

They rented a limousine, sent out the invitations to all the best people in town, ordered the perfect food for a feast, and made sure that security for the evening was top notch. The host had his toast all prepared and was ready to set forth a strategic plan that would get all his people excited to move forward, on board, and ready to conquer the world.

The best laid plans do not always work out the way we want.

Jesus arrived on a donkey. Twelve men who had been fishermen, tax collectors, and the like showed up to eat lamb. A traitor was among them. The host, our Lord, Jesus Christ, was rebuked for washing the feet of His guests as He tried to set the example of being a servant of people to bring the world to know the mercy of God.

We all have ideas of what would be a great celebratory meal setting. Plans are different when the meal is for a baby's first birthday than when the meal is for a 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Plans are different when the meal is for a meal celebrating a clean bill of health after cancer treatment than when the meal is for a family reunion.

Little did the chosen people know that the directions given for the meal we hear about in our first reading tonight from the book of Exodus would be their last meal of any substance in Egypt, let alone a meal that would be remembered for thousands of years by millions of people.

Little did Jesus' apostles know that the meal they were about to eat on the night we remember tonight was the last meal of a condemned man, about to be hanged on a cross in less than 24 hours.

The fact is, this meal is so intertwined with who we are, and more importantly intertwined with who Jesus is, that it is the most important meal that has ever been celebrated or consumed. It has meaning beyond the food, the nourishment, the people who were there at the beginning or who have come to it since it was first prepared. It has meaning beyond where it took place or where it continues to take place.

In the very short term, here at Nativity of the Lord Jesus, this meal has meaning because this very evening we who are present as fully initiated members of the Church partake in this meal just as if we were there on the night when Jesus took bread and wine and changed them into His Body and Blood. In the very short term this meal has meaning because tomorrow we partake in this meal when His Body and Blood are offered in the perfect sacrifice on the Cross of Salvation. In the short term this meal has meaning when at the Easter Vigil through His saving grace we will welcome two to the waters of Baptism and one to full communion in the Church and they will partake in this meal for the first time.

In just a week this meal will have meaning after beginning the Divine Mercy Novena tomorrow evening, we will conclude it on the Sunday after Easter with a prayer service

celebrating the beauty of God's mercy that is manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One week later, this meal will have meaning when eight of our children will be invited to partake in this meal for the first time when they receive their First Holy Communion.

What we must realize is that we can go on each and every week, each and every day, and find that this meal has meaning all the time. There is not a moment in history when the Eucharist is not meaningful, not extremely meaningful, not ultimately meaningful.

Saint Paul says so in his letter to the Corinthians when he tells them to continue to proclaim the death of the Lord as the Lord shared His Body and Blood until He comes again.

All this is beautiful. All this is wonderful. Reflecting on the gift of the Eucharist we certainly can appreciate this gift that Jesus gave us and celebrate it. Yet, we should not forget the purpose of eating. We do not eat for the sake of eating. To do so would be to commit the sin of gluttony. So, why do we eat the Sacred Meal? We eat to become more Christlike. We eat to do the work of Christ.

And so, during supper, He rose and took off His outer garments, took a towel and tied it around His waist and began to wash the feet of His disciples. He asked them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

Enjoy this most beautiful of all meals created for us by our Lord and Savior. And then, as you immerse yourself in this Easter Triduum remember, it is not over. If you have noticed the dismissal I have used during Lent, it has been, "God forth, the Mass is over." Tonight, there is no dismissal, and there will be none until the dismissal after the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday Evening. This Triduum is one liturgy. Nothing is over until this Triduum is over. In a similar way, this meal never really ends, as the Eucharist is eternal. And, having partaken in this meal, having been nourished, now it is time to use the energy and grace to wash the feet of others as Jesus has done for you.