

LITURGY BYTES

Holy Thursday

The evening Mass on Holy Thursday is also called the Mass of the Lord's Supper. This is where the Church relives the institution of the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass at the Last Supper. It also celebrates the institution of the priesthood, which took place on this same evening the night before Jesus was crucified.



As we know, the Last Supper was a Passover meal that Jesus shared with his Apostles. However, he gave the traditional Passover a radically new meaning: now it is He who becomes the sacrificial lamb. Christians have come to see in this celebration the institution of the Eucharist, whereby bread and wine become truly the Body and Blood of Christ, and the ministry of the priesthood.

Another beautiful symbol of this night we need to look at is the disciple John while he rests and, like a child waiting to be fed, leaves his hand open to receive. On the other hand, Judas reaches to dip his hand in the dish. He alone feeds himself; he no longer believes the Master is the "bread of life." For him, food must be taken greedily and even by force if necessary. Something for us to ponder as we go to receive Communion at Mass is to reflect on how we do just that: *Receive*. In opening our mouths or hands, we allow ourselves to be fed. This is because life-giving love is always a gift. It can never be taken by force. Our task this Holy Thursday is to simply trust and open our hearts to *Receive*.

Another action of importance from this Passover meal happens when Jesus takes off his robe and begins to wash the disciples' feet. This is normally the job of a slave. This action provokes a series of reactions, especially from Peter who refused to have his feet washed by Jesus. He just could not allow the Lord to see his soiled feet which were distasteful in his eyes. Jesus did not come for a part of Peter. He wants to enter into a full relationship not only with Peter but with all of us. Jesus wants to know both the light and dark side of our lives. Here is a question we might wish to ask ourselves: What parts of my life am I too ashamed to share with Christ? What are the weaknesses, fears, wounds that I still keep trying to cover up before Christ's eyes?

Have a blessed, healthy, and safe week! ~~*Michele Hall*