

Today, as we know, is Holy Thursday, one of the most sacred days in the Catholic calendar. It was on Holy Thursday that the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the basis of the priesthood and of the permanent diaconate, began. It was on Holy Thursday that the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the true body and blood of Christ, was instituted. Yet as important as those two sacraments are, we don't hear them even mentioned in our Gospel from John. As we have just heard, John's Gospel focuses upon Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. And why? Because of its great significance to our faith.

In order to appreciate the Gospel, we must put it into historical context. As we know, the roads in first-century Palestine were not paved; they were basically dirt roads. In dry weather they were inches of deep dust, and in wet weather they were liquid mud. The shoes ordinary people wore were sandals which were simply leather soles held on to the foot by a few straps. They gave little protection against the dust or the mud of the roads. For that reason, there were always great pots of water and towels at the door of a house. A person of low social status was there to wash the soiled feet of the guests as soon as they came into the house.

All that being said, notice that in our Gospel Jesus washed the feet of the disciples **after** they had come into the house, reclined at table, and were eating supper. Why did Jesus wash the feet of the disciples at that time and not as soon as they entered the house? I think that He wanted the washing of the feet to stand out and not simply be considered routine courtesy. Notice too that Jesus reminded His disciples that they referred to Him as "Master" and "Teacher" and rightly so. Why do you think He said that? He wanted to impress on them that He was someone whom the disciples respected, not someone of low social status, and yet **He was the One** who was performing the menial task of washing their feet. What He was giving His disciples was His example of what they should do, that they were not too important to take care of others, no matter how menial that task may be.

As we know, we are the present day disciples of Jesus. We became disciples of Jesus on the day we were baptized. The example of service to others that Jesus gave His disciples two thousand years ago holds true for us today. As His present-day disciples you and I are called to serve others as well. OK, how should we do that? I think we need to start with ourselves. In order to truly serve others, we need to rid ourselves of the dirt of our pride. We need to rid ourselves

of the dirt of our selfishness. We need to rid ourselves of the mud of our egos. We need to rid ourselves of the mud of our indifference. Then we must acquire the attitude of humility that Jesus reflected in the washing of the feet, that nothing we can do to serve others is too menial for us; that we are never too important to help others.

Let us not forget that when we serve others we are worshiping God. Worship and service are not separate issues but two sides of the same coin. Scripture reminds us time and time again of the connection between worship and service. We hear in Matthew "The King will reply truly I tell you whatever you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me." We hear in Peter "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace." We hear in Paul to the Romans "Love must be sincere. Be devoted to one another in love. Share with the Lord's people who are in need." Yes, worship and service are two sides of the same coin.

OK just what can we do to serve others? ) The possibilities are endless, especially during these challenging times: run errands for shut-ins while taking the necessary precautions; call them on the phone just to chat during this time of isolation; donate to a charity that helps the needy; pray for all of us who are suffering from the coronavirus; or to put it very simply: show people that we care about them. I really think that showing others that we care about them is always important, but especially important during these difficult times.

Under normal circumstances the washing of feet would soon follow as part of the Holy Thursday liturgy but, as we all know, these are NOT normal circumstances. Tonight's liturgy will not include the washing of feet, yet the washing of feet remains an important part of the Holy Thursday liturgy. Let it remind us of the responsibilities of our discipleship, to serve the needs of others. Let it inspire us to be the feet washers that Jesus has called us to be.