

Holy Thursday: **“The Lord’s Supper: Eucharist, Priesthood, and Service”**: Ex 12:1–8, 11–14; 1 Cor 11:23–26; Jn 13:1–15

Tonight, we begin the most sacred and solemn celebration of our Christian faith: **the Paschal Triduum**. Holy Thursday is a very special night because it takes us into the very heart of Jesus. On this night, the Church invites us to remember three great gifts Jesus gave us before His Passion and death: The Eucharist, the Priesthood, and the Commandment of Service. Tonight is not just about remembering something that happened long ago. Tonight, we enter into the mystery of Christ’s love — a love that gives, a love that serves, and a love that saves.

In the first reading, we hear about the first **Passover**. The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, suffering under oppression. God prepared to set them free. He told them to sacrifice a lamb and mark their doorposts with its blood. That night, the Lord passed over their homes and spared them. That event became a sacred memorial for the Jewish people. Every year they celebrated it to remember how God had delivered them from slavery. But, my brothers and sisters, that first Passover was only a sign of something much greater to come. On Holy Thursday, Jesus celebrates the Passover with His disciples, but He gives it a new and eternal meaning. **Jesus Himself becomes the true Passover Lamb**. The blood of the lamb in Egypt saved the Israelites from physical death, but the Blood of Christ saves us from **sin, eternal death, and separation from God**. So tonight we see clearly: **the old Passover is fulfilled in Jesus Christ**. He is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

In the second reading, Saint Paul gives us the beautiful words of Jesus at the Last Supper: **“This is my body that is for you... This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”** These are not ordinary words. These are words of love. These are words of self-giving. These are words that changed the world forever. On this night, Jesus gave us the **Holy Eucharist**. The Eucharist is not just a symbol. It is not just a reminder. It is not simply a memory of Jesus. **The Eucharist is Jesus Himself — truly present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.**

Every time we celebrate the Mass, we are not doing something separate from Calvary. The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is made present to us sacramentally. We do not repeat His sacrifice; rather, we are drawn into that one eternal sacrifice of love. That is why the Eucharist is the **heart of the Church** and the **center of Christian life**. When we receive Holy Communion, we are receiving not just bread and wine, but **the living Christ**. He comes into our hearts to nourish us, strengthen us, heal us, and unite us with Himself and with one another. How blessed we are to have the Eucharist. How blessed we are to have Jesus so near to us.

The Gift of the Priesthood: But tonight Jesus gave us not only the Eucharist — He also gave us the **priesthood**. When Jesus said, **“Do this in memory of me,”** He entrusted the Eucharist to His Apostles. In that moment, He gave them a sacred mission: to continue what He had begun. This is the origin of the **ministerial**

priesthood. The priesthood is not merely a profession or a human career. It is a **gift and a calling from God.** Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a priest is given the grace to act **in the person of Christ** — especially in celebrating the Eucharist, forgiving sins, proclaiming the Gospel, and shepherding God’s people. A priest is called: to bring Christ to the altar, to bring mercy in the confessional, to bring hope to the suffering, and to bring the Word of God to His people. Yes, priesthood is a beautiful gift — but it is also a life of sacrifice, service, and love.

As **St. John Vianney** said: **“The priesthood is the love of the heart of Christ.”** So, tonight is also a beautiful opportunity for us to **pray for priests** — for faithful, holy, humble priests — and also to pray for **new vocations**, so that the Church may always have shepherds to feed God’s people with the Eucharist.

The Commandment of Humble Service: And then the Gospel gives us one of the most moving scenes in all of Scripture. Jesus, the Master and Lord, rises from the table, takes off His outer garment, wraps a towel around His waist, and begins to **wash the feet of His disciples.** This was the work of a servant. This was the task of the lowest person in the house. And yet, Jesus kneels before His own disciples. What a powerful lesson. The One who is Lord of heaven and earth bends down in humility. The One who is God becomes a servant. And after washing their feet, Jesus says: **“I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”** In other words: If you want to follow Me, then learn to love humbly. Learn to serve quietly. Learn to kneel before others with compassion. True greatness in the eyes of God is not found in power, status, or recognition. It is found in **humble love.** Holy Thursday asks each one of us a very important question: **Do we live what we celebrate?**

If we come to the altar and receive the Eucharist, then we must also become people of the Eucharist — people who love, forgive, and serve. We cannot receive the Body of Christ and then ignore the suffering of Christ in others. The Eucharist must lead us to charity. The altar must lead us to service. Communion with Jesus must become compassion for others. That means: helping those in need, forgiving someone who hurt us, visiting the sick, comforting the lonely, serving without expecting recognition. That is what Jesus teaches us tonight.

Holy Thursday reveals the depth of Christ’s love. Tonight we remember: **The Eucharist** — the gift of His Body and Blood. **The Priesthood** — the gift that keeps His presence alive in the Church. **Service** — the commandment to love one another as He has loved us. As we enter these holy days of the Lord’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection, let us ask for the grace: **to love as Christ loved, to serve as Christ served, and to remain always united with Him in the Eucharist.** May this sacred celebration renew our faith, deepen our gratitude, and transform our hearts. **Amen**