

Holy Thursday Homily
Mass of the Lord's Supper
4/21/11

The narration of the washing of the feet began by pointing out to us a poignant detail. The evangelist narrates to us, "The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him – the Christ -- over." Jesus knew this. He also knew Peter's feeble faith would cause Peter to deny he even knew the Lord. The Lord knew the rest would scatter as the angry mob would seize him in the garden. He knew all this. Yet He was not deterred from the task before him. He was Teacher and Lord. As Teacher and Lord, He took off his cloak and assumed the role of the servant performing the domestic rituals of hospitality, washing the feet of his disciples, washing them and welcoming them to the sanctuary of His wondrous love.

The Letter to the Hebrews elaborates this for us with the following words: "Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil, that is, his flesh." Jesus' humanity opens for us the sacred chamber where we sit at table with the Father and the Son, wrapped in the light of the Spirit. The Servant Son takes off His cloak to reveal His divinity shining through his human nature. He reveals the hope of our own humanity as well. Washed by the Lord, washed in His blood, our humanity can do what he has done.

He takes off his cloak to wash the feet of His disciples. Later the soldiers would remove the same cloak to nail the Lord to the cross. Two distinct moments but with one single intention, to reveal divine love through the sacrifice of service. So we will sing this evening: "Where charity and love prevail, there God is ever found." So too is found the true nature of our humanity. We are called to do as he has done. By ourselves we are not able but our human nature is enabled by what Jesus did for us, what he does now, and what he still will do.

The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, teaches us, "The 'commandment' of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be 'commanded' because it has first been given." "*El amor puede ser « mandado » porque antes es dado.*" (DCE, n.14) The Lord Jesus comes to us now in these days. See what he does. Believe that what he has done you can do because he has loved you first.

Good Friday Service

4/22/11

“Son though he was, *Jesus* learned obedience from what he suffered.”

The obedience of Jesus shocks us. Earlier in the gospel according to John, Jesus said, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.” (Jn.10.18)

The obedience of Jesus was an act of freedom. This defied much of what many understand as freedom. Freedom is associated with one’s own wants and desires. The ability to do what we want defines the popular and preferred notion of freedom. For this reason, the actions of Jesus alarm us. His obedience was not imposed. It was not coerced. He was not manipulated. He freely chose to do the will of His heavenly Father. This is what gave Jesus His freedom. This is what gave his sacrifice such power.

Pilate claimed to have the power to release Jesus and the power to crucify him. Yet in this narrative he became a pitiable figure manipulated, coerced, and condemned to his own fear. With the immense power of the Roman Empire, he became powerless.

The beauty of the obedience of Jesus is found in his love for the Father. Jesus loved the Father and in “becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, he revealed Himself as the divine Son of God, the Father. In this bold, brave gesture of freedom, the Lord Jesus also revealed the true destiny of all human freedom.

The obedience of Jesus became the Genesis of a new humanity. Freedom was lost when Adam and Eve imposed their own wills on God’s creation. Creation began anew when Jesus freely and reverently obeyed His Father’s desires and fulfilled His Father’s hopes with the perfect offering on the Cross.

He died because of our disobedience. We are brought to a new and more abundant life because of his obedience. Through the death of Christ, humanity was born into the freedom of the children of God.