

As we begin the Sacred Triduum this evening with the Mass of the Lord's Supper I am painfully aware that most Catholics will be unable to attend Mass. You are still able to participate though, through prayer, through a reflective reading of the Word and by watching a live streamed Mass. Father Dieudonné and I will celebrate the Mass tonight at 6:00pm and we will offer it for all of you, our parish family as well as for those who are sick and suffering, and all who have died from Covid-19. As difficult as our struggles are, let us be grateful that we remain healthy and that our friends and family likewise remain well; but, many are suffering, far worse than us, so let us offer prayers for them, that God's healing hand of peace may come upon them. I submit a homily for you to reflect upon and ask you to picture the upper room where these events took place, or gaze upon a painting of the Last Supper.

Look upon the scene of our Lord's Last Supper. Put yourself in the room with his apostles, including the one who has betrayed him. Look at Jesus. He is at the center of the table. It is a reminder to us that Christ needs to be the center of our lives. His hands are resting on the table with his palms facing up and his gaze is turned downward, looking at a piece of bread. While Jesus appears calm, the other disciples appear to be upset, their hands are upraised, some flailing, and their faces are filled with astonishment, anger, fear, perhaps even shock. The reason for this is that Jesus has told them that one of them would betray him before sunrise. Andrew holds both of his hands up in a "stop" gesture. Judas is in shadow, looking withdrawn and taken aback that his plan has been revealed by the Lord. He is clutching a bag of silver, given to him as payment to betray Jesus. Peter appears angry and he is holding a knife, pointed away from the Lord foreshadowing his violent protection of the Lord later that night in Gethsemane. John the beloved disciple appears to be literally falling back at this horrendous news. Thomas is clearly upset, James looks stunned, his arms raised in the air, and Philip is turned towards the Lord and appears to be requesting some explanation. Both Jude Thaddeus and Matthew are turned, facing toward Simon, seeking answers from him about what the Lord has just said.

Tonight we celebrate the anniversary of what took place in that upper room. As do people of faith all over the world. As Catholics the Eucharist must be the focus of our lives. It is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. The Real presence of Christ sets us apart from many other religions because the Eucharist is Jesus for us, it is his body, and His blood which was given to the apostles at the Last Supper and it is his body and blood that he gives to us at the altar of the Mass. It is not the priest who stands before the altar, but the priest *in the person of Christ*, who consecrates ordinary bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. As most are deprived this year of our Lord's Body and Blood may this moment of yearning never leave us. May it renew within us our hunger for our Lord and our gratitude for this gift of nourishment.

The genius of bread and wine is its ordinariness. Grain, ground into flour, mixed with water, baked and formed into loaves. Jesus' genius, was also his ordinariness, He did not come as a powerful king, but as a simple man, poor and humble. He was and is today, bread for the hungry.

That is the gift that we celebrate tonight, the gift that Jesus gave for us over 2000 years ago. We are united this night with Catholics all over the world who will pray and remember this sacred meal.

But these events that we remember tonight are not just to celebrate what once happened to Jesus, but what is now happening among us as a people called to conversion, gathered in faith, and gifted with the Spirit of holiness. For each of us, the mysteries of Holy Week must be experienced anew in our lives each year. It shouldn't be just the same old thing. Hopefully the grace of God continues to work and grow in our lives each year to offer us new insights, call us to new growth and experiences that bring us closer to God.

For our elect and candidates, certainly that is true this year, they will become full members of our faith community, they have stepped forward and taken the challenge and said 'yes' I want to deepen my faith, deepen my relationship with the Lord. And for many of you the same is true. The spirit has moved you and challenged you in different ways in your life to allow you to become what you were meant to become. Sometimes that means bearing a cross, suffering an illness or a loss. Or maybe it's a new joy, a marriage, a baby, a new job. Our joys as well as our sorrows will be colored by the light of our faith. The spirit is alive in us, constantly working, moving us, calling us to serve, challenging us to greater heights, what will be our response? How far are we willing to go?

After sharing the meal giving them his body and blood at the table Jesus tells them, "Do this in memory of me". And after washing their feet he tells them "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

The washing of the feet is so closely connected with the Eucharist. Think about it. The ordinary bread and wine which becomes for us something completely unordinary, something far more significant than what it appears, the body and blood of Christ. The washing of feet is, in a way, a simple act of service that seems to make no sense to us. But in an extraordinary sense it is a reminder to us that serving others is what we are called to do, without regard to whether it is rewarding or even sensible, and without regard to who ought to be serving whom. It reminds each one of us that in this place we are all equal and we are all welcomed. Unite yourself with our Lord tonight. Recall His words to the apostles, his words to us, "If I the master and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." And as the bread and wine is being consecrated, meditate upon that instruction that Jesus gave us and that we follow at every Mass that is said throughout the world, "Do this in memory of me". May God bless each of you this Holy Night, and all who love the Lord with simplicity of heart.