

Holy Thursday

This evening's Gospel contains a phrase that is the very core of what Jesus did for us: having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Jesus loves to the point of giving his life for us. And every one of us can say: He gave his life for *me*.

It is not a coincidence that this assurance of the Lord's love is joined to the institution of the Holy Eucharist: Jesus continues to stoop, to wash us, to serve us, to sanctify us, and to love us through the priesthood and the Eucharist.

We are reminded of the commandment that Jesus offers us in the Gospel acclamation: "Love one another as I have loved you."

To show us how he has loved us, the readings point us to the interconnectedness of the sacraments and the cross. The Passover of the Old Covenant is fulfilled in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ at Calvary.

The Liturgy is none other than *our* participation in the once-for-all sacrifice that Jesus offered for us on the cross. It is in the liturgy that we come face to face with the perfect expression of self-giving love, a love which Christ calls us to share.

An example of the Sacramental economy through which Christ lovingly and unendingly gives to us is highlighted in Jesus' explanation to Peter: "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over." Bathing here has traditionally been understood as a reference to baptism, hence Jesus' insistence that Peter cannot receive it a second time. Nonetheless, Jesus is careful to stress that the disciples' feet still need washing, thereby symbolizing our need for ongoing conversion and confession even after we have received baptism. (feet -> movement -> ongoing movement through life -> ongoing conversion and confession)

More generally, we can reflect on what Peter's reluctance and the Lord's response teach us about the spiritual life. Peter's struggle is one we are at times tempted to share in: despite Christ's infinite giving of love, Peter won't allow himself to be loved as he ought.

With all of this unending and immense outpouring of love, how can we respond?

Tonight provides you an answer: spend some time tonight with Jesus at the altar of repose at our parish; meditate on the suffering of Christ, the magnitude of Whose love and suffering surpass our understanding.