

## **Holy Thursday Homily**

The Holy Thursday liturgy celebrates two aspects of the Lord's Supper. Mark, Luke, and Matthew in their gospels, tell us only of the Eucharist of the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ. St. John, in his Gospel, is unique in telling us of the Eucharist of humble service by telling us how Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. The ancient Church embraced both traditions as the full understanding of the Eucharist and on Holy Thursday so do we.

In the Mass of the Lord's Supper we are reminded of the implications of receiving the Body of Christ in Holy Communion. We must be willing to accept the humble service of others as a way of life. When Jesus knelt to wash the disciple's feet, he was showing us how God chooses to communicate His love and concern for His people through our service to their needs. The world can be and often is a hard and inhumane place. But all is not lost because of the two things which Jesus did at that supper.

The Gospel of this liturgy is often proclaimed by parents who regularly sacrifice their sleep, their money and their personal needs for the good of their children. This Gospel is proclaimed by the woman who leaves mass early to get back home to her husband who has dementia. This Gospel is proclaimed by the single woman or man, who while carrying the cross of

loneliness, still reaches out to help someone in the family or neighborhood. This Gospel is proclaimed by people who donate food and gift cards to feed the poor even during the covid19 pandemic. Washing feet or dishes, washing clothes or little hands and faces or the brow of an aged parent, all of this reflects the humble service of Christ in the Gospel.

But wait, isn't all of this just altruism? Isn't all of this just social work, admirable but hardly noble enough to be considered religious and spiritual? If that was ever true, and I don't think it was, it changed forever the night that God's son knelt on the floor to wash His disciple's feet. This kind of love can easily drain even the strongest among us and so Jesus nourishes us with His very Body and Blood to give us strength by His abiding and Real Presence. We hunger for Holy Communion right now more than ever, which is blessing. Let us recommit ourselves to celebrating every Mass in the future with heartfelt gratitude that the Eucharist is not so much a reward for being good but a gift for being loved by Christ.

Fr. Valentine