

[Readings: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; John 13:1-15]

This is a special day in the Christian world. As we begin the Easter Triduum, we celebrate the gift of Eucharist, priesthood, and the call to ministry and service. Part of tonight's liturgy should involve the symbolic washing of feet, but because of health concerns, we were cautioned not to do it. What were the cautions? If Deacon Marion and I had to bend down and stand up 12 times, we may not get up again for the rest of the Mass!

Jesus washing the feet of the apostles teaches us about power and humility. We can never say that we are too good for any act of service to another person. Nothing falls beneath our dignity. No act becomes too unimportant for us to worry about. Nothing is a waste of our talents. Jesus lays claim on us. That claim is to offer the washing of forgiveness, helping people find the refreshment of release from guilt. We offer the washing of service, cleaning off the dirt of poverty, hunger, suffering, violence, hopelessness and despair.

Why do we do this tradition two thousand years later? For three reasons. First, feet are smelly and unattractive. Washing each other's feet represents the power of love. It is not always easy to love one another. We allow others to love those parts of us that are not very loveable, and I do the same for you. We love every part of the Body of Christ, warts and smells and all.

Second, Christ asks us not to place conditions on our love. Christ loves us not because we deserve it, because you and I need loving. As we receive Eucharist tonight, we see that Christ asks us to love each other fully – without reserve or conditions, and to love as He loves us, where love is most needed.

Finally, we must be willing to receive Christ's love. Hold nothing back. We give Him every part of ourselves, even the parts that bring us shame. On this special night, let us taste Christ's desire that everyone may share in the desire to be Christ for one another in here, and out there.

The Eucharist makes present to us the whole of the saving work of Jesus. We remember and celebrate everything that Jesus did, taught and suffered for our salvation, until He comes again in glory.

His self-giving at the Last Supper was an act that looks backward and forward. His self-giving looks ahead to Good Friday, when it would be completed by His sacrificial death on the cross. By giving us the Eucharist, His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, Jesus anticipates His self-offering even unto death on the cross, His final act of complete obedience to the Father, made for love of us.

It was love for us that led the Son of God to share our life in the Incarnation – the Word Made Flesh. It was love for us that led Him to destroy our sin and death in the Crucifixion.

It is that love that is Christ's farewell and eternal gift to us in the Eucharist. But that love we receive at this table is not only for us gathered here. Our communion in the Body and Blood of Christ requires us to serve others as He did – throughout life, even unto death. As we receive Christ's gift of love, we are to proclaim His death by becoming one with Him in His sacrifice.

The Last Supper was the most intimate moment in the life of Jesus. It is the most intimate moment in the life of His Church. This is the night when people who are personally close to Jesus know that He does not want to eat alone. Tonight, of all nights, He wants someone to talk to, someone to be with.

When He gathers His friends into a safe circle of concern, He washes their feet. As a kindness, because they are tired; as a courtesy, because He is their host; as a sign that in the long run, service to them is more to the point than teaching or leading or saving them.

Then He gives them bread and wine. As a kindness, because they are hungry; as a courtesy, because it brought them together; as a sign of His Body and Blood, and a promise that whoever lived in His memory would never die.

Tonight, Jesus invites us to His supper. He will serve us, extend His peace to us, and give us His Body and Blood. As a kindness, because we desperately need His peace; as a courtesy, because we are His awkward servants; as a sign, because we need to clean ourselves and each other.

AMEN!