

Holy Thursday

Biblical Reflection 2024 from Fr Kevin Walsh, Sydney Australia.

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-15

Jesus said, 'If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet.'

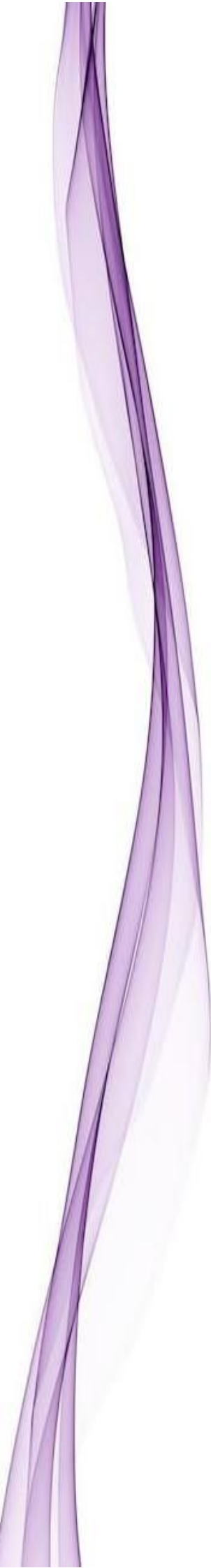
Hospitality towards each other, is one of the most beautiful and respectful gifts that we can offer to one another. One does not have to go to some fancy, expensive Restaurant to expect genuine hospitality! There is no price tag on proper hospitality. There is an ordinary Fish and Chip Shop close to where we live, however it is not ordinary, it is extraordinary! Apart from the scrumptious Fish that they cook and sell, which melts in one's mouth, and might I add that the delicious Chips are made from real potatoes, and not some kind of fake potato; the respectful smiles, the welcome that customers are given, tells us that the food is prepared with an essential ingredient, which you can't buy in Woolworths....it is called LOVE.

The Celebration of Holy Thursday is part of a triptych; Thursday, Friday, and Sunday.... That is a threefold picture of Hospitality, Deep Love and New Life.

In the Gospel reading today, we see Jesus doing an action of well-known hospitality! Washing the feet of his guests, his friends, his companions. This customary action is never just attending to cleaning feet, so that there is no dirt on the Carpet! No, this action has more to it than meets the eye. Let's go deep sea diving into this hospitality ritual, which Jesus, by his words and actions, has made this washing of feet.....Sacramental! The washing of Feet is directly connected to the Eucharist. It is connected to the real understanding of trust, humility, tenderness, respect, and new life. The ritual action of the washing of the feet, is a unique connection between the one washing and the one being washed. Our feet are literally the gateway to our whole body. The way that the washing is done, is done with deep consciousness, respectful attitude, and spiritual intimacy. Jesus calls us to follow his example in the fullest sense of the action and wash each other's feet in the deepest sense of its meaning.

When we literally get down on our knees before someone that is a gesture of real trust! Remember, when Moses was confronted with the Angel of the Lord in the Burning Bush, Chapter 3 of the Book of Exodus? Moses was asked to take off his sandals, which was an act of trust! The angel of the Lord said that he was on Holy Ground! What made that ground Holy? The answer would seem to be that the conversation taking place on the ground.....the earth from which we were made, was a ground-breaking experience of communion with the Lord God..... hence, the ground and place are Holy because of the faith interaction.

The action of Jesus was a *ground-breaking conversation of trust, love, and service* as a prelude to The Breaking of the Bread. In short, *we are called to be Foot washers* of the Lord! We are not called to overpower others by having Christ's living Body subordinate to us! We are called to be genuine, real, Christ like Servants. In the new order of things, initiated by Jesus, we are cautioned not be part of a dog-eat-dog society, and we are not called to be ladder climbers.....particularly in the Church. We are not called to be superior



beings in charge of lesser beings. In the eyes of God, we are all on the ground floor.....there are no top dogs, or top shelf treatment; in short within the Christian community, there are no grandparents or control freaks we are all children; brothers and sisters to one another.

Holy Thursday's message is a clarion call to all of us, to not only imitate what Jesus did in the washing of the Disciples feet, but to see Christ in those whose feet we wash! This is a radical invitation because its ramifications are to turn us, and the people of the world upside down.....to see other people, not as objects, but as respectful jewels within the Crown of Christ. The deep message of the washing of the feet, demands that there are no ifs and buts when it comes to acceptance of others; they must be accepted just as they are, not what we would want them to be. Our response to having our feet washed, metaphorically speaking, is to receive it with grace and thanksgiving. This is truly the interior temperament we must have before receiving the Eucharist.

The Celebration of the Lord's Supper reaches its climax within the overwhelming dispositions that we bring to it. If we have not been washing each other's feet in our daily life..., we have missed the boat in experiencing the full import of the Lord's Supper, and the ongoing Mission entrusted to us.

The Celebration of the *'real presence'* of Jesus is three-fold. We hear God's Word full of invitations, every time that we listen to it; the Word always invites our response, which has the power to change us. We do not come to the Celebration of the Eucharist like we would go to a Service Station to fill our Cars up with Petrol, to keep us on the road! We arrive at the Celebration of the Eucharist as living members of Christ's Body, to be nourished by His Word, from the Eucharist and from the Faith Community. We are then sent out to proclaim what we live through our attitudes, actions, and hospitality for all.... If we leave our Hospitality for a select group of people, we have then missed the mark, and are not utterly convinced that we are Christ's living body, however, it can be world changing if we do! If it is to be world changing! We must change ourselves first!

May our Holy Thursday Liturgy re-ignite us in understanding of the full implications of who washes the feet, and whose feet are to be washed? Our celebration this evening, is the entrée for the Celebration tomorrow of the greatest sign of God's love for us, in the Passion and Death of Jesus.

I would like to conclude by sharing an incredibly wise and true saying from the great St. John Chrysostom, *'If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find him in the chalice.'*