

April 2, 2026—Mass of the Lord's Supper—Holy Thursday

God's entire plan of salvation comes together in the events of Christ's death and resurrection that we begin tonight. Painstakingly, God revealed all that He had planned in the people and events of the Old Testament. During the Season of Lent, we have been reflecting upon them one by one.

Jesus instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Priesthood of the New Covenant on Holy Thursday evening at the celebration of the Passover Meal. The First Reading tonight took us back to the original Passover. We heard the instructions that Moses gave to the Jewish people who were slaves in Egypt. They were to sacrifice a lamb and mark the doorpost and lintel with its blood and then roast it as part of a meal with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The Passover Meal was both a sacrifice and a banquet. It was sacred! Because of it, the angel of death would pass over their houses sparing the first-born son from death. Pharaoh would force them to leave Egypt as his house and people were not spared.

The Passover Banquet was to be perpetual memorial of this momentous event. Memorial, not only in the sense of a memory aid, but much more. Each year, this sacred meal was meant to take them back to the time of their ancient ancestors in Egypt so that they could participate in the event once again; its meaning was not just a thing of the past but of the present. It allowed them to be a part of God's great plan of salvation that one day would be fulfilled in Jesus and the Holy Eucharist.

The Passover lamb could only be sacrificed in the Temple of Jerusalem. Once the Roman army destroyed the Temple in 70 AD, the element of sacrifice was no longer present in Jewish worship. That element was already fulfilled and taking place in Christian worship in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For us the Holy Mass is the perfect form of worship because it unites us with the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. **"Do this in memory of Me"**, He told the apostles. That one sacrifice of Jesus is made present to us, or renewed, as the priest offers the bread and wine in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. Jesus takes our poor offering of worship and love and unites it to His so that we can give, not just any form of worship, but the most perfect form of worship. At the same time, He pours out an ocean of mercy and grace upon us and leaves us His real Presence in Holy Communion.

As I say the words of consecration and hold up the Sacred Host for adoration and likewise the Chalice with His Precious Blood, I try to think of all that He has done for me by His sacrifice on Calvary and once again make the poor gift of myself to

the Heavenly Father. By uniting my sufferings, prayers, good deeds and work to Jesus' sacrifice, I trust that He will transform them by his sacrifice into something truly worthy of the Heavenly Father.

There are many things that a priest must do to be the spiritual father of his flock, such as baptizing, hearing confessions, witnessing marriages and anointing the sick. As important as those sacraments are and the other things a priest must do, Pope St. John Paul wrote that the very reason for the priesthood is to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I always think that even if the day goes wrong and other plans fail to work out, if I have offered the Holy Mass to the best of my ability then my day was worthwhile. My priesthood was fulfilled in the best way that God intended that day. If we participate in the Holy Mass, there is no such thing as a wasted day!

Jesus fulfilled the priesthood of Israel and the worship in the Temple with the priesthood of the Catholic Church and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Tonight we remember these gifts that Jesus gave us right at the beginning of these days of our salvation to help the Church through all ages, until the end of time. He wanted to be very close to us in the Holy Eucharist and the priesthood.

After Holy Mass tonight, we will have a procession around the Church with the Blessed Sacrament, remembering Jesus' journey from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. The Blessed Sacrament will be placed in the Altar of Repose set up at the St. Gianna Shrine. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed and accepted the Father's plan for our salvation while asking the apostles to stay awake and pray. The Church will be open until midnight to come and spend some time in prayer with Jesus. After Mass the altar will be stripped; please leave Church in solemn silence, rather than the usual good custom of visiting with one another in the vestibule.