

Homily: Holy Thursday 2022: Ex 12: 1-8, 11-14; Ps 116; 1 Corth 11: 23-26; Jn 13: 1-15
“**The 3 Spiritual Gifts Jesus gave us on Holy Thursday**”

We enter as a Church into the holiest days of the Liturgical year this evening, beginning with the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper and culminating with the Easter Vigil and the celebration of Mass on Easter day. We are called to meditate in a special way on the mysteries of salvation. Tonight we are called to mediate on three distinct but interrelated gifts that Christ gave us at the Last Supper - which are continued by the Catholic Church.

1. First we remember tonight that the Lord Jesus ordained the first priests of the Church at the Last Supper, the first Mass. The Lord gives the special sacrament of **Holy Orders** to His Church to continue His ministry of Word and Sacrament in the human instrument of a priest. The priest is a man like all others, but consecrated in a special way to God for the service of the Church, the Bride of Christ. He is to be an instrument of God’s mercy and holiness. The priest’s hands are anointed at his ordination in order to consecrate the Eucharist and to forgive even the gravest of sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What an awesome gift and how we priests need your prayers to remain faithful to this most sacred vocation. **It is such a noble vocation, yet the treasure of the priesthood is held in a very frail human nature** - as we have seen in the recent years with some priests going astray with evil consequences. Please pray for all those who have been hurt by priests who gave into any type of grave evil. And please pray for us priests on a daily basis, especially for those in our diocese; and in a special way pray and offer your daily sufferings to the Lord of the Harvest beseeching Him to bless His Church, especially our diocese, with more vocations to the priesthood - we need men striving for holiness to enter the priesthood, especially here, in our Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown which has had its share of problems. We have one man being ordained a priest this year and one to the transitional Diaconate. Please pray for them. Thank you Jesus for the ordained priesthood and for letting me personally share in that gift now for almost 22 years on May 27th.
2. There is an intimate connection between the priesthood and the next gift the Lord Jesus gives us at the Last Supper, namely, the Most Holy Eucharist. Though the

priesthood we receive from the Lord the gift of the Eucharist - His very own **Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity** under the Sacramental Signs of bread and wine. **What a miracle of grace!** Let's ask the Lord to INCREASE our Faith in His Real Presence in the Eucharist on a daily basis. May we adore Him ever more profoundly, (tonight we have adoration until 9 pm, please stay and adore and thank our loving Lord for His presence among us in the Holy Eucharist) and receive Him with an ever more fervent faith and love each time we receive Holy Communion. And may we NEVER receive Him unworthily *by indifference, lack of faith and love, and in the state of mortal sin!* May we remain in the grace of His friendship always and stay in that grace through the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Confession. **He loves us more than we can ever imagine:** *to stay with us until the end of time in a Little White Host - how amazing and humble the love of our God* has for us weak human beings! Let's thank Him by striving more and more to live a life of holiness which is the Eucharistic grace in action.

3. That leads to the third gift the Lord bestows on us at the Last Supper: His holy example of self-giving love in service to our fellow human beings, symbolized by the washing of the Apostles' feet. **As the Lord allows His body to be broken sacramentally in the Eucharist to feed our souls, we must take that gift and allow ourselves in Christ to be broken in service to our fellow human beings.** We are called to daily lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters, of which all human beings are, as Jesus did: *by dying to selfishness; serving others by works of charity and being patient with all; sharing our material wealth with the poor (e.g., giving to the food bank collection tonight); sharing our Catholic faith: our spiritual wealth, with those who don't know the Lord, who are sadly increasing in number in our modern secular world; and by praying and being kind, loving, and merciful to all, especially with our enemies and persecutors, be they personal or communal. For as Jesus said, "For what you do to others will be returned to you by Your Heavenly Father."* With God's grace and mercy, may we be instruments of His to the hurting modern world - pointing all to Jesus and the gift of salvation He won for us on the Cross and distributes thru the Church. God bless you.