

Homily: Holy Thursday: 2021: Ex 12: 1-8, 11-14; Ps. 116: 12-13, 15-16 bc, 17-18; 1 Corth  
11:23-26; Jn 13: 1-15

***“The Gift of the First Mass”***

*“By celebrating the Last Supper with His apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus passing over to His Father by His death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1340).

1. As we commemorate the Last Supper, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Mass in history, it is a powerful time to ponder what exactly the Lord Jesus did for us, as we meditate on these mysteries of Faith during this Sacred Paschal Triduum. What a gift the Lord Jesus gave us as the eternal High Priest of the miracle of consecrating His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. We must **never take the Holy Eucharist for granted** as the pandemic has taught us in a very tangible way - as we went thru those months last year from March thru June with the Holy Mass only being celebrated in private by the priests of the Church. What a strange time that was! I remember this time last year when I went down to my good friend’s Church St. Andrew’s in Johnstown and celebrated Mass with just Fr. Peter Crowe the Pastor there and my buddy Fr. Angelo Patti who is the Pastor at St. Peter’s in Somerset. It was that day or the day before when the Governor put out a decree that anyone traveling at night might be pulled over by the State Police because of the Coronavirus – what that had to do with traveling at night is still bizarrely unknown, but it’s what we had to deal with! So I snuck down and back from Johnstown and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass praying for all of my flock here at St. Thomas and also at 7 Dolors. It was a Mass I won’t forget and reminds us all of the gift it is to publically celebrate the Sacraments freely without government interference and never to take that for granted in these crazy times. It reminds us also to treat Jesus in the Holy Eucharist with the utmost respect and never knowingly to receive Him with mortal sin on our soul and pray in reparation for people who do so, especially any leaders in Government and Society who claim to be Catholic and receive Communion regularly despite taking positions diametrically opposed to our Catholic faith, like publically and

legislatively supporting abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia, and any other number of moral disorders which are objectively mortal sins. Lord have mercy on their poor, deluded, obstinate souls, and may they soon repent before it is too late! We can't hide our Catholic faith in public life: its vision is needed more than ever in such a dire time.

2. What a gift the **ordained priesthood** is, of course intimately connected to the Holy Eucharist because you can't have one without the other. The friend I mentioned Fr. Peter Crowe is also the Diocesan Vocation director as of last June. He is trying to do a good job despite the many challenges of encouraging more men to be open to and discern if Jesus is calling them to give their life to Him in a radical way which the ordained priesthood in our time especially entails. Pray and offer acts of penance for this intention: *that God blesses the Diocese of A-J with more priests which obviously requires more young men to say Yes to this sacred calling*. We are truly going back to being a Mission diocese; in fact, one priest I know and it will be public in a few weeks is soon going to be in charge of 5 Parishes. That's insane and yet that is what some of us will have to do more and more until we get more priests to serve the Church. What a noble and beautiful calling the priesthood is for the sole purpose of the salvation of souls! Encourage priestly vocations always to the young men you know: to at least consider it in prayer and see where the Lord leads them.
3. Finally the Lord Jesus washing the feet of His apostles at the Last Supper has always been held up as a model of **fraternal charity** for the rest of us of the need to serve others because we love God and receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. The pandemic has forced us to make some adjustments in this regard. If you look at yourself and others, we all have different personalities and temperaments which makes life more rich and interesting, even if sometimes frustrating as we all don't operate the same way. If you are more of an **extrovert** this time of the pandemic has been particularly challenging as there have been many limits on social gatherings and group activities – some extroverts I know, including priest friends, are really struggling after a year of this – although things are slowly getting better with most, but some have cracked – we pray they regain their bearings soon. Hopefully by being forced to live a more quiet life this past year, it has given extroverts an appreciation for the life of silence and reflection, and the realization that you don't

have to overly always do public things to help serve others, but by quiet prayer and offering God our sufferings/penances to Him from the quiet of our home and Church we can help so many souls. For those of us who are more **introverts**, hopefully the last year has taught us more that we can't be selfish in our quiet time at home and outside of social gatherings, but we too must do more in terms of prayer and reparation and sacrifices and penances to effect spiritual change for the good – praying daily the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet for our own deeper conversion in holiness and that obstinate souls in our world will convert before they lose their souls forever and end up in Hell – per our Lady of Fatima's request. Jesus brings that home tonight as He offers Himself as the Living Sacrifice for our salvation. Let's embrace these gifts ever more profoundly: *of the Holy Eucharist, the sacred ordained Priesthood and a life lived in service to God and our fellow men and women in this time of great need and fear - reminding everyone that only God can get us thru this pandemic and through any dark time collectively or personally.* We must live in a spirit of **Faith, Hope and Charity**; and ask God to strengthen those theological virtues in our mind, heart and will. Remember all can be for the good of souls, no matter what we go through – if we unite our life with Jesus **each day**, in company with Mary, St. Joseph and all of the good angels and saints. God bless you.