

HOLY THURSDAY—2009

Homily given by Fr. Dennis Koliński, SJC

St. Peter's Church, Volo, Illinois

9 April 2009

We call this day “Holy Thursday” but it has been known by many names through the centuries. During the Middle Ages, it was known in some places as *Natalis Calicis*, “The Birthday of the Chalice” because it was on this day that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist. By transforming the ritual Passover meal into the sacrificial meal of the New Covenant He gave us His Most Precious Body and Blood in the form of the bread and wine. But when He said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” He didn’t intend it to be only a memorial of that supper in the Upper Room, which future generations would then observe, just as the Jews commemorated Passover in memory of their release from Egyptian slavery. He gave it to the Apostles as a way to remain with them in a new way, even if they still didn’t completely comprehend what was soon to happen to Him. And He wasn’t giving His Body and Blood only to the Apostles. He was giving it to all mankind for all time.

But in order that people through the centuries could be nourished by this new sacrament of His Body and Blood, Jesus had to give us another sacrament. When He said: “this is my Body ... This is my Blood ... Do this in remembrance of me,” He was also instituting the sacred priesthood. At that supper He made the Apostles priests, giving them the same supernatural power that He had to transform ordinary bread and wine into His Body and Blood. He was making them “other Christs” for the sake of the world, so that once He had ascended into heaven, He would be able to continue to work among His people in the persons of men configured to Himself, the One High Priest.

And ever since then, Satan has been trying to destroy Christ’s Church. Perhaps He thought that he might win when he had duped men into thinking that they should kill Jesus, but when Christ rose from the dead, Satan realized that he had lost—big time. However, Satan is a sore loser and ever since then, he has been trying to strike back at Christ by attacking the Eucharist. In our day, he has made enormous strides in his campaign. Satan has managed to convince enormous numbers of Catholics that the Eucharist is not really Christ’s Precious Body and Blood, resulting in widespread desecration of the Eucharist. And he now has many agents trafficking in stolen consecrated Hosts that are used in satanic black masses.

But these direct attacks on the Eucharist bring about only a limited degree of success in his campaign. That’s why one of the most important elements of Satan’s strategy is his attack on the Catholic priesthood because if he can destroy priests, he can control the very source of the Eucharistic Presence. If there are no priests, there will be no Eucharist. And if there is no Eucharist, many more people will go to hell because they will not have the spiritual nourishment that will make them holy and keep them holy.

That is why an unprecedented attack has been launched against priests and bishops in this country. Everywhere you turn you hear about tolerance and rights, but we, priests, are just about the only segment of the American population in this moment of our history, which can be openly criticized and maligned with impunity. It began with an unfettered assault by the media in 2002 when the priest scandal broke out in Boston.

Recently, a group of Illinois bishops went to Springfield to voice their opposition to the Freedom of Choice Act, which was making its way through the legislature. At one of their meetings one of the legislators, who called himself a Catholic, lectured the bishops and called them “obstructionist”. Recently, there was a bishop who was detained for several hours at an airport in a major American city upon returning to the country—for no reason. It has already begun. We are fair game.

At this very moment, the Obama administration is actively working to remove the conscience provision presently in place that allows health care workers the right to refuse to perform morally objectionable procedures, such as abortion. Citizens were given the opportunity to voice their objections to this action, but it seems as if the forces of evil in our government are going to do what they want to do anyway. Last month, Cardinal George said that removing the conscience rule would be “the first step in moving our country from democracy to despotism.” If the conscience protection provision for health care workers is banned, this also means that priests will not have any grounds upon which to refuse to perform marriages for same-sex couples. If this happens, priests will go to jail, only exasperating the present shortage of priests around the country. We are rapidly entering an era of totalitarian government in our country and modern history has shown us that some of the first people that such regimes round up are priests.

Just imagine, what would you do if they started arresting priests (something not at all outside the realm of possibility in these troubled times) leaving more and more parishes without priests? Japan was once confronted with such a situation when all the priests were driven from their country. For two hundred years, Japanese Catholics kept the faith alive in their country but they would gather around an altar, place a priest’s stole on it and cry, for they could no longer have the Eucharist.

This is the world that we are now living in and it will get worse before it gets better. Satan has gained control of our government, of the media, as well as a broad segment of the American population, and by means of them he is attacking and trying to destroy the priesthood. Yet, at the same time, criticism of priests has become a favorite pastime of so many Catholics, eating away at the very core of the Church. Instead of defending priests and building up the Church, many Catholics are unwitting pawns of Satan. For some it has just become a bad habit that is now hard to break. How many people I’ve encountered, who are constantly talking about what this priest did, or what that priest did. They can’t help it and probably don’t even realize that they are engaging in detraction, a sin against anyone, but in this case against the very men that Christ set up to be Him in the world. For others, who fashion themselves as self-righteous self-proclaimed defenders of the Church, it is sometimes even malicious. Some of the greatest criticism comes from those, who consider themselves the most traditional and faithful Catholics. But for most, it is just something that one does without thinking. And all of us have done it. All of us have criticized some priest or bishop at one time or another. But does that make it right? We have a much bigger and far more dangerous enemy than the priest, whom we don’t like.

Priests around the country are now beginning to realize that are all potential targets of the new totalitarian regime that is being set in place in our country. Why? Because they represent the truth and because it is through them that Christ maintains His presence on this earth. Satan knows that if he strikes at priests, he will strike at the heart of the Church, which he wants to destroy. And if he can destroy priests, then there will be

no Eucharist and no Real Presence in the world. Satan wants to destroy the priesthood because it is his only way of striking at Christ Himself.

I beg you—pray for priests as if your life depended upon it. Because it does! Your spiritual welfare depends upon it. Pray for the priest, who baptized you and made you a Catholic. At ordination, men are made “other Christs” but they are still men, who must struggle with a fallen human nature like all of you. So, pray also that priests be holy and selflessly dedicated to the sanctification of those under them. Pray that priests will be able to resist temptations because they are human too and Satan channels many of his efforts into getting priests to fall. Perhaps, we would have never had a terrible scandal in the priesthood if more people had prayed for them. And if you know of a disobedient priest, don’t criticize him. Pray for him. Pray for the welfare of his soul and the enlightenment to realize his errors.

Padre Pio once said that “it is easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!”¹ Without the Mass there would be no Eucharist and without priests there would be no Eucharist. And woe to us if we didn’t have the Most Holy Eucharist to sustain us in these dangerous times.

¹ Padre Pio: the Priest,” (<http://www.ewtn.com/padrepio/priest/index.htm>).