

**The Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper – Year A – April 2, 2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen**

**First Reading – Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14:** The LORD commands Moses and Aaron to mark the new year and prepare for Passover. Each Israelite family is to select a flawless lamb, share as needed, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The lamb's blood will protect them from the impending plague, signifying the LORD's mercy as He strikes Egypt but spares His people, establishing an eternal commemoration.

**Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 116:** In response to God's boundless grace, I vow to honor Him, lifting the cup of salvation as a symbol of my commitment. Freed from my burdens, I dedicate my thanks and uphold my promises, embracing the covenant shared through Christ's sacrifice.

**Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:** On the night of His betrayal, Jesus established the Eucharist. Breaking bread, He offered it as His body, and the cup as the new covenant in His blood, instructing us to commemorate His sacrifice in this act until He comes again.

**Gospel – John 13:1-15:** Before Passover, aware of his imminent departure, Jesus demonstrated his love by washing his disciples' feet, a task for servants. Peter initially resisted but accepted upon understanding its necessity for fellowship with Jesus. Jesus used this act to teach humility and service, emphasizing that followers should emulate his example of serving others.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

**“THE MEANING OF SELF-GIVING”**

The Gospel reading during the Holy Thursday evening Mass offers a detailed account of Jesus' final Passover meal with His disciples, marking His entry into the Passion to atone for the sins of humanity. During this farewell supper, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the ministerial priesthood so that He might remain with the children of men. All of this was done solely out of Love.

The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love. It is a very brief definition—yet one that is remarkably complete, concise, and encompasses a truly boundless significance. Indeed, from time immemorial to the present day and for all eternity, no one has ever been able to fully define love. Love is a gift bestowed by God upon humanity—a gift that belongs uniquely to human beings, enabling them to live it out and to give it away. The very word “love” has entered the realm of mystery. Love cannot be fully articulated through words alone; rather, it is a deeply personal sensation—a stirring within the heart that transcends all boundaries.

And so, though we may not know exactly when it began, the Sacrament of the Eucharist came to be known as the Sacrament of Love. We know only that, for a long time now, this title has appeared in Papal Encyclicals, Apostolic Letters, and numerous liturgical texts. And perhaps this title alone is capable of capturing the deepest significance of the Eucharistic Mystery: it is self-giving, self-offering, communion, self-emptying, and sacrifice... in short: The Eucharist is Love.

People often ask: "Why did God—He who is all-powerful—not choose a different, easier path? Why did He choose instead to become incarnate, to endure a life of suffering, and to undergo such a humiliating death in order to redeem humanity?" The theological explanation—perhaps being too profound—is often difficult for many to accept; for theology posits that: "Jesus chose the path of Incarnation to demonstrate to humanity that human beings possess an exceptionally noble worth—so noble, in fact, that He did not hesitate to take on human flesh—and that, through this very Incarnation, He elevated the dignity of the human person."

We can offer a more accessible, down-to-earth explanation through the following illustration: Imagine a young man seeking a life partner who simply remains in one spot—never visiting the young woman's home, never seeking her out in person, and never engaging in face-to-face conversation to truly get to know her—but instead stays at home, making phone calls, sending text messages, or writing emails to declare his love. How, then, could the young woman possibly accept his proposal? Furthermore, for the majority of Vietnamese people, there exists a cultural custom requiring a suitor to "go and serve as a prospective son-in-law" before he stands any chance of winning the hand of his life partner.

The same applies to Jesus: had He simply remained in heaven, calling down from above—"I love you; I am ready to die for you..."—how could humanity have ever verified the authenticity of that love, or found a way to reciprocate it? Consequently, Jesus had to descend to be with humanity—to embrace the human condition, to walk alongside us and share in our lives, and to stand ready to make the ultimate sacrifice to save the very beings He loved. Indeed, that is precisely what He did; and the most eloquent proof of this is His willingness to "die for the one He loves."

On one occasion, during a youth group activity, a catechist posed the question: "When two people are in love, what do they need most?" A small number of students suggested that what is needed is mutual understanding, financial stability, sentimental gifts, or romantic love letters. However, the vast majority agreed upon the answer: "When two people are in love, they need \*each other\*."

Yes—that is, indeed, the most profound and accurate realization shared by all true lovers. When two people are in love, letters, gifts, money, and words are merely secondary elements; what they truly need is the very person of the other—a complete self-giving, a union in which two become one. This, too, constitutes the very substance of the Sacrament of Matrimony. More than anyone else, Jesus—the King of Love—profoundly understands the deep needs of humanity, the very objects of His love. The words He spoke and the deeds He performed are indeed precious; yet, what could be more precious—and more essential to the human heart—than His very self? What could serve as a more compelling testament to love than His offering of His own Body to humanity? Thus, when the Eucharist is given to us, it embodies the fullness of union—a union that is simultaneously physical and spiritual.

Indeed, Christ demonstrated His love for humanity through the ultimate act of self-giving: the offering of His own most holy Body. This stands as the most eloquent proof and the most profound expression of true giving. It is the giving of one's entire life—a giving that extends to the very last drop of blood. It is a giving that transcends all other forms of giving—a total surrender, free from any calculation or self-interest. It is a giving born of authentic love itself.

To conclude this reflection, let us turn once more to the account narrated by the Evangelist Matthew regarding the Jewish custom of making offerings. While the officials and the wealthy ostentatiously poured their money—with a loud clatter—into the temple treasury, a poor widow, possessing only two small coins, reverently and gently placed her offering inside. Yet, in the eyes of Jesus, it was this very widow who had given the most; for she had offered to God her entire heart—and that is precisely what God desires. As for those wealthy men—although their monetary contributions were a thousand times greater than that of the widow—their love was not even one percent of hers, for they gave only from their surplus, or gave merely for the sake of ostentation and to garner praise. From this, we may conclude that THE TRUE MEANING OF GIVING is to give freely and gratuitously—without calculation or self-interest, and not for the sake of fame or gain—but rather, to give entirely out of Love. And the Sacrament...

*O Eucharistic Jesus, grant that we may live a life of selfless giving, without calculation or reserve, so that we may become like You—the One who gave Himself completely for the sake of humanity—and that, through our sincere life of love lived for Your sake, all may recognize us as Your disciples. Amen.*