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It seems that there is a part of our culture that has a macabre curiosity about the last meals of the rich and famous and especially of the notorious and criminal. It is interesting that something as private and common as a meal which is, after all, what we all must eat, can be recorded for all time. From Cleopatra to Whitney Houston, the last meals of the great have been recorded. They have varied from the mundane and meager to the extravagant and gluttonous. The last meals of those on death row certainly seem to err on the gluttonous, as if to say if they cannot cheat death perhaps, they can cheat indigestion.

Then of course there are the virtuous few, regardless of how History paints them, the likes of King Louis XVI, King Charles I, and Tsar Nicholas, who's last meals consisted of simple fare. Not what one would expect for royalty. King Charles especially, before facing the axe, ate only a piece of bread with a glass of wine, and only at the Archbishop's insistence. We may only speculate if this fascination with last meals stems from the emphasis placed on our Lord's last meal, His Last Supper, that very meal which we come together to commemorate tonight. We might also wonder if this fascination with last meals is from an unconscious hunger to take part in that Last Supper of Christ which has continued daily down through the ages. But of course, we know that Jesus' Last Meal, His Last Supper, was no ordinary last meal.

The first extraordinary thing that Jesus does as part of His Last Supper is to wash His disciples' feet. This was seen as a task for a servant, unbecoming of their Lord and Master, Jesus. This is why St. Peter seems to be so uncomfortable with Jesus washing his feet. The next extraordinary act Jesus does at His Last Supper, is to share it with those closest to Him, even with the man who he knew was going to betray Him. This is very uncommon when the last meals of the rich and famous, or the criminal, are taken into consideration. Then there is the extraordinary nature of the Last Supper itself. What exactly did they eat at the Last Supper? There is some debate as to whether the Last Supper was indeed a Passover Meal. Yet the Scriptures mention that Jesus did intend to eat a Passover meal with His disciples, thus the menu would have consisted of roasted lamb, herbs, bread, and wine. This was the liturgical and symbolic meal recalling the first Passover when the Israelites were brought out of Egypt. The Scriptures only reference the Passover meal as part of the Last Supper in passing, the reason is because it is not as important as what came after. The emphasis is placed on the fact that Jesus took bread and wine into His hands. He blessed the bread and brake it, saying *take, eat, this is my Body which is*

*given for you*, and He took the cup of wine and blessed it saying, *drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins*, and these He gave to each of His disciples. At Jesus' Last Supper, He gives Himself as food through the bread and wine, now His Body and Blood.

Again, what was also extraordinary about the Last Supper, is that Jesus serves and feeds the man who betrays Him, Judas. Even though, according to the manners of the day, Judas was rather rude and dipped his bread into the cup at the same time as Jesus did. We might not make much of this today, but in Jesus' day good etiquette was to wait until the host had dipped His bread in the cup. But we may also read from this that Judas must have been sitting nearer to Jesus than we normally see pictured in artist's renditions. He might not have been at the very end of the table waiting for his opportunity to go out into the night and receive his blood money. And still, Jesus knowing all of this, gives Judas the piece of bread known as the sop, the bread which was often dipped in the juices of the Passover lamb, the symbolic gesture of love and friendship at a seder meal, saying to him, *what you are to do, go and do quickly*.

We can spend hours debating whether Judas actually received the bread and wine of the Last Supper, or whether he just received the sop of bread from the hands of Jesus. Regardless, it is very likely that this was Judas' last supper as well. We know how Judas' story ends. He is so overcome with guilt and shame at having betrayed Jesus, and in seeing that Jesus is indeed going to die a cruel and barbaric death on a cross, he goes and hangs himself. This is a most tragic end for one who had walked so closely to Jesus. We might also wonder what kind of soul can receive bread and wine that has mysteriously become the body and blood of Christ and go out into the night and immediately betray Him. Some of the commentators point out that the darkness of that night was a perfect reflection of the darkness in his own mind and soul, which ensured that he ate and drank his own damnation.

Perhaps the fact that Judas received his last supper or last meal from the hand of Jesus and then went out to betray Him, is not so hard for us to believe after all. We each have had the experience of receiving Holy Communion and going out into the world to betray Christ. We betray Christ with Judas for greed of mammon and money in the world, or for shame, embarrassment, or fear with Peter, and the rest of the disciples. And just as at every Passover Meal the child asks their father, *Father, what does this night mean to you*, tonight we remember that we too are invited to join the disciples in the upper room, we too are invited to receive the bread and wine

of Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Tonight, may we also begin to heed His words to His disciples in the garden, *watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* Amen.