

HOLY THURSDAY 2008

Eucharist, Priesthood, Washing Feet

The last week of the life of Jesus was lived in a blaze of publicity and in an atmosphere dense with conflict. It is the only week in his earthly life that we can follow him day-by-day, almost hour-by-hour. This afternoon we remember that Thursday evening of that last week when Jesus, surrounded by his twelve friends, celebrates the carefully prepared Paschal Meal with reverence, song, and intimacy. It is the Last Supper.

It was in the quiet stillness of that Thursday evening that Jesus bequeathed to us two Sacraments: that of the Priesthood, and that of the Eucharist. Neither mind nor words can ever begin to grasp the depth and wonder of these two mysteries. In grateful faith, we must let ourselves be grasped by them. Without them there can be no Church and without Church there can be no Priesthood or Eucharist.

In a sense, our attitude towards these Sacraments is the best and truest test for the level of our faith life. If our faith is weak, vacillating or vague, so too will our attitude be toward the Eucharist and Priesthood.

And as they were at supper, Jesus got up from table, removed his outer garment, and taking a towel wrapped it around his waist. He then poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of his disciples. In this simple gesture Jesus becomes a living parable to his disciples. No words are needed. His greatest desire is to be Servant and Friend. It is a wonderful thing to see that the closer Jesus comes to Calvary, the closer he becomes to his friends. The more they would hurt him, the more would he love them.

Flowing simultaneously from these two inseparable mysteries of God's love, Priesthood and Eucharist, we receive our mission and are inevitably impelled to live a life of service, that is, to be Eucharist for others.

As followers and friends of Jesus, let us ask ourselves: "When did I last live the parable of the washing of the feet?" or perhaps, what is even more difficult, "When did I last let my feet be washed by another?"

Holy Thursday, then, speaks to us of three tremendous truths, which in the Divine simplicity of God are transformed into the oneness of love: Priesthood, Eucharist and that reverend and humble service we are called to live, that is, to give to, or receive from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

May we make ours the prayer of Thomas Aquinas:

*Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore,
masked in these bare shadows, shape and nothing more.
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart,
lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.*

Fr. George Auger, CSV