

**The Homily for Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper
April 2, 2015**

Tonight in this liturgy we celebrate the institution of the very sacrament we are celebrating—the Eucharist. We commemorate the night when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples.

Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe and the Lord of all, gets down on his knees and in an act of love washes the feet of his disciples. It was a most extraordinary, but no more extraordinary than the fact that Jesus came down from heaven and took on human form and allowed himself to be sacrificed for our salvation.

Bathing the feet of his disciples was an act of reversal—really it should have been the disciples who bathed the feet of Jesus not the other way around. But entirely reversing the order of things is precisely what Jesus is all about.

Jesus washed the feet of his companions to stress the special bond between them and to show them in a very concrete way how he wanted them to live.

If it wasn't beneath his dignity to wash their feet then it could hardly be beneath the dignity of the Apostles to do the same for others.

This ministry of service to one another is at the very heart of the Christian life. To be a Christian is to be prepared to kneel down and perform the lowliest of tasks for another. It's to be a servant for the sake of Jesus.

We do not serve our brothers and sisters simply because we're told to do so by Jesus, we don't do it because it might help us to get to heaven.

We do it for love; we do it in response to the love shown to us by our Divine

Savior.

Tonight we also focus our attention on the Eucharist, on this great sacrament of love. That is precisely what the mass is, a sacrament of love and thanksgiving.

A sacrament that can't be contained within the walls of this church—just as love between two people overflows into love for their children, their wider family and their friends.

And we celebrate the Eucharist precisely because of Christ's specific command: Do this in memory of me. He only said those words once, but he said them in a very special context—during the solemn meal the night before he died.

His words, Do this in memory of me have layers of meaning. They mean celebrate this holy meal; they mean wash one another's feet; they mean love one another; they mean give your lives in the pursuit of truth; they mean be prepared to follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross.

They mean so very many things and yet they mean only one thing, to live the same kind of life that Jesus lived.

That should be the whole aim and purpose of our lives.

This one liturgy of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, focuses on the paschal mystery of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection. We reenact these events in our services, watching with Christ at the Garden of Olives, unveiling a Cross and venerating it as we put ourselves on Calvary, and rejoicing with Mary Magdeline and the disciples as we join them in celebrating the Risen Lord.

But we're not called to simply remember what took place. We're part of what

took place. We are united to the Paschal Mystery through our union in the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ inside of us is still saying at that meal, "Take and Eat." Christ inside of us is still saying at that meal, "This is the new covenant, the new relationship with God and with each other,"

We'll never fully understand the Eucharist. After all, it is a mystery. But the more we reflect on this gift, the more we approach a realization of the depth of God's love for us. Who are we to receive such a gift? The answer lies in remembering tonight that we are the people whom God loves.