

GOOD FRIDAY, Mar. 29, 2024, Year B

- There are two principal dimensions to our observance of this day. Inevitably, our hearts and minds are *first* drawn to the details we have just heard described in the Passion Reading from John's Gospel. Those details stay with us as we ponder *what happened* on that dark day, two thousand years ago. The *second* dimension takes more time and reflection. This is because we need to consider *what is still true now*, as a *result* of that day, long ago.
- At many Good Friday services like this, I have focused on what happened *then*, and how we understand what happened then, in the context of *that time*. Today, I will focus on *what is still true now - and on what is still happening* - as a result of that day.
- We learn a phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews, in the New Testament: '*once and for all.*' What Jesus did - and what God did, in and through him - was *once and for all*. Yet, in saying this, we do not look upon the events of Good Friday as being like *other* historical events, whose significance lies *mainly* in what we learn and remember about things from long ago. The meaning of Good Friday is *not* disclosed to us *merely*, or even *primarily* by, what historians and others call a process of '*recovery.*' Because we don't just *remember* what we have learned about what happened on Good Friday. Instead, *we continue to experience* the meaning of Good Friday, by and in what we *continue to do*, in *liturgy*, and through *sacramental action*.
- Here is *one way* to make the point. Jesus, with and on the cross, offered himself- and the whole Creation - to the Father, in the Holy Spirit. He did this once and for all. Yet, in every Eucharist, and *in how we - and Christians throughout the world - remember him today, he continues to be present*. And he continues to *make present* and *real* in our experience *now*, what he did, once and for all, *then*.

GOOD FRIDAY, Mar. 29, 2024, Year B

- He acted, once and for all. Yet - and this is the paradox - He **still** acts for all... for all *time*, for all *places* and *things*, and for all *people*. *What he is still doing now*, does not in any way signal an incompleteness to what he did, **then**. For he *continues to offer the gift of including us* in what he did *then* – when he did what he did, *once and for all*.
- So *what does it mean* for him **to include us now**, in what he did **then**? That is the question for Good Friday.
- One way into the many answers to our question can be found in Salvador Dali's painting, *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*. I will surprise you by saying that it is not a painting **of**, or **about**, the Last Supper. Instead, this is a painting **inspired by** the Last Supper. And, by what the Last Supper came to mean in the broader context of all that happened during those three days. For the painting is **about the sacrament** - about the *sacrament* in which **He now makes present** the **result of** what happened on the Cross, in the Resurrection, and with the descent of the Holy Spirit.
- The Book of Common Prayer service for Good Friday is in fact **not** a Eucharist, just as the Last Supper in that Upper Room was *not* a Eucharist. The Last Supper is **prefigured** the Eucharist, but could *not* have *been* one. For Jesus had *not yet died*, *nor yet Risen* from the Tomb, and the Spirit had *not yet descended* at Pentecost. And neither are the sacramental services on Good Friday intended to be *Eucharistic* celebrations. For in the wisdom and tradition of the Church *we do not celebrate* the Eucharist on this most holy day, though - *spiritually* - we receive the fruit of it, and all its benefits.
- Instead, today, all our focus is upon **Him**, who died and rose again for us, *once and for all*.

GOOD FRIDAY, Mar. 29, 2024, Year B

- These are some of the reasons why Dali paints the disciples as recognizably physical, and as historically-anchored, people. And why he *yet* paints our Risen Lord as present in his *mystical risen glory*.
- We gather in his name and in his presence on particular occasions, in particular places, at particular times. Yet **He is now present** *at* and *on* all occasions, in all places, and at all times. We - who are rooted in time and place - receive him who *transcends* and *yet is present* within all times and places. Grace infuses nature. The timeless One imbues time with glory.
- The One who is the source of all *purpose* and *meaning* brings meaning and purpose to us, and to all that we lay before him, here and now. Time and again, He brings *completeness* and *fulfillment* to all that falls short of the glory of God.
- On the cross, **Jesus lifted up the whole Creation** to his - *and now our* - Father, once and for all. Just as he lifted up our human nature in his Ascension, which in a sense then became our Ascension. And yet, he continues to lift up the whole Creation - *including us*, and *including* all the uncertain and unfinished aspects of our lives.
- So, the One who is the source of *all* purpose and meaning *continues* to bring meaning and purpose to us, and to all that we lay before him, here and now. Time and again, he brings completeness and wholeness to all that is lacking. This is so that we might live more within his glorious fulfillment - his completion and realization - of all that it means to be fully and *wholly* human.
- For all this, we offer our deepest thanks and praise.



Salvador Dalí, *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, 1955