

Homily Outline for Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
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- I. A [front-page story](#) in today's issue of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL reports that "Tech companies are serving up million-dollar-a-year compensation packages, accelerated stock-vesting schedules and offers to poach entire engineering teams to draw people with expertise and experience in the kind of generative AI that is powering ChatGPT and other humanlike bots."
 - A. If you are not up on the latest tech lingo, "AI" refers to Artificial Intelligence, "ChatGPT" stands for Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer, which allows people to have conversations with a computer, and "bots" are robots that are designed to think and act like humans.
 - B. With workers in these new technologies in high demand, the president of a semiconductor-recruiting firm says candidates can be won over by various factors, from compensation to being a true believer in a startup's mission to being promised autonomy over their work.
- II. I thought of this in terms of recruiting young men to become priests and young women to become religious sisters.
 - A. The Church cannot offer million-dollar-a-year compensation packages, accelerated stock-vesting schedules, or even autonomy over their work.
 - B. In fact, rather than autonomy, they will have to promise obedience to their bishop or religious superior!
 - C. So why would anyone want to be a priest or religious sister? What do we have to offer?
 1. Well, we do look for someone who is a true believer in the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. What the Church offers is something that money cannot buy: happiness in this life and in the life to come!

2. To help answer these questions, I need look no further than our own Father Brian Alford, Rector of our Cathedral and Vicar for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations.
 - a) In his Rector's column in these weekend's Cathedral Weekly bulletin, Father Alford tells us about "Paschal Joy" of the Easter season.
 - b) Father Alford writes, "Paschal joy comes from the glorious truth that Christ has risen from the dead! Life is victorious, sin has been defeated! On the day of our Baptism, we became partakers in this victory, and because of that, we have great hope that we shall share in the Resurrection at the end of our earthly journey."
 3. In other words, what the Church offers is something that money cannot buy: happiness in this life and in the life to come!
 4. We find so much joy in that truth that we want to share it with others and help them to live in this joy by knowing, loving, and serving God.
- III. 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.
- IV. In our Catholic tradition, we do not usually say that we going to church for a worship service; 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.

V. 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)

VI. 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).

VII. Our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress last October and the National Eucharistic Congress next July in Indianapolis are ways for us to grow in our appreciation of the great gift of the Eucharist. 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.

VIII. May God give us this grace. Amen.