

From the Desk of Our Pastor

Our Divine Host



I was struck with last Thursday's Gospel lesson where we see Jesus preparing breakfast for His disciples as they were out fishing. Apart from the fact that the resurrected Christ loves to eat, it is beyond comprehension that God incarnate waits tables for his people. No one could ever make something like this up. It is simply a fact of Easter that God is our Divine host.

This fact of our religion, along with the even greater conundrum of Jesus washing His disciples' feet, is hard for us to get used to; God our waiter with towel in hand!

However hard this is for us to fathom, it is critical for our understanding of the Mass. We must understand the priest serves in persona Christi, in the place of Christ. As a "server" he is a "minister." The word "minister," although it might seem to be a position of authority and power, really means the opposite. A minister is small or insignificant, akin to words like diminutive, miniature, and mini. As such, a priest is a servant of the table in the place of Christ.

You may have noticed some changes in the way we serve communion since I have become pastor. The priest, with the help of the deacons, does more of the set-up and the cleanup. This may be rather irksome to some as too elaborate and time consuming. However, these actions are essential to demonstrate what is happening here. Jesus is not only the waiter setting up our table, but the provider of the meal itself, as well as the "bus boy" cleaning the dishes. You may notice that Fr. Armando often wears a maniple at Mass (Sometimes I do if I wear his chasuble), a liturgical cloth that hangs from his left arm. This symbolizes the serving towel. All of this helps us to grasp the fact the Jesus is serving the whole dinner from set-up to clean-up! Can our thankfulness ever match the generosity and humility of our God? Why the hurry to get the Mass over with?

Let me here say a word about liturgical vestments. There has been a change here as well. The beautiful vestments the clergy are now wearing are not a fashion show. It has nothing to do with ostentatious clericalism, although the danger is always there. But there are dangers everywhere. Informality and minimalism can breed contempt for the holy just as easily as extravagant ritual can breed clericalism. The point of the elaborate vestments and ritual is to worship God in the beauty of holiness. True, Jesus is our Divine Host, but He is our Divine King as well. I wish to keep that tension here at St. Joseph as we search for "vibrant liturgy."

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