

Our Lady of Lourdes

Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord's Supper

April 1, 2010

Readings:

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-15

Deacon Bob

Tonight the season of Lent comes to an end as we begin the celebration of the Triduum. The three days of the Triduum, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday celebrate the heart of our Christian faith, the redemptive suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Human beings have spent countless hours trying to figure out the meaning of life. As we celebrate the Easter Mysteries through the eyes of faith we come to realize that our search for true meaning does not need to go any further than the Paschal Mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

In our lives we sometimes experience hurt or betrayal. We learn sometimes the hard way that life does not always go as we would wish and that people do not always act as we would like for them to act. Our response to betrayal or hurt says a great deal about who we are and what we truly value.

When we are hurt or betrayed by a friend, by illness, death or our own expectations our most common response is anger or sadness. How we process and accept life's unfairness has a tremendous impact on our relationships, our relationships with ourselves, others and with our God. Hurt can damage our ability to trust and without trust relationship become difficult and we become isolated.

We know that Jesus was betrayed not only at his death but all throughout his life. His response his only response was always one of love of forgiveness. In the Gospel today we see a vivid example of his response when he washes the feet of his disciples. We must not forget or just gloss over the fact the he washed all of the disciples' feet even the one who he knew would betray him. Jesus said, "Do you know what I have done for you? If I, your master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you an example, that as I have done, you should also do."

The other day when I was visiting someone in a nursing home she asked me to please hold her hand because one of the things she missed was being touched. She is completely bed ridden and cannot move without the help of someone. She said that sometimes she is handled like a sack of potatoes. But some attendants gently hold her hand; speak directly to her to let her know that she is important that she is valued. These aides are the ones who understand Holy Thursday; they know its meaning in their gut. They take off their outer garments of efficiency and time constraints; pour love over the one they are caring for like the loving waters of baptism.

We are reminded by this story of the importance of human touch. We are also reminded that we touch others lives in many ways. We are to be the touch of Jesus especially in the lives of those who feel lost or abandoned. You and I are called to love in this way, to love as Jesus taught us.

On this holy night Jesus not only showed us how to serve, how to love he left us a living memorial of that love in the Eucharist. He told us that each time we gather to celebrate the

Eucharist we are to do that in memory of him. The very best way we can do that, to remember him is to love as he loved.

On this night Jesus also instituted the priesthood. On Monday night Bishop DiLorenzo celebrated the Chrism Mass with his priests and the people of the Diocese. In his homily the Bishop spoke about what the attributes are of an excellent priest. Let me share with you some of those attributes. An excellent priest is one that is close to Christ and helps bring others closer to Christ. He is one that prays both privately and liturgically. He is compassionate. He is accessible. He is a good listener. Jesus instituted the priesthood that we might continue to have his presence in the bread and wine which becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. On this night we give thanks to God for the gift of our priests and we pray for them that they are able to do all that they can to be humble and excellent priests.

On Saturday evening at the great Easter Vigil our catechumens will be baptized. They will be called to be priest, prophet and king. Each of us who are baptized is called in this same way. We are called to priestly service. We are called to the same excellence that the Bishop spoke about on Monday night. This is true for the young and the not so young, for those single and for those married. It is true for each of you and for me.

On this night as we begin our celebration of the Triduum with its culmination at Easter we recall in gratitude what God has done for us. We have been given example by Jesus and we have been given his very body and blood to help us follow his example. We are to wash the feet of others and we are to partake at the banquet of love. Jesus tells us over and over "Do not be afraid". We are to do these things in remembrance of Jesus.