

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

One of the most brilliant people who ever lived was Albert Einstein. In fact, his name is synonymous with being smart. However one day when he was asked for his phone number, he was totally unable to recall it. So he asked for a phone book to look up his own number. What would he ever do in this day and age when you need password to open your phone, buy groceries, or even get money out of the bank?

It wasn't that Einstein had forgotten his phone number. He simply didn't think it was important enough to remember. He had a habit of mentally discarding anything he felt would simply clutter up his mind. He was wise in recognizing that the human mind can only absorb so much information and he didn't want to fill up his mind with what he considered trivial.

This evening we are reminded of certain events that must never be forgotten. The first is the Jewish Passover. It is the celebration of God intervening to set the people of Israel free from slavery in Egypt. God had Moses go to the Egyptian Pharaoh and tell him, "Let my people go!" But Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he refused. So God said to Moses that on a certain night the people of Israel were to take the blood of a lamb and smear it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. The Israelites were then to eat the slaughtered lamb "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs". They were to eat the meal "like those who are in flight...with loins girt, sandals on their feet, and staff in hand." Then God would bring judgment on Egypt, "striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast," but He would pass over any homes that were marked by the blood of a lamb. It was a night the people of Israel would never forget.

To make certain that they would not forget, God commanded, "This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord, as a perpetual institution." This is the Passover of the Lord.

It is important for us to remember this Passover event because Jesus and all his disciples were faithful people of Israel. The meal that they celebrated on what we call the Last Supper was this Passover meal. St. Paul describes it in our second reading tonight: "I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes." And that, my dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, are why we are here tonight—in remembrance of Him.

In both cases, the Passover and the Last Supper, we are called by God Himself to celebrate these events with meals. They are meals that were designed by God: for the Passover—roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread; for the Last Supper—unleavened bread and wine. In this we can see that God took great care in planning these celebrations.

Don't we do the same thing when we plan celebrations? Whether it be a birthday party, a wedding reception, an anniversary celebration—all the important events of our lives, we generally celebrate with a special meal. I remember that my Mother would bake each of our favorite cake on our birthdays--mine was a dark chocolate cake (sometimes called devil's food cake) with a creamy, marshmallow frosting. I don't remember what kind of cake she made for my sisters. But I knew every birthday I would get my devil's food cake with that creamy, marshmallow frosting. I'll never forget it! And the reason I'll never forget it is, though I loved the cake, I knew my Mom took the time and went to the trouble to make it every year because she loved me.

That too is why Jesus calls us to share in this special meal that He Himself planned for us—a meal of unleavened bread and wine. But it's not just any unleavened bread—it is bread that only God can offer—bread that He transforms into His Body that He offers up for us. And it's not just wine—it is wine that again only God can offer—wine that He transforms into His own Blood that He shed for us. In this meal God gives us the gift of Himself in the person of Jesus who sacrificed His whole life for us so that we might know how much He loves us. In Jesus the words of the Lover to His Beloved are made true, "I love you so much that I will die for you".

It is also important for us to remember that before Jesus shared in the meal of that Last Supper with his disciples, he disrobed and bent to the floor to wash the feet of his disciples. He Himself performed this ritual of hospitality usually performed by a servant, or in a home, lack servants, the youngest child in the family.

You see, in those times, people walked everywhere, there were no cars, and they wore only sandals on their feet. So when they came to a home, they came with dirty feet. And, of course, meals weren't eaten on tables. People sat on the floor, resting on pillows, so their bare feet would be in the face of the person sitting next to them. It really was imperative that people had clean feet. So Jesus took on this important and necessary service of washing the feet of all gathered for the meal. He became the servant to his disciples. He performed this menial act of hospitality.

Then, before they partake of the meal which will be the First Eucharist, Jesus says, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me teacher and master, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

Tonight Deacon Gene and I will again provide this model of service that Jesus has given by washing the feet of our children who are preparing to share fully in this Sacred Meal of the Body and Blood of the Lord. Just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples before the First Eucharist, we will wash the feet of these little ones who soon will receive Jesus in the Eucharist, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

This night we remember God's love for His people. A love made real for all of us in the suffering and dying of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. A love that calls us to serve humbly and lovingly as Jesus served. Every time we share in this Eucharist when bread is broken becomes His Body given for us and wine poured out becomes His Blood shed for us, we "proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes."

There are some things that are of little consequence that clutter our minds. Lay them aside! Forget about them! They have no power to save you or anyone else. These things, however, must always be remembered—God's love for all His people, including you and me, made real in the cross of Jesus Christ—then celebrated in this Sacred Meal—take and eat, this is my body; take and drink this is the cup of my blood—and, finally lived in lives of humble and loving service; "as I have done for you, you should also do".