

Homily for Holy Thursday

How do we live our faith? How does faith direct our lives? Why are we here? What do we learn from these sacred celebrations that begin tonight and culminate in Easter? Do we come here year after year simply to remember what Jesus did and how He suffered as we attempt to touch again the majesty of the Resurrection? Or do we come here to enter more deeply into the meaning of these events so that what we celebrate informs us as to how we should live our lives...as individuals ... as a community of faith.

It strikes me that each of these questions and all of these questions coalesce with each other and bring us to the heart of not only this night but also of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ means little or nothing if it is not the source of how we live and how we take care of ourselves and of each other.

Every Holy Thursday we begin with the words: “We glory in the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We don’t just remember it nor do we grieve it. Rather we “glory” in it. We rejoice and find our strength in the cross for we have come to learn that the cross is not a dead end. Rather, the cross is our victory over sin and death, over evil and

destruction. The cross is what will triumph over our fears and our apprehensions, over our loneliness and our longings. It is the cross that is the key to the kingdom of God, the reign of God, in our lives and in the life of the world.

But unless we learn how to live this victory of the cross, unless we learn to live this mystery of our faith, then we will have failed to let Jesus Christ into our hearts. That key to opening up our hearts to this victory of Christ is given us in tonight's gospel.

For Jesus fully aware of what was coming and knowing how his life would end...fully aware of betrayal and the pain and humiliation of His Passion, takes off his outer garment and gently and lovingly washes the feet of his disciples. Christ is teaching us. Christ is schooling us in how we need to live this mystery of life and death in our own lives. Very simply Christ is saying to us....let me touch your life so that you might take care of each other.

If only we could learn from Christ this night. If only we could follow the example of Pope Francis and wash the feet of those in prison; if only we could reach out to the homeless and the poor; if only we could care for each other and wash each other's feet...then would we truly learn the meaning not only of tonight and the gift of the Eucharist but of

everything we celebrate in these next three days....in this celebration of the Sacred Triduum.