



such rest, comfort, and pardon of all sins. True rest, comfort, and pardon from sins in the Sacrament cannot be received any other way than by faith!

This distinction must stand, not moved by any daring hand: what we physically receive whether it is in our hands or placed directly in our mouths IS the bread and wine and also IS the body and blood. This remains forever true whether your or I believe or not. The blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation, the strengthening and preserving of both body and soul, however, are received not by mere eating and drinking, but by faith alone. So while the Israelites of old ate in haste; we eat for rest. The Lord's Supper is the ultimate "comfort food." We eat and drink, and receive the pardoning of our sins by faith alone. To receive the forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of the Altar is to receive the forgiveness of sins in the same way as in Baptism, the same way as in Absolution: by faith. Faith, like a grab claw, clings to the promise. Faith is the means by which forgiveness of sins is always attained.

That same faith was required of the Israelites on the night of the first Passover. They were told to slaughter a lamb, and place its blood on their doors. They trusted God's command, did it as they were told, and trusted that the Lord would send the tenth and final plague upon all those who did not follow God's Word, and they trusted God would deliver them from the hands of the Egyptians. What else could the Israelites do but trust God's Word? They could not believe it, I suppose, and suffer the death of their firstborns.

So also, you and I have the same two options. We can either trust God's Word, and live to eternal life as we have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel to do, or not believe and die to eternal death. On this Maundy Thursday, you know the right answer. With the death of Jesus looming for our sake and in our stead, may God grant us the faith to choose life! May God grant us the faith to receive His holy supper for needed rest, for comfort, and for the forgiveness of all our sins!

Perhaps most remarkably Jesus institutes His Supper, His medicine of immortality, on the night He knew He was going to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men. In the verses in the gap of our Gospel reading Jesus said to Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly" (Jn 13:27). Most of us would likely be paralyzed by fear with the pending reality of such daunting things as betrayal, suffering, crucifixion, and death! Yet Jesus in His perfect love continues to serve. He served the disciples and us today with His Word. He serves the disciples and us today with His blessed Sacrament. Today is not about feet washing or Jesus' commandment to love one another as you will most certainly hear on the News, though Jesus did wash His disciples' feet and did give such a command. Today is about Jesus giving Himself to and for you. Today is about Jesus coming to and for you. Let us feast for needed rest, for comfort, and for pardon. In Jesus' name, Amen.