

03/29/18 Holy Thursday

-- In October, 2002, Pope St. John Paul introduced us to the luminous mysteries of the rosary. Prior to this, the rosary meditated on the early life of Jesus and on his passion and death. But it didn't concentrate on the important events of his public ministry.

-- John Paul wanted to correct that. So he put together five meditations on key moments in Jesus' public ministry. And these culminate in the last of those events: the institution of the Eucharist.

-- Indeed, it is a high point of his ministry. Here he gives his body and blood to the apostles and commissions them to do this in his memory. We celebrate that event tonight.

-- In our 2nd reading, St. Paul gives us one of the earliest accounts of the institution of the Eucharist. He emphasizes that he "received" this account—it's not something he made up or put together from memories.

-- Yes, the Eucharist is a wonderful gift from God. Through it we partake of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ himself. But we should not look on it simply as a personal gift to enrich our spiritual lives.

-- It might be helpful to look at the other luminous mysteries of the rosary to see what Jesus was all about in his ministry. First, in his baptism, he is sent forth to do God's work on earth. We are to do the same because of our baptism.

-- In the second luminous mystery, he performs the miracle at the wedding in Cana. He doesn't do it to show off, but to respond to the need of that couple for assistance in their celebration.

-- None of us is going to turn water into wine. But all of us can help others to celebrate important events in life. We can walk with the people around us in good times and bad.

-- Third, we meditate on Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, in the Sermon on the Mount and other teaching. But Jesus also teaches through his actions, healings and listening to people in their need.

-- We are called to proclaim God's kingdom. Sometimes we do it by direct witness to our faith. But more often we do it by listening to others.

-- The Transfiguration, the fourth luminous mystery, may seem at first glance to be primarily a show of Christ's power and glory. Though there is that glimpse of glory, it does not last. The disciples have to come down from the mountain to real life.

-- We may have intense moments of faith, when God's presence is intense. But we can't hang on to that. We have to be faithful in normal moments of life, and even in the difficult moments as well.

-- Jesus showed us that the path to him is one of serving one another. In our gospel he became the servant by washing the apostles' feet. I will do that in a moment and will be reminded of my call to serve you.

-- Then we will commission three members of our community as Ministers of the Eucharist. They will help distribute the body and blood of Christ to our community. May they imitate Jesus in their service.

-- When the Pope instituted these luminous mysteries of the rosary, he suggested they be prayed on Thursdays. This Thursday we commemorate the last, climactic mystery.

-- As we do so, may all of us resolve to imitate the Lord's service, compassion, and spirit of reconciliation with one another.

-- Then, as we approach the altar to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, we will be filled with the grace and strength to continue Christ's work on earth.