

+

The Events of Holy Thursday



AIM: To give the teens a thorough understanding of the events of Holy Thursday and their impact on our spiritual life

REFERENCES:

- + St Mark (Sydney) website
- + “ Thine is the glory and power “ book by HH Pope Shenouda+ The Christian Orthodox E- Library
- + “ The Essentials in Deacons service “ by Deacon Albair Gamal Mikhail

LESSON PLAN:

We will divide the topic into 3 main parts :

(a) The events of Holy Thursday with their related bible readings.

(b) Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday and spiritual contemplations.

(c) Have 5 – 10 minutes at end of lesson for personal spiritual contemplation letter to be written by each student to God .

Lesson:

(A) The events of Holy Thursday :

1) The Lord went with His disciples to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He asked Peter and John to prepare the Passover

(Matt 26: 17-19) meal. The Passover feast was a major Jewish feast celebrated . The Passover was considered a major turning point through which they crossed from the land of bondage to the wilderness and eventually towards the Promised Land.

(Briefly explain to the students the Passover event in Exodus 12 & 13).

The Lord Jesus Himself became the Passover of the believers as we now have a chance to inherit eternal life. This is the same God who commanded all the people of Israel (In Exodus 12 : 24) to keep celebrating the Passover feast forever. Symbolically, in the New Testament, it's the Passover of all the church, united to her Groom, in eternal life in heaven.

2) He ate with His disciples the Passover meal (Matt 26 : 20).

3) During the meal , He washed their feet. (John 13 : 5-20)

4) Then He pointed to the betrayal (Matt 26 : 20-25)

5) The Lord instituted the Lord's supper and gave His disciples His Body and Blood (Matt 26:26-29) . Thus , Holy Thursday Was The 1st mass ever held and it is the origin of all masses as HH Pope Shenouda says.

6) Jesus warned them about further destructions and the betrayal of Peter (Matt 26 : 31-35)

7) The last speech of the Lord to His disciples (John 14 :1 – 16:33) . Jesus will be soon going on the cross and He wanted to give them words of advise and comfort so that they will not be troubled as they see Him going through severe agony .

Clearly, this is similar to a loving and caring father who is about to go to hospital for a serious operation. Just before the day He is going, He realizes that his children will be troubled and worried and he sits and comforts them that everything will be OK-what a great loving Godly Father we have.

8) The Lord's intercession prayer (John 17 : 1-26). In this prayer, the creator of heaven and earth and all that lives in them prays for Himself and His disciples. This is an extreme level of humbleness that cannot be matched nor comprehended by any worldly expressions, We now see the faultless God, who is without sin, praying like a weak human being to show us the example of full submission to God the Father.

Again, He did not forget about the ones He cares about and prayed for His disciples.

9) The grief in Gethsemane. The Lord asked the disciples to watch and pray more than one time, but they slept. He was in great agony and His sweat became like droplets of blood. An angel then appeared to the Lord to strengthen him. (Matt 26 : 36-46)

(B) DIVINE LITURGY OF HOLY THURSDAY AND SPIRITUAL CONTEMPLATIONS :

The Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday begins with the offering of the Lamb without the normal prayers or Kiryalayson because the hourly prayers are not prayed during the week of Pascha. The Hiten are not said, rather Tenwoust is chanted immediately, followed by the Pauline reading in the annual tune. There are no readings from the Catholic Epistle, Praxis or *Synexarium*. The *Trisagion* is chanted thereafter in the same manner as the Prime hour, except in the annual tune. After this, the Litany of the Gospel is prayed, followed by the reading of the Psalm and Gospel, also in the annual tune, as well as the Gospel Response.

The Prayer of Reconciliation is not prayed, this is omitted so as to denounce Judas' kiss again, and also because reconciliation between God and Man has not yet been fulfilled through God the Word, the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the wood of the Cross. This will not happen until Good Friday.

So , really , while all masses are special , Holy Thursday mass is the origin and has a special place in the heart of Christians and particularly the Copts . Many will take this day off or at least go late to work to attend this heart softening mass.

Fr Jacob (St Mark's Sydney) says that washing the peoples feet on this day has an incredible impact on the heart of people . They see the representative of God on earth (the priest) humbly following his

Master's footsteps (John 13 :14) . The heart is then melted with incredible and indescribable feelings of deep emotions towards God and our brethren on earth. It is said that a person who had enmity feelings towards anyone can change to love that person as Christ loved us, we the weak and unworthy.

The disciples of our Lord Jesus are seen to reflect priests and bishops in recent days. But , these are also His believers , people and servants . We as Christians are amongst them . He cares for us just as He cared for them 2000 years ago . He is there for us ;He can even order His angels who are praising Him to be silent just to hear a weak prayer that we might say to Him. Our prayers, praises or even existence are not necessary for His glorifications as He is fully glorified without anything or anyone around Him .

Holy Thursday , one of the pinnacle days of passion week is a day when we ought to remember the extreme level of unconditional love that our Lord Jesus has for us . He wants us to love Him , our brethren and even our enemies. This will make His heart content and it will pierce another nail through His Holy Body .

(C) PERSONAL CONTEMPLATIONS :

Give a pen and paper to each student and servant . Allow them about 5-10 minutes to write a letter to God . It could be a love, thanksgiving or anything else that they may want to say to God after knowing how much He did for us in Holy Thursday and passion week and will continue to love us eternally .

CONCLUSION :

The events of Holy Thursday show us how caring and humble our God is . The washing of feet is a clear message without Jesus needing to say any words as to the level of love that He wants us to have towards Him and others.

Jesus is our Passover to Heaven and that was His aim for all the sufferings and agony that He went through for all of us.

+ + +