

## Holy Thursday

There are certain celebrations throughout the year that give families the opportunity to gather together. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter are some of those events that come to mind. We take time out of our busy schedules to be with our families. These are opportunities to renew those family ties, and to actually be in the presence of each other. Unlike Skype or Facetime, which are wonderful means of communication, we are actually together in the same location. This enhances our relationship with each other and can strengthen the bond of the family.

We can see this in the Passover celebration of the Jews. It was God's commandment that all Jews come together to celebrate the Passover in a place designated by God, in this case Jerusalem (see Dt 16:1-17). Being faithful Jews, this is what Jesus and His disciples did. They gathered in the upper room to share the Passover meal. This was part of Jesus' extended family, His most intimate friends. However, Jesus was going to show the depth of His love for them. When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples it was more than just an act of kindness. It was an example of humility in which our God wants us to know that He is willing to lower Himself in order to take care of us. It is not done out of a sense of obligation. It is done out of a sense of love that comes from the depth of God's heart. It's as if God is telling us, "Not only will I humble Myself to wash your feet, as a servant does his master, but I will humble Myself even further by dying on the cross for you. This is the depth of My love for you."

Some of us may be like Peter and not want the Lord to wash our feet; and we may want to tell the Lord that He doesn't have to prove His love for us. But Jesus was very clear, in that "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." What does this mean for us? Being washed by Jesus involves more than just being washed in the waters of baptism. It also means a complete surrender of our lives into the hands of Jesus. It means a complete trust in His loving providence for our welfare. This is easy to do when everything is going well. However, when times are difficult and we may face many challenges, even some life threatening, do we trust that Jesus will be there and take care of us? "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (see Jn 15:13) If Jesus was willing to lay down His life for our salvation, shouldn't we also believe that He will do anything to help us get through this journey of life? Complete trust and total surrender into the hands of the Lord are difficult things to ask for most of us, especially since most of us like to feel we are independent and able to take care of ourselves.

Jesus continues to show His humility and His great love for us in the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist we are receiving the divine life of Jesus in the bread and wine that become His Body and Blood. We gather as a family around the table of the Lord, as God calls us into a more intimate relationship with Him. We cannot do this through Skype or Facetime. We can only do this in the presence of the Lord at Mass. This communion with the Lord around His table enhances our relationship with the Lord and with each other, and it will strengthen the bond of God's family (of which we are a part).

This is the Paschal mystery that we are entering into for these next three sacred days. This is the Paschal mystery that God wants us to participate in every day of our life. Because it is through the Paschal mystery – the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus – that we are drawn into the divine life of the most Holy Trinity (see Jn 12:32). And it is through this great Paschal mystery that Jesus will lead us to the joy of eternal life in heaven. And that is the kind of inheritance that we should all desire.