



Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lords Supper Year C

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"...as I have done for you, you should also do" Jn 13:15

The love Jesus has for us is etched within the words of this Gospel, *"...as I have done for you, you should also do."* He loved his own *"to the end."* Throughout his ministry he proved this to us and showed us how to follow him. During Holy Week we recall that the time draws near when he will give his life for us. At this Mass of the Lord's Supper his ultimate assurance of love for us is joined to two enduring sacraments, the Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders. At this Mass Jesus continues to stoop to wash our feet, through the action of the priest *"in persona Christi Capitis"* -- *"in the person of Christ the head."* This action of stooping to wash our feet should humble every priest throughout the world. Jesus is present to serve his people, sanctify his people and to love his people through the priesthood and the Eucharist.

God calls us to participate in this most sacred Supper, in which his Only Begotten Son handed himself over to death, entrusting to his priests and assembly a sacrifice new for all eternity, the eternal banquet of his love. At this Mass in celebration of the institution of the Eucharist, we return to our origins. This Mass gives special meaning to *"do this in remembrance of me."* We recall during the Eucharistic Prayer that he took bread into the very flesh of his hands, as the priest now does. Realizing that everything he is and does has come from beyond him, he gives thanks to his Father the Giver. This act of gratitude opens him completely to the Father's love that flows through him. He *"gives thanks"* in gratitude – action that embodies the very meaning of the word *"eucharist."*

Then he breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples. The breaking symbolizes the sacrifice his one life has to undergo in order to reach all lives down through the ages to come. What he has been given from the Father, and what we have been given from the Father, is meant to be given away as gift – *"This is my body given for you."* As we receive this gift, we ingest his spirit through the consecrated bread and spiritual drink, so that we may be strong enough to follow him. At this Mass we continue this practice Jesus began, so that we may continue Jesus' presence among us pouring out our self-donation as oblation to the world. May we be raised in wonder and awe as we pray and reflect on this great mystery, the fullness of charity and the source, summit and fountain of our life.

This Mass institutes a new social order. This new order is structured on *"diaconia,"* service to others rather than social preference – the first shall be last and the last shall be first in reciprocal interdependence. This week, may we take time out to dwell in the unconditional love other gave to us, a love participated and passed on from what the Lord gave to them. What effect does this love have on us? May we reflect on this gift and pray that, through the Holy Spirit, our love may be *"diaconia"* poured out for others, in heartfelt joy and thanksgiving.

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Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father.

He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.

The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over.

So, during supper,

fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments.

He took a towel and tied it around his waist.

Then he poured water into a basin

and began to wash the disciples' feet

and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

"Master, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him,

"What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later."

Peter said to him,

"You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him,

"Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me."

Simon Peter said to him,

"Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

Jesus said to him,

"Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all."

For he knew who would betray him;

for this reason, he said,

"Not all of you are clean."

So when he had washed their feet

and put his garments back on and reclined at table again,

he said to them,

"Do you realize what I have done for you?

You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am.

If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.

I have given you a model to follow,

so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

The Gospel of the Lord