sign of Jesus’ real presence amidst his people.

Now we know that this last supper will culminate in the resurrection and the dawn of new life and hope. But there are many who live in utter despair. Today is a good day to remember them in our prayers. And if we know someone who is in need of help, approach them and, with our presence, open a space for the ray of light and hope in the middle of their nights. It is not about accusing and condemning but about reaching out and saving.