

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity
August 12, 2018

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Many holy cards depict Our Lord Jesus at the Last Supper. You may very well have such a card in your prayer book or Bible. The artwork shows Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity holding in His hands the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. This is not bad theology. It is the representation of a Divine truth. *Priest and victim are one.* And we know when we receive the Sacrament It is not merely the Body of Jesus born of Mary. It is specifically the Body broken and the Blood shed for us by the Saviour on Good Friday.

Think again about that holy card depicting Christ at the Last Supper. We know the supper occurred the night before the Crucifixion. The supper was *before* Christ's Body was broken for us and His Blood shed. Yet at the Last Supper Christ said, "This is My Body; this is My Blood." It was *the whole Christ*, the living Christ, giving the whole Christ, the living Christ, to the Apostles at the Last Supper. Nothing was lacking

What this means is the sacrifice of Christ (although it happened under the conditions of time) is in His Own gift a *spiritual and eternal event*. Just as we believe the merits of Christ's sacrifice kept Our Lady free from sin from the moment of her conception, so also Christ's merits could and did make bread and wine His Body and Blood at the Last Supper, before the sacrifice itself was accomplished on Good Friday.

Christ's Crucifixion is never repeated. It has no need to be repeated because it *continues*. It lives. His sacrifice is present once again in our time and space whenever a priest goes to the altar. At the Last Supper Our Lord in Person gave His Own Body and Blood, with His Own hand. But it is also true Christ was in control of His *whole Passion*. Christ is the principal agent, the willing victim. Nobody took Christ's life. He laid it down. One of our Easter hymns declares this fact. At the Lamb's high feast we sing, Praise to our victorious King; Who hath washed us in the tide, Flowing from His pierced side: Praise we Him whose love divine, Gives His sacred Blood for wine, Gives His body for the feast Christ the victim, Christ the priest."

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Our Lord is both priest and victim. Christ lies upon the altar in the Blessed Sacrament, much as He laid stretched out on the Cross on Good Friday. There is something you do not normally see because hidden under the altar cloth. The *mensa*, the flat surface of the altar, contains five crosses. They are our present-moment attachment to the five wounds in the Lord's Body made by the nails and the spear. Bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ because Jesus was laid out on the Cross. But there is a *vertical connection* as well. You also see Christ stand at the altar, operating through the hands and voice of an unworthy yet consecrated priest. It is just as Christ stood in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday, providing Himself for His Apostles and His Church.

And then we notice one more thing. We see Catholic faithful making their communion. You and I are to be the continuation of Our Lord's whole life. Christ came into the world to *be*, to *suffer*, and to *do*. He came to *be* God Incarnate in our midst, to *suffer* for our sins, and to *do* the Father's will among men. Remember that. The Gospel good news is that Christ died for our sins. But Christ did not come from Heaven only to exist here, or to suffer here, but also to *go about doing good*....doing the Father's will. He participates in our life that we might participate in His. And when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ we are made partakers of the virtues which come from Christ and which equip souls going back into the very world He came to save.