

The Altar of Repose



The institution of the Eucharist lies at the heart of the Last Supper tradition. It was on that night when through the words of institution, Jesus had already laid his life down, by transforming his violent death into a free act of thanksgiving, in a self-giving act for others and to others. Therefore, on Maundy Thursday through the memorial of this institution we remember that through that act of love that the church brings Christ's love to those in need.

However, in 1988 the Holy See published "*Paschales Solemnitatis*", through which they explained the preparation needed for the *Easter Triduum*. In par. 49 the Holy See gave us a clear definition of what needs to happen after the memorial on Maundy Thursday. They declared that,

For the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared and adorned in such a way as to be conducive to prayer and meditation, seriousness appropriate to the liturgy of these days is enjoined so that all abuses are avoided or suppressed.

They go on to say that,

When the tabernacle is located in a chapel separated from the central part of the church, it is appropriate to prepare the place of repose and adoration there.

Thus, the Eucharist which is the food for our earthly journey takes a different journey that day. The procession to the altar of repose takes a new meaning. It helps the Christians present at the celebration to walk with Christ, and meditate in those last moments through which he saved us. It is after this procession that we are encouraged to enter into an atmosphere of silence and adoration, and wait with Christ in those moments of agony in the garden of Gethsemane. This should help us to meditate in silence, the beauty of the act of self-giving that Jesus did for His Church - because we are the reason that He suffered and died.

The theme chosen for the altar of repose at the parish of SS John Cantius & Nicholas, in the Archdiocese of Edinburgh and St Andrew's was the Lamb of God. The title "Lamb of God" is a title for Jesus that appears in the Gospel of John. It appears at *John 1:29*, where John the Baptist sees Jesus and exclaims, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*". The Catholic doctrine holds that divine Jesus chose to suffer crucifixion at Calvary as a sign of his full obedience to the will of his divine Father, as an "*agent and servant of God*". It symbolises the Pascal Lamb at Passover, explained in *Exodus 12: 1-4*. Hence, from a Christological perspective, this is the beginning of the salvific theme of the redemptive and sacrificial death of Jesus followed by his Resurrection.

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