

## **Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz's homily for Holy Thursday Mass *in cena Domini***

*[this section given in Italian]*

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (*Jn 13:1*). Let us go in our imagination to the Cenacle in Jerusalem, to contemplate the great proof of love our Lord gives us: the institution of the Eucharist.

Our God is always close to us. But in the Eucharist He shows Himself especially close to our heart: with his Body, with his Blood, with his Soul, with his Divinity. Jesus has loved us “to the end.” No one is excluded from this love. For each of us, the eternal Son of God has become man, like us in all things “except sin” (*Heb 4:15*). Moreover, he has wanted to bear the burden of the sins of all mankind, to make reparation for them and restore us to friendship with God the Father, making us children of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can ask ourselves: how are we responding to this Love. On this Holy Thursday we ask our Lord to help us to grasp more deeply God’s love for each of us and the love with which we need to respond, imitating and uniting ourselves to Jesus.

*[given in English]*

Our response to God’s love has many manifestations. One way to show our gratitude for so much affection is to have recourse to the sacrament of Confession, in order to prepare ourselves very well to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. Our participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice is not simply the memory of our Lord’s self-giving for us. The Mass is much more: it is the sacramental representation of the sacrifice of Calvary, anticipated in the Last Supper. “Do this in memory of me” (*Lk 22:19*), our Lord said when He instituted the sacrament.

The Church, faithful to his command, makes present Christ’s Passion and Death, through her priests, in each Eucharistic celebration. Saint John Paul II wrote that the sacrifice of the Cross “is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there” (Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 11).

Thank you, Lord, for the Eucharist. And thank you for faith, for our faith, in the Eucharist. Thank you for the priest, who has perpetuated this love of yours in time. “God’s love for his creatures is so boundless and our response to it should be so great that time ought to stand still when Holy Mass is being said” (Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 436).

*[given in Spanish]*

From the Cross, from the Eucharist, stems the force of the Redemption. There we find the source of all grace, the model of the love with which we have to love one another, the root of apostolic

effectiveness. At the Last Supper Jesus gave this this express command: “that you love one another as I have loved you” (*Jn* 15:12). And in order to engrave it deeply on the memory of his disciples and each one of us, he washed the apostles’ feet.

Saint John in his first epistle writes: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (*1 Jn* 3:16). How can we do this? There are many ways to put in practice the new commandment of our Lord. Saint Josemaria offers us this advice: “Charity consists not so much in giving as in understanding” (*The Way*, no. 463).

Forgiving, excusing, sincere interest in others, small details of service in daily life—in one’s family, at the university, at work, when resting, etc.—are so many opportunities to make present and a part of our life our Lord’s commandment.

*[given in French]*

During the Last Supper, Jesus asked the Father for the unity of those who would be called to be his disciples down through the centuries. “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (*Jn* 17:21).

We will imitate God’s example if we strive to strengthen the unity among us, in the Church, and in so far as we can, among believers. Our Christian vocation, when fully lived, brings our friends and colleagues closer to Jesus, whether they know Him already or not.

“As thou, Father, art in me” (*Jn* 17:21). Sharing in the union among the Persons of the Blessed Trinity: this is a very high goal. But our Lord grants us this participation in an eminent way through the gift of the Eucharist, the sacrament of faith and love. May our Lady, Mother of Fair Love, obtain for us through her maternal mediation the grace of a more intense faith in God’s love for us and a greater charity towards those around us.

Amen.