

Holy Thursday

My beloved brothers and sisters, tonight, we begin the Sacred Triduum, the three most holy days of the Church's Calendar year. We call this the Mass of the Lord's Supper, but the Gospel for tonight is not about the Institution of the Eucharist- it is really about the Institution of the Sacred Priesthood, and the meaning of that Sacred Priesthood for priests and bishops, and for the People of God; without which, there is no Eucharist!

In the Gospel, we are in the Upper Room with the Apostles, His closest friends. It is His last night before He will die the most unimaginable suffering and death. This night, He gives us three of His most incredible gifts of Divine Mercy and Love: Priesthood, Eucharist and Mercy!

In the first reading, the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed and its blood painted upon the door posts to ward off the destroying angel, the angel of death. In this night, Jesus tells us that He Himself will become the True Passover Lamb, and by His Blood on the Cross, we are saved by Him from the spiritual death of sin and the consequence of sin which is death. In this night, through His Priesthood, bestowed upon the Apostles, He commands that we perpetually commemorate His sacrifice, when He commands: "Do this in memory of me!" In the Eucharist, we offer to God the Father, what Jesus Himself offered, it is the same mystery of the Divine Love offered, through His priests. Through the Eucharist, Jesus fulfills His Divine Promise: "I will remain with you always," because He loves us always!

However, Jesus then manifests the deepest meaning of this Love, which will be made fully visible the next day. He strips off His clothing down to His loincloth, puts a towel around His waist and washes the feet of His apostles. This is not only shocking, it is also absurd! This was a society that went either barefoot or in open sandals. The roads of the cities and towns and the countryside were covered with animal dung and the cities, with human excrement- that is where they emptied their chamber pots. This was job was so disgusting, it was relegated to the lowest slave in the house! In doing so, Jesus does three things: first, He strips Himself and makes visible Who God truly is! He will do so again on the next day. This is the utter, infinite humility of God made visible to our eyes!

Secondly, **this is utterly shocking!** He washes the crap off of our lives! Peter is so shocked and taken aback, that he says to Jesus: “Lord, you shall never wash my feet!” To which Jesus replies: “ Peter, if I do not wash your feet, you can have no part of my company!” Peter, loveable Peter then responds: “Then Lord, not only my feet but my head and hands as well!” We too should be utterly shocked, aghast! This is how much God thinks of you and me, how much He loves each of us: He washes the crap off of us- He still does. In each Eucharist and in the Confessional, through His priests, Jesus still washes away the crap from our lives and then, amazingly, the True Passover Lamb feeds us with His own Body and Blood and makes us truly, one body, one blood, one with Himself!

Finally, there are some Biblical Theologians who teach that the real moment when Jesus constitutes His priests, ordains them, is the moment when He says to them: “Do you understand what I have done to you? If I who am your Master and Lord, and truly that is what I am, have washed your feet, then so you must do for one another!” Every priest and bishop participates in this infinite mystery of Divine Love by their Holy Orders. By our Ordinations we are consecrated to this Service of the Lord and His people; changed, forever, sealed forever in this mystery of Divine Love, rendered the Presence of Christ by this mystery for His ongoing presence to His people for Mercy by all of the Sacraments, but most especially by Eucharist and Confession. Last Thursday, at the Chrism Mass, Jesus said to me and all the priests there gathered: “Are you resolved to be more united with the Lord Jesus and more closely conformed to Him; to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God; and to be moved only by zeal for souls?” I said: “I am!”

Tonight, every single man, woman and child throughout the world, in every Catholic Church throughout the world, are caught up into this Divine Humility, this Divine Self gift of Jesus, this Divine Mercy, This Divine Infinite Action of Love, which is repeated in every Mass throughout the Word, until He comes again! Tonight, pray for your priests and bishops, that we may more and more closely resemble what we offer on this Altar!