

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper- B 2015

EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26; JOHN 13:1-15

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040215-evening-mass.cfm>

Our readings are so rich tonight.

In *Exodus* we hear the institution of the Passover Feast, the feast that is memorialized by Jews, still today, of their people passing over from slavery to freedom.

It was that same Passover Feast Jesus and his disciples shared which was to be Jesus' last supper before he entered into his Paschal mystery, his passion, death and resurrection, his passing over from death to life.

And then Paul reminds the Corinthians what a true Eucharistic meal is, the meal that Jesus instituted at that last supper.

It is said that this Scripture accounting is the oldest literary recording of our ritual meal.

It is estimated that this was written around 51 AD.

Notice that Paul was not instituting this ritual, but reminding the Corinthians of what they had already been taught.

If one uses the year 33 AD as the possible year of Jesus' crucifixion, that tells us that the sacrament Jesus instituted at the Last Supper had become a regular part of our Sunday thanksgiving gatherings sometime in that 20-year period.

We hear Jesus' same words ring out still today in our memorial feast.

Our Catechism notes that the priesthood was established at the Last Supper, that:

Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it. By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant. (CCC 611)

Another part of tonight's richness is the traditional name for tonight, Maundy Thursday.

It finds its roots in the Latin, *mandatum novum*, "New Commandment":

*I give you a new commandment: love one another.
As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.*

And of course we have the account of the foot washing.
We hear Peter not quite getting it... again... and Jesus plainly letting him know that he would be cut off from his inheritance if he did not allow Jesus to wash his feet.

Need I remind you how disgusting it could be to wash someone's feet in that ancient era when people wore sandals and shared the roadways with beasts of burden?

That foot-washing image has become somewhat of an icon for deacons in our diocese.
It typifies diaconal service.

Just like we here at St. Mary's have the Pilgrim Statue of the Virgin Mother that we take turns taking into our homes, the diaconal community has the "Traveling Servant", a statue that is passed on from deacon home to deacon home.

You can probably see the image in your mind:
Jesus kneeling and cradling the foot of his disciple.

I used to think that that disciple in our religious art was Peter.
After all, his confusion about it all is a major part of the story.
However, Scripture says:

Jesus, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet.

That is plural.
That means he washed the feet of all of the disciples—all twelve.

That realization led me to an "aha" moment.
You know what?
That meant Jesus washed Judas' feet!

He washed Judas' feet fully aware that Judas was going to betray him that very night.

How could anyone act with love and intimacy towards the one who was about to send him to the cross?

He chose to love Judas.

You know that statue of Jesus washing Peter's feet?
For me, I now see Jesus washing Judas' feet.
That is the model of relationship to which Jesus calls me.

Whose lifestyle don't I condone?
How am I to serve them?
"Nicely" would be a nice start.
Could I even show love?

I shared this "a-hah" story with our newest class of deacon candidates.
I was their instructor for Catholic Social Tradition.
One of their final exams was to ponder on the question:
"Whose feet would it be difficult for me to wash?"

Candidates for the diaconate come with a wide range of opinions, theological perspectives and convictions.
Yet they are to serve all.
I told them their answers may be intensely personal, maybe more personal than I had a right to know.
I asked them to engage their spiritual directors in the conversation and to just certify to me that they had done so.

I share the same question with you.
Whose feet would it be difficult for you to wash?

Is there someone safe you trust with whom you can share that conversation?

There are people whose feet would be difficult for me to wash.
If I had to solely rely on my own efforts, I do not think I would ever be able to do so.
Thank God my life isn't dependent solely on my efforts.
God gives himself.
God gives himself here.
Just as Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who comes from the Father's and the Son's love, we, too, may be able to love Judas.

That is something of what Jesus meant when he said:

Love one another, as I have loved you.