



## Holy Thursday: Institution of the Priesthood and the Eucharist

On the day when the Church celebrates and remembers the institution of the Eucharist, the Priesthood and the New Commandment, I especially address you Priests, members of the Jesus Priest Institute, sending you a message of best wishes and closeness on this anniversary.

Among the greatest gifts that the Lord has given to humanity, those of Holy Thursday are the most significant, both because they highlight his great love for humanity, precisely on the night of betrayal, and because they perpetuate in every time, in every place and for all men, his loving and revitalizing presence.

Reflecting on the identity of the Priest, on what is conferred on him in his priestly ordination, on what he is enabled to do with his vocation and on the gift that is granted to him, I believe that all this should make our hands tremble.

I quote some reflections contained in the book of Cardinal Comastri: *“On the Night He was Betrayed”*, published by St Pauls Publishing, and some reflections of the persons that the Cardinal himself cites in his book.

*“Whenever we celebrate Holy Mass, we priests should be deeply moved when we pronounce the words of the consecration. Precisely when our unworthiness was clearly manifested, Jesus touched us with a gesture of infinite Love, an undeserved gesture, a totally gratuitous gesture, a gesture that awaits our response today”*. And he quotes the writer Domenico Giuliotti (1877-1956), who writes: *“The priest is a man, but he is more than the Angels; he is a sinner, but he forgives sins; he is a servant, but the Lord obeys him. The Angels and even the Queen of Angels do not have the power to absolve, nor the power to call Christ every day to renew God’s reparative offering to God in the Holy Mass. He alone can do these wonders”*.

He still recounts the great scientist Enrico Medi (1911-1974), who speaking to a group of priests, said: *“Dear priests, after having celebrated a Holy Mass, how do you manage to calmly return to everyday life? Think about it, do you believe what happens in every Mass? Jesus identifies with you, he almost becomes one with you, he overlaps you to the point of saying through you: ‘This is my body, This is my blood’. And the miracle happens! I feel shivers of emotion! Dear priests, do not get used to this miracle, but be amazed every time you celebrate a Holy Mass”*.

Finally, he cites the Holy Curé of Ars (1786-1859), who speaking to his parishioners said: *“A good priest, a priest after the heart of God, is the greatest treasure that the good Lord can grant to men. Without the priest, we would no longer have the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle. Who has placed it in the tabernacle? The priest! Who welcomed your soul when you first entered life with Baptism? The priest. Who feeds*



*her with the Eucharist to give her the strength to make her pilgrimage to heaven? The priest. Who will give you God's forgiveness? Again, the priest ... After God, the priest is everything! ... He himself will only be understood well in heaven".*

The photograph of the Priest shown above, in the quotations, may seem to us over emphasized. Certainly, however, what a great mystery of love we have in our person that is not ours, but has been given to us in order to live it and make it fruitful, to make it alive and to make it present in today's humanity.

The life of the Priest is marked, centered on the Eucharist, as the source and summit of his own existence, of his identity, of his mission in the midst of humanity. The greatness and responsibility that is in our person must make us reflect: **why did the Lord choose me for this task**, why really me, why really to me?

Recognizing our unworthiness and smallness, we make our own the dialogue/prayer between the prophet Jeremiah and the Lord:

*"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you; I made you a prophet to the nations". I replied: "Alas, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, because I am young".*

*But the Lord said to me: "Do not say: 'I am young'. You will go to all those to whom I will send you and you will tell everything that I will order you.*

*Do not be afraid in front of them, because I am with you to protect you" (Jer. 1:5-8).*

The wish that I address to all priests and to all the members of the Jesus Priest Institute is that may you be "temple of the Spirit" in the midst of the events and realities of the world, and the joy and hope, through union with Christ, poured out into our hearts may not fade.

In fraternity

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