

HOLY THURSDAY (C)

It was at the last Supper that Jesus instituted the Blessed Eucharist as a memorial of His Death when His body was given up for us and His blood poured out for us for the remission of sins. In the Mass we draw strength from His sacrifice when in the little and big ways we expend ourselves for others.

We live out the sacrifice of the Mass in the ordinary everyday events of our lives. Every Sunday at Mass, married couples are implicitly renewing their married vows which involve sacrifice, the priest is renewing his commitment to His Bride, the church, and single people are renewing their commitment to others in the many and varied ways they serve their families or the community at large.

This is where the 'washing of the feet comes in'. At the time of our Lord washing the dusty feet of visitors was the norm. A servant in the household was assigned to it. We may not wash peoples feet anymore but strive to see the image of Christ especially in those who suffer and respond accordingly. A book by Bishop Egan of Portsmouth which I'm reading at present puts it like this: *"Think of the poor and needy in the local community, the mentally and physically sick, the lonely and unloved, the homeless and those on the margins, migrants and refugees, the unjustly treated or discriminated against. What are we doing to meet them and serve Christ in them? Think of God's creation; what are we doing to live more simply"?*

After Jesus had washed the apostles' feet he asked them to do the same for each other. Peter was stubborn and 'dug in his heels' if you'll excuse the pun. Sometimes, because of our pride, we won't allow people to help us – we prefer to muddle through ourselves and cling on to our independence. Jesus told Peter that their companionship was well-nigh over if he remained so obstinate in declining to have his feet washed.

Even Jesus must have felt rejected when the three apostles in Gethsemane slept through his awful agony despite asking them to watch and pray. I'm sure Jesus felt mightily relieved when Simon of Cyrene helped him carry his heavy cross along the Via Dolorosa and Veronica wiped his sweat and blood-stained face. He didn't push them away.

For our friendship with Our Lord to be meaningful, there needs to be a strong connection between receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion and seeing him in the face of our fellow man and woman. It goes without saying that the 'Amen' we say to the body of Christ when the priest or minister holds up the host in front of us at communion, is also an 'Amen' to the Body of Christ in people deprived of love, whether they be in our family, local community or beyond.

Maundy Thursday is so called from the mandate Jesus gave to His apostles at the last Supper: 'love one another as I have loved you'. Receiving Holy Communion impels us to put this new commandment into action in our day to day lives.

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est. Where there is love and charity, there is God.

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