

Fr. Ed
Holy Thursday 2020
Homily/Reflection

In recent years Disney has made a number of live action movies that were once only animated. We've seen, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Mulan, The Lion King, 101 Dalmatians, and the one I'm probably forgetting, go from the page, to real life. In the rebirth of these movies, I've found myself wondering why Disney is doing this? The easy answer: money. Another answer: lack of creativity. As I've reflected more and more, I think I've arrived at a pretty solid answer, one that I don't think Disney intended but I think hits the mark, and that is: authenticity.

Within each of us, we desire authenticity. When someone is not being authentic with us it can be a turn-off or lead to distrust. In this time of coronavirus, let's be honest, we've dealt with the desire for authenticity in new ways. We've tried to substitute real authentic life with electronic platforms such as Zoom, Facetime, and GoToMeeting, but it's just not the same. Let's face it, Zoom meetings are great, but real life is better. Zoom weddings are fine, but real authentic life is better. Zoom Easter gatherings will be interesting, but real egg hunts are better. The real, authentic experience is better; it is fully lived.

Tonight, as we celebrate the most sacred night when Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples, later to be known as The Last Supper, things got really real. If we want to know what authentic love and Eucharist is, then we need go no further. We recall a central aspect of this meal starting from the ground up, literally, a main focus of this night is Jesus washing the Disciple's feet. For the disciples, things got really real in this moment because they experienced the Lord's authentic love in a new way. The Eucharist is Christ, and we are called to be Eucharist, Christ, for others. Jesus' plainly tells His Disciples that He has given them an example to follow and that they should wash the feet of others. For the most part, we're on board with this too.

When we prepare for the Mass of the Lord's Supper at OLHC, there is great excitement and anticipation. We prepare for a meal, we gather as one, we eat, and we pray. Personally, if you're like me you're feeling a bit empty inside to say the least, that we are not gathering as we normally do. At the same time, if there's emptiness, then there's something that is able to be filled. Anyway, getting back to the point, like the Lord taking, blessing, breaking, and giving bread/Eucharist at Mass, we are excited to take this time with the community and enter into blessed time but when it comes to being broken open, it's hard, just like real life. I say this without judgement, but the experience of getting people to volunteer to get their foot washed is a challenge. Sometimes one would rather have a root canal than get their foot washed. You see, we're good with the taking and blessing and we're good with the giving at the end, but the breaking open presents the struggle. Yet, at the same time, when we are broken open, that's the Lord's authentic love working to get into our very beings.

It the washing of the feet, things get really real, very authentic, just as it did at the Last Supper for St. Peter. This requires us to be vulnerable and open, something we're not that used to being. We struggle and wrestle with this idea. Recall the Disney stories though, it's the part we don't like, like when Mufasa dies. Every Disney story is much like any other story, we are introduced to the characters and story, everything seems great, a problem arises, things get real, the main character is broken open so to speak, victory is won.

In the breaking is authenticity. St. Peter and the other disciples were broken open when their feet were washed. Simba is broken open when he confronts the truth of his past. We are broken open when we're true to ourselves and allow the Lord into the depths of who we are. At the same time, the breaking part is cute from a distance but hard to encounter up close, authentically. We can struggle with being broken open because too often it can be associated with things that are raw, difficult, or that we just don't like about ourselves.

Nothing can be further from the truth in these days. As our lives have changed dramatically due to global pandemic, we might feel like our world is broken. We might feel like our faith is broken. We might feel like our lives are broken. However, maybe there's another way we can look at being broken open.

Rather than the negative, think of being broken open like a young child opening a gift at Christmas with bows, ribbon, and paper flying everywhere. A great gift is being broken into with joy and excitement. Is that not God's gift of grace and mercy to us? When we are completely vulnerable and allow the Lord to break us open, God's mercy rejoices to get inside. Jesus reminds us that the Father delights in the repentance and conversion of sinners. We have nothing to fear or be apprehensive about. Remember, the faith journey we're on, it leads to victory.

Like the Disciples at the The Last Supper, a moment of being broken open led to victory over the grave. Every Disney story, the main character is broken open, we have hope, because we know the end result is victory, new life. In our quest for what is really real, what is true and authentic, fear not the Lord's desire to wash your feet. Let the inner depths of yourself go, that which cries out for what is true and authentic. Allow yourself to be broken open, let His mercy in, after all, we know where this story is headed. Amen.