

Homily Outline for Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 1, 2021

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- I. During Lent, the staff of the Diocesan Curia has been participating in weekly sessions of the B3 Discipleship Academy: *Belong, Believe, Become*.
 - A. Our focus in this course has been on the Old Testament.
 - B. Yesterday's session was on the worship in the temple, presented by Professor Mark Giszczak of the Augustine Institute.
 - C. One of the discussion questions was: what was the purpose of creation?
 1. The purpose of creation is to come into God's rest and worship God.
 2. This is the 1st commandment: to worship God alone.
 - a) Adam and Eve in Paradise worshipped God before they sinned.
 - b) The angels in heaven worship God.
 - c) The saints in heaven worship God.
 - d) Our goal is to be saints to worship God in heaven.
 3. What do we mean by "worship"?
 - a) Negative connotation: falling down in submission to kiss the ground or the feet of a king; I don't think this is why God created us!
 - b) Positive and correct connotation: to express love and devotion for God.
 - D. The *Baltimore Catechism* I learned in grade school answered this in a different way.
 1. The 3rd question in Lesson 1 asks, "Why did God make us?"
 2. The answer is that "God made us to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in heaven."
 3. The 4th question asks, "What must we do to gain the happiness of heaven?"

4. The answer is, "To gain the happiness of heaven we must know, love, and serve God in this world."
5. The 5th question asks, "From whom do we learn to know, love and serve God?"
6. The answer is, "We learn to know, love, and serve God from Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who teaches us through the Catholic Church."

II. This is what Jesus shows us in the Gospel today: how to know, love and serve God.

- A. To know someone in the biblical sense is to be intimate with that person. At the last Supper, Jesus gave us the gift of the Eucharist to share his love with us in the most intimate way possible: by coming into our hearts in Holy Communion.
- B. In response to God's love, Jesus asks us to imitate His love by serving others, which He demonstrates by washing the feet of His disciples.
- C. Jesus commands us to do both: to celebrate the Eucharist and to serve others.

III. In our Catholic tradition, we do not talk so much about going to church on Sunday to worship God; we go to church at attend Mass, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to receive Holy Communion.

- A. Of course, all of this is worship in the true sense of expressing our love and devotion for God, but they emphasize more specific aspects of our worship.
- B. The word Eucharist means to give thanks: we thank God for His love.
- C. The word Mass means to be sent out: Jesus sends us out to love and serve others.
- D. The word Communion emphasizes our oneness with God.

IV. Quote from St. Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist:

"Material food first changes into the one who eats it, and then, as a consequence, restores to him lost strength and increases his vitality. Spiritual food, on the other hand, changes the person who eats it into itself. Thus the effect proper to this Sacrament is the conversion of a man into Christ, so that he may no longer live, but Christ lives in him; consequently, it has the double effect of restoring the spiritual strength he had lost by his sins and defects, and of increasing the strength of his virtues." (St. Thomas, Commentary on Book IV of the Sentences, d.12, q.2, a.11)

- V. The Angelic Doctor, as St. Thomas Aquinas was called, was even more explicit about how we share in God's divinity by partaking of Holy Communion in his work that we read on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi:

"Since it was the will of God's only-begotten Son that men should share in His divinity, He assumed our nature in order that by becoming man He might make men gods. . . . Yet, in the end, no one can fully express the sweetness of this sacrament, in which spiritual delight is tasted at its very source, and in which we renew the memory of that surpassing love for us which Christ revealed in His passion. It was to impress the vastness of this love more firmly upon the hearts of the faithful that our Lord instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper. As He was on the point of leaving the world to go to the Father, after celebrating the Passover with His disciples, He left it as a perpetual memorial of His passion." (*Opusculum 57, in festo Corporis Christi*, lect. 1-4).

- VI. As we celebrate the institution of the ministerial priesthood and the Holy Eucharist tonight, let us thank God for this great gift, by which we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
- VII. May God give us this grace. Amen.