

[Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 12:1-15]

Before entering the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C., visitors pass by a prominent sign that reads, "Think about what you saw." Far from merely being a catchy slogan, the sign is a call to action. "Think about what you saw" calls visitors to remember the past and let it shape the future. In that way, the Holocaust Museum remains a LIVING memorial, a means to preserve the memory of the victims, while calling this and future generations out of passivity and into action.

Tonight's First Reading gives us all the essentials of the Passover or Seder Meal. Among the many striking features of the Seder are two. The first is the "NOW" of the Passover Meal. Orthodox Jews do not simply remember what happened in the past. Speaking the words of what happened in the past makes the action real in the PRESENT. They are not merely remembering the Passover -- they ARE doing the Passover right now!

The words of their prayers speak of this: "Let all who ARE hungry come and eat. Let all who ARE in need come and celebrate Passover... This year we ARE slaves: next year we are free!" Secondly, the dismissal at the end of the Passover meal ends with the well-known words: "Next year in Jerusalem!" It speaks of the hope that one day all will return to the mother land -- or better put -- the Holy Land. Some think this will happen at Armageddon. We believe otherwise. When the Church is united at last, all will be "in Jerusalem."

Tonight, we gather to celebrate the Supper of the Lord, a living memorial that puts us smack dab into the present moment of our lives. Like our Jewish ancestors, we simply do not remember and retell the story: In speaking the words, we are in the PRESENT MOMENT of the REAL PRESENCE: "This IS my Body... This IS my blood." "Do this (NOW) in remembrance of Me."

As Moses received his instructions from his God, we receive our instructions, and our shipping out orders from Jesus Christ Himself. Those orders come from the words found in tonight's Gospel: "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should do also."

Jesus, John tells us, knew that His hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved His own in the world and He loved them to the end. He was fully aware of what was going to happen in the next twenty-four hours. He sheds the signs of prestige and position in society, and washes the feet of His disciples. Are you aware, my friends, that you are in this awesome mystery NOW? From the moment you walked into this holy place and sat yourself within these hallowed walls, you put yourselves into the middle of this holy mess!

You come to the Supper of the Lord with tired eyes and weary bodies. You come with your genuine concerns and cares about work, or the lack of it; health, or the lack of it; love, or the lack of it. You come to the table of the Supper of the Lord, in Word and in Sacrament, to be inspired, to be given hope, to be nourished. And then, like our pilgrim ancestors in Egypt, you are ready to leave this place at a moment's notice.

And where are you headed? When you receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, you receive it not from me, but from Him in Whose place I stand as an "Alter Christus" -- "Another Christ." As Jesus handed a morsel of bread to Judas Iscariot, who turned traitor, and to Peter, who denied Him, and to the other ten seated around Him, Jesus Christ hands you His very Self for your nourishment and strength. For your peace. For your salvation.

Think about what you saw. Think about what you see here tonight. Let that guide you to where you are headed. To betrayal and to denial, or to fraternal love, ministry and service. Let us leave here tonight, fully aware of what is going to happen to us, or totally without a clue, letting Jesus Christ guide us to wash some feet. The feet of those who have lost their homes and jobs. The feet of those who are mentally or physically challenged. To wash the feet of those who are broken and broken-hearted, or who are strangers and aliens in our land.

This, we will learn, is the ultimate meaning of the Eucharist. To become the hands and feet, the eyes and the ears, the mouth and the heart of the Lord in the world. AMEN!