

Very often in our spiritual lives our focus centers on all the things that we are called to do as disciples of Christ, on the way that we must live. Very often we focus on the two great commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” and “Love you neighbor as yourself.” But as we enter into the Sacred Triduum, as the mysteries of salvation unfold before our eyes, our focus is changed. In these three days, we focus not on the ways that we are called to love; rather, our focus becomes the great act of love that God has performed for us. In this Sacred Triduum, the love of God for His people becomes unmistakable, if only we have the eyes to see.

This unfolding of God’s great love for His people begins on Holy Thursday in three humble signs. First, as we heard in the Gospel, Jesus gathered with His Apostles in the Upper Room; and when they had gathered there, He performed for them an act of great humility and love. He took off His outer garment, tied a towel around His waist, and stooped down to the floor and washed their feet. As I explained to our Parish School of Religion students yesterday, this no mere symbol of love. The Apostles’ feet were undoubtedly filthy. Like any other person of their time, their sandal-clad feet shared the dirt roads of Jerusalem with the animals, and all the filth that comes with them. That’s why washing the feet of another was a task that would only be performed by a slave.

Yet, Jesus uses this humble act of being a servant to His followers to show the great love of God. The Lord is not One who remains above us on a lofty throne. No, He stoops down to our level to pull us out of our filth and raise us to Himself. By His great Love for us, God makes us clean!

\*\*\* But, this sign was not enough to express fully God's love, and so He gave another gift to His Apostles. As St. Paul recounted in his first letter to the Church in Corinth,

The Lord Jesus..., took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

In the Eucharist, the Lord gave the Apostles a gift that would not pass away from this world, a gift that would show the Lord's great love until the end of time. In the Eucharist, the Lord Himself remains present with His Church, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. In the Eucharist that has been handed on to us, we ourselves are privileged to experience the same Communion with Christ that the Apostles knew.

Once again, the Lord stoops down to us. Under the humble appearance of bread and wine, Jesus shares His True Body and Blood. We, who are mere creatures, are made one with the God who created us. In Holy Communion we receive a foretaste of heaven. What greater gift could the Lord give to His Church, what greater love than to remain here with us in this Most Blessed Sacrament.

And, in one last sign of God's humble love for us, He gave to the Apostles the gift of the Sacred Priesthood of Jesus Christ. By His command, "Do this in memory of me," Jesus gives to the Apostles the power to offer the one sacrifice offered once for all on the Cross. And just like the Eucharist, this gift of the priesthood is a gift that will not pass away. God's great love for His people is seen in that He uses poor, humble, broken men as His instruments, as conduits of His grace. We who have been chosen are in no way worthy of such an exalted vocation. I am in no way worthy to stand at the altar and offer this Holy Sacrifice day after day; but the Lord has chosen us nonetheless. The Lord calls us, He ordains, us and He conforms us to Christ so that we can stand as priests before His people. And so, to borrow the words of Pope Francis to our little group when we met Him three weeks ago, "Pray for me, I beg you. I need it!"

The Lord showers His love upon His people this day. In the washing of the feet, in the Most Holy Eucharist, and in the gift of the priesthood, Jesus makes present the God who is love, the God who offers Himself out of love for us. In this Eucharist let us give thanks for the reckless, raging fury that is the love of God. This night let us bask in the radiance of a God who loves us!