

## **HOMILY for Holy Thursday – Year A**

On this Holy Thursday evening, we kick off Holy Triduum & commemorate the death & resurrection of our Lord. Tonight Jesus did the most incredible things that most leaders would never do, namely, He washed the feet of His disciples & left with them the gift of Himself at the Last Supper. Tonight we will re-enact those two memorable acts of our Lord & reflect on why He did those for us.

Here is how tonight's Gospel retells the first memorable action for us, "...During the supper, Jesus – fully aware that He had come from God & was going to God the Father who had handed everything over to Him – rose from the meal & took off His cloak. He picked up a towel & tied it around Himself. Then, He poured water into a basin & began to wash His disciples' feet & dry them with the towel He had around Him. Thus, He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You may not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter replied, 'You shall never wash my feet!' 'If I do not wash you,' Jesus answered, 'You will have no share in my heritage.' 'Lord,' Simon Peter said to Him, 'then not only my feet, but my hands & head as well.' Jesus told him, 'The man who has bathed has no need to wash [except for his feet]; he is entirely cleansed, just as you are; though not all.' ...Jesus said to them: '...If I wash your feet – I who am Teacher & Lord – then you must wash each other's feet. What I just did was to give you an example; as I have done, so you must do.'"

First, Jesus stopped in the middle of an important supper to do a memorable act. Usually people wash their body parts & everything else before a meal. But, Jesus waited until the middle of a serious meal like the one tonight to do something that would get the attention of His disciples. He wanted them to remember that if He who was teacher & was willing to wash their feet, they must do the same for one another. So, Jesus called on all Christians to practice that same act of love for one another. In fact, He challenged all the leaders to follow His example & take good care of the lowly people in their community. Sadly, we have seen some Christians who have tried to reason away that important duty assigned by Jesus & refused to take care of the lowly & the poor. They would rather sit at the table & enjoy a nice meal than standing up to take care of the needs of others. We have witnessed the wealthy & the powerful who have made empty promises of helping out the poor, & ended up looking after only their own benefits. That is why we have seen so much greed & selfishness in our world. We need more kind & caring acts of Jesus these days to brighten our world.

Lastly, Jesus did not wash the hands or heads of His disciples. He knelt down at the feet of His disciples & washed their dirty feet. Most people would gross out & frown on such a humble & dirty deed. They would leave that duty to someone else & do something fun & popular instead. We need more people like Jesus who is willing to do the humble & dirty work to lift up the lowly & help out the misfortunate. We have to challenge our leaders of the Church & of the world to show compassion & humility like our Lord. Otherwise, we'll continue to be stuck in the vicious circle of pride & carelessness.

The second memorable act that Jesus left behind for us tonight is reported in the Second Reading as following, "...The Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, & after He had given thanks, broke it & said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is

the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' Every time then you eat this bread & drink this cup, you proclaim the death of our Lord until He comes!" So, St. Paul reminds us about the most valuable gift that our Lord Jesus left behind for us in the Holy Eucharist & the Mass, namely, the gift of Jesus' body & blood. That is why the Holy Eucharist/Mass is so sacred & import for Catholics. It is not a musical, communal celebration, or a Bible study session. It is a re-enactment of the Last Supper with Jesus as far as the Catholics are concerned.

Some people show their kindness & generosity by giving others foods & basic necessities. Others step up a notch by donating an organ to people in need, or giving part of themselves like Adam did with one of his ribs. Tonight Jesus shows us the highest level of kindness & generosity by giving total of Himself, His body & blood to His beloved. That is what true Christian love looks like, anything short of that is simply casual love that politicians often masquerade as true Christian love to fool the world. However, Jesus did not stop there. He challenged His followers to wash one another's feet & serve the least in the world. We surely will not see leaders of the world do that. For they usually demand others to do that for them. We must resist that temptation & follow the example of our Lord instead. Another temptation that we might encounter these days is the dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) to do everything for us. We need to take pride in our own hard work & sharing God's blessings for us with the poor & misfortunate around us. That is what Jesus did tonight; he did not rely on the Holy Spirit or somebody else to wash the feet of others or share the bread & drink with people around Him. He did it Himself. For that is what true Christian love looks like.

My dear brothers & sisters, tonight is a solemn time for Jesus & His disciples as He said goodbye to them at the Last Supper. But, Jesus left with them two memorable lessons about Christian love & service. If we want to call ourselves Christians, we must be willing to make sacrifices & shed our own blood as He did for us in the Holy Eucharist. If we want to follow Him, we have to be humble enough o wash the feet of one another. Otherwise, it would be hard for the world to believe that we are Christians.