**Liturgy Matters Lesson #28**

**The Words of Institution**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

I am Bishop Chad Zielinski, serving the Diocese of New Ulm. Thank you for joining me and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us as we continue our lessons on "What Happens at Mass."

The Institution Narrative is the next part of the Eucharistic prayer, and the strand of what the priest is saying comes very much into the fore. A precise and specific event from the life of Jesus is retold, namely, the supper with his disciples the night before he died. The priest recounts this story not merely with words but with gestures as well. The priest retells the moment, acting out before the Father in simple stylized gestures, what Jesus did and said at the supper. When he tells that Jesus took bread, he picks up the bread that the people have brought in the procession that day. When he tells how Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, he raises his eyes. He relates that Jesus then blessed the bread, broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said. . . At this point in his telling, when the priest comes to what Jesus said, he bows slightly and quotes the very words of Jesus. It is important to notice that when the priest says the words of Jesus at this point, he uses the present tense: “Take this, all of you, and eat it; this is my body which will be given up for you.” Something similar happens with the wine when the priest recounts after supper Jesus took the cup. He continues the narrative with the cup of wine, and again, when he comes to the words of Jesus over the cup, he again bows slightly and speaks the words in the present tense: “This is the cup of my blood.” The effect is the same. With the saying of these words, the bread and the wine have been transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

What Jesus did at the Last Supper and what he still does now at this moment, for this is an Hour that does not pass away, was to set in motion the mighty events that would be the culmination of his life. He was giving his disciples a sign together with a command to repeat it in his memory. This sign would reveal the meaning of his death, which he knew he would undergo the following day. The actual events surrounding his death and the long hours which it was stretched out were too terrible to be understood by anyone. But with this sign performed before and repeated after, Jesus was revealing the meaning of his death and that he was willingly submitting to it.

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on “The Words of Institution.” I look forward to sharing Lesson #29 with you next week as we continue our lessons on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.