Homily 4-9-20 (Holy Thursday)

I want to talk to you about a gift. On Holy Thursday Jesus gave us the greatest gift He could give us…Himself. At the Last Supper with his apostles, the Eternal Son performed his greatest work of mercy. Feeding five thousand with a few fish and loaves, walking on water, calming the raging sea were all great manifestations of Christ’s divinity. But tonight, the Savior did something far greater. He gave us the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. As he consecrated the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and set apart the Twelve as priests of the New Testament, Christ identified himself with his ministers in a wonderful way. From that Last Supper until the last moment of the world’s existence, Christ committed himself to be present to his people whenever one of his priests obeys his command: “Do this in memory of me.”

In the “Bread of Life” discourse, Jesus declared that the Father had given him power as man to give poor sinners the gift of eternal life. He said: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.” The eternal life, that only he can give, comes to us in this “Bread of Life.”

This is an extraordinary Holy Week. On this day which marks the establishment of the Eucharist, we are denied the Eucharist. I shouldn't say 'denied', but rather 'unable to partake'. A parishioner shared with me that she was moved to tears as she watched Mass being celebrated because she realized how much she missed receiving Our Lord in His Body and Blood.

I would suggest that a healthy spirituality might see this extraordinary Holy Week, even with all its trials, as a gift. Maybe we are relieved of taking the Eucharist as a given or granted.