

## HOMILY FOR HOLY THURSDAY

Can you remember your first memory?

My first memory is being at a grocery store in Sandgate with my mother and grandmother when I must have been three years old. I was at the checkout with them and they put some of their groceries into a little leather backpack I had worn (I'm sure it was after they had paid for them). That backpack – a hand me down from my older brother – became my school bag and was replaced a few years later with another hand me down.

Memory and receiving are themes in the readings for tonight. In the first reading, their remembering at the Passover becomes the reason Israel finds its purpose as God's own people.

The second reading has the Apostle Paul passing on to the Church the words that Jesus says over the bread and wine and the instruction of how we are to do the same. Memory and receiving are at the forefront of Christ's words. "Do this as a memorial of me." Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are proclaiming and therefore honouring Christ's death.

This should be the first memory for the Christian. Often, it is also the last memory for the Christian as he or she lies on the deathbed.

These readings tonight present us with the answer to the question – 'Why are we here? Why do we come to mass?'

We hear of the obligation to come to mass but, we can easily let it sit there as an obligation and never let it become any more - tick off that box and let us get to heaven. Interestingly, the dispensation from the obligation in these COVID-19 days has revealed for most parishes how easy it is to lose a congregation.

Last week, I heard the Director of Evangelisation Brisbane, Deacon Peter Pellicaan, reflecting on obligation. As a married Deacon, he likened the mass obligation to marriage and therefore the relational aspect of obligation. In marriage we are obligated to be faithful to one's spouse but, this only has meaning because we have first made a commitment of love.

In the difficult times, that obligation has a purpose but, it is love which begins this obligation and it is from this obligation we find once more the love we remembered we had.

So, why do we come to mass? It is because as Christians, our earliest memory of our relationship with God is Jesus Christ. Even a baptised infant has to come to this memory. It is the first act in our relationship with God, that we remember how God has loved us.

Why do we come to mass? Well, it isn't to gain something for ourselves. That would not be a loving act. Love is self-giving and it is certainly not selfish.

Why do we come to mass? Because it is recognising that this is a memory of the first moment when Jesus offers the world to God. The mass is not what we gain. The mass is

the memory of what Jesus offers to God and we are a part of those whom Jesus offers to God. If we're not here as those who believe, then what has Jesus to show to God?

The mass is the domain of Jesus Christ. The mass is the memorial of his giving of himself to God. The mass is where we are invited to remember Jesus, not as some ticket into heaven but, as the principal example of love – the ultimate expression of true humanity. He deserves to have us gather to remember him.

Jesus gave that example when he washed the feet of his disciples. It was not done to make them feel important. It was done that we might see how important Jesus is to our memory. This memory is lived as we give of ourselves to others, as he did, making it not just a memory but, a thing of our present and of our future.