

HOMILY FOR HOLY THURSDAY, 2014

Peter is the key. Peter is the key to this night. It is Peter who unlocks for us the meaning of this celebration.

It is intriguing that Peter is often labeled a hothead...quick to fly off the handle. There are those who interpret his every word as filled with the weakness of pride....or arrogant. Perhaps they're wrong. Perhaps Peter is neither prideful nor arrogant. Perhaps, Peter is insightful.

When you look back in the gospels you begin to notice Peter's insight. In the early chapters of the gospel of Luke we are told the story of Christ asking Peter to "put out into deep water" even though Peter had just returned from a long night of work. Respecting Christ as a teacher, Peter instructs his comrades to again stretch out their nets. And when those nets begin to break because the catch of fish is so large, Peter turns and looks at Christ. And at that moment...at that singular moment... he knows....he knows what the others will take much longer to understand. Peter knows that Christ is not just a good teacher...not just a wise rabbi...not just a model human being....Peter knows that Jesus is the Son of God, the Promised of the Ages, the Word made flesh. Peter falls to his knees because he knows that he is in the presence of Christ who is God and

before whom he can wear no masks and have no pretenses. Peter's insight makes him humble and renders him as if naked before the eyes of God.

And so when Christ gathers his disciples for that "last supper" and then surprises his friends by washing their feet, Peter who knows the true identity of Christ is embarrassed that God should wash his feet. Peter is embarrassed by the richness of Christ's love. Peter is overwhelmed by this action because he understands what is happening. He simply cannot imagine that God would wash his feet. And so he tries to push Jesus away.

It is then that Jesus teaches Peter and all of us the most profound lesson of this night. And it is this: to celebrate Eucharist, to be a disciple, to follow Christ into the new life of God's kingdom, is to live the love that God pours into our lives in the gift of ourselves to each other. It is to embrace each other with a love so profound that it cuts through all our pettiness, all our prejudices, all our angers, and all our resentments. To celebrate Eucharist is to love as God loves.

Tonight we begin the journey of Passion, Death and Resurrection. Tonight is the night of consecrationthe night when Christ consecrates His disciples and His Church in the power of His love. We need to understand that each time we come forward to receive the Eucharist God washes our feet, our hearts, our entire being. And God

calls us to care for each other...to wash each other's feet...with the same generosity as Christ who comes to us in the mystery of Bread and Wine transformed into His Body and Blood.