

HOLY THURSDAY YEAR A: THE MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER 2020

'Remembering' what Jesus did and said the night before his death, one expects Saint John and his Gospel account, to describe the narrative of *The Last Supper*: - of Jesus' prayer offered in 'thanksgiving' to the Father; of his actions of taking *the Passover bread*, of offering *the Blessing over a cup of wine*; and central to all this - is recalling the command: "**To Do This In Memory of Me.**"

Instead, we read the account of *The Washing Of The Feet*, - a *Solemn Ritual* performed by Jesus: He "**arose from Supper and discarding His outer garments, with towel in hand He poured water into a basin and began to wash His Disciple's feet and to dry them with the towel about His waist.**"

One could be forgiven if, perhaps you considered a water basin, a pitcher of water and towel, as somewhat strange, erratic, and unusual '*tools*' for any labourer. How could one not be astonished and intrigued by this action and: What could it mean...?

The mandate, *the command* of Jesus to "**Do this in Memory of Me**" lies at the *very heart* of the Holy Thursday Liturgy, and indeed, at every celebration of the Eucharist. In some way, Christ's *mandate* is given greater clarity, and an urgency this night through the '*Washing of Feet*'. At the very time when we are given bread and wine as spiritual food and drink to "*Do this in Memory*" of Jesus, we are also charged to wash each other's feet. Christ's mandate is heightened even more so presently, as the world awaits the outcomes associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I'm not so keen - at most times friends - to embrace Christ's challenge. However, St John makes it clear - that it is in this '*sign*' of the '*washing of one another's feet*' - *of service to our sister, our brother in Christ*; - that we '*en-flesh*' the demands of The Eucharist. For to sup or eat from *The Table of Eucharist* is indeed - *a very dangerous thing to do!*

Whenever we gather at the Lord's Table, it is simply not enough to eat a little bread and maybe, take a sip of wine. If that is all we do then, well, we have certainly missed the point, - we have become much-like St Peter himself, - who found it difficult to understand that the *action* of the '*foot washing*' has *a hidden meaning*.



Within the celebration of *The Last Supper* is an invitation: *an invitation* to deepen our awareness of what the Eucharist is, and of what it demands from each one of us. Our '*foot washing*' or *service to Christ* in those whose lives are broken and fragile, happens everywhere - at a neighbour's kitchen table; over a conversation and a concern shared; at an AIDS Clinic, or a hospital bed. It might happen in the classroom, or within a busy city-office block, or even - in our own backyards. No matter where it happens or how it looks or how often it is done, or even whether you think about it or not; - it is intimately connected with The Eucharist!

On this Holy Thursday, we are reminded that to accept *the invitation* to dine at the Lord's Table is also *to wash the feet of one another in need*: - to wash *the places of human living* that thirst for new life; to proclaim in deed and in word, in what we say and in what we do - the coming reign of *God's Love*, of God's *justice* and *infinite peace!*

Holy Thursday is not meant to be a celebration focused narrowly upon the beginning of the Institutional Priesthood. To do this, is to miss the larger and far more essential character of tonight's Eucharist. Dear friends: We are a People, a World - who *dare to proclaim the love of God* as '*a passion*' - as love, unto death!

It is that Love with which we have been marked with the Sign of The Cross. It is the same love which impels us, which drives us, from complacency *into our fragile World*, water basins, pitchers and towels in hand - to comfort the weary and hardened feet of all whose *pilgrimage through life* is often rough and pitted. For so many at this time - life is shaped by illness, uncertainty, grief and death itself. *The Washing of Feet* is echoed presently, in particular, in the daily care of health care providers, of researchers seeking a vaccine, of emergency workers coming to the aid of those less fortunate than perhaps, ourselves. They are the ones being *Christ-Like* in their service of others, they are the ones putting daily their lives at risk - who possess *the courage* to be humble, *to be servant* of our sisters and brothers; and like the numerous firefighters of recent months, are each, examples in which we need to contemplate Life's many challenges and blessings.

There are many in Our World - Our Nation, Our cities this very night friends, who wear the torn and tattered shreds of human forgetfulness, or of illness, of loss and of uncertainty and of fear. In our *common memory* we are called this Holy Thursday, and indeed at every Eucharist, '*not to forget*' them. We are called to '*remember*' - that in the midst of all those who suffer tonight, can be found The One who asked us to "**Do this, In Memory Of Me**", The One whose voice echoes in our hearts still: "**Love one another, as I, have loved you.**"