

HOLY THURSDAY

St. John 13:1-15

With this Mass of the Lord's Supper we begin the sacred Triduum or three days. On this Holy Thursday, tomorrow, Good Friday, and Saturday, with the Easter Vigil, we are drawn into the very depths of our salvation when on these three days two thousand years ago our promised salvation was realised. These three days are not three separate Masses but rather one Mass that begins this evening and finds its close on Saturday evening.

These days are the "still days"—the days when the Lord was crucified and buried and lay silent in the tomb and then amidst that silence rose from the dead.

On this day, Holy Thursday, we commemorate also the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the institution of the Priesthood. This is marked by the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the washing of the feet. Both of these are a sign of service. The Eucharist a sign of God making Himself a servant of man, and the washing of the feet, God commanding that we make of ourselves servants of one another.

These two things, the Eucharist and the Priesthood, are inseparable from one another because a man is ordained Priest for one reason alone—to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Without this he is nothing and has no purpose or reason.

On this night, two thousand years ago, the Lord gathered with His Apostles for the Passover which would be His Last Supper. The Jewish festival of the Passover commemorated the Hebrew's freedom from slavery in Egypt. We too, in commemorating the Last Supper, remember that we also have been freed from slavery. But not slavery to pharaoh but slavery to something far worse—Satan. Satan, who tempted Adam and Eve and caused the downfall of humanity,

held and still holds all men and women captive and seeks payment of ransom for our souls—a ransom that no man could ever pay. So God, not abandoning us as we have abandoned Him, gave as a ransom to Satan His only Son, so that by His death we would be set free for eternal life.

This evening on this altar we will behold the greatest sacrifice as the bread and wine offered become truly the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ as it was given first so long ago in that upper room in Jerusalem and on that hill of Calvary. And we will follow Our Lord as the Blessed Sacrament is carried to the Altar of Repose just as the Lord walked with His Apostles to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. And we will wait in silence with Him as did they on that first dark night. And we will gather again tomorrow and we will behold the Passion and Death of the Lord and stand at the foot of the Holy Cross as the light of salvation is darkened and taken from us.