



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for Holy Thursday

Year B 2015

No film has touched my life more than Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List." It is impossible for me to watch this film without being deeply touched. I remember talking to my parents and suggesting that they not miss seeing this movie. My parents were always suspicious of my likes when it came to movies. But they did follow my advice and went to see it. I called them the following day and asked them what they thought of it. My mother moved me when she said: "When we got back in the car, we prayed the Rosary all the way home." That was a magnificent response to a powerful film.

One of the scenes that touched me deeply was the conversation that Oskar Schindler has the commandant of the Naza Concentration Camp. Oskar Schindler asks this question: "What is real power?" The Commandant is perplexed because the answer seems all too obvious to him. However, Schindler surprises him by answering his own question with these words: "Real power is when you have the ability to destroy another person's life, and instead you show mercy and love."

It is Oskar Schindler's definition of power that cuts to the heart of what we are about as we gather on this Holy Thursday evening. For on this first celebration of our most holy of days, we recall that Jesus, Son of God, first-born of the Father, creator of the world, has emptied himself and taken on our flesh. But this is not enough. There is still one more lesson that the master must impart to us. It is the lesson of power which knows only love and mercy.

And so Jesus, knowing that everything belonged to Him and that He had come from the Father, stopped down and washed his disciples' feet. He who commands the stars, choose the most abject of labors the work for the lowest slave and washed the feet of his companions.

And all this to teach us that the real power in our world comes in our care and concern for each other. Real power comes in the love and mercy that we bring to those in need...especially the poor, the unloved, the victims of prejudice and hatred. Real power is found in the Eucharist where Christ, who becomes our food for the journey of life, empowers each of us to become food for each other.

Our world stands desperately in need of this most profound lesson of Holy Thursday. For when we walk the streets of the world we find violence, hatred, despair and abandonment. Whether we endure the pain and violence of ISIS, the division between Israel and Palestine, the constant bickering of our political leaders, the violence of prejudice and hatred, we know well the evil that infects our world and our society. Whether we walk the streets of Los Angeles, New York or even Cranston- the need is the same. To replace violence and hatred with the gifts of love and service.

Tomorrow evening our Jewish sisters and brothers will gather to begin their celebration of Passover. The youngest child will ask this question: "Why is this tonight different from all other nights?" We might well ask that same question of ourselves on this first night of our Sacred Triduum. And our answer should be that tonight is different because it call us to once more to embrace the vision of Jesus Christ - a vision where power is played out in the common acts of love and service which God renders first to us and we, in turn, render to each other. And in living the love that God first gives to us we become perfections of the Eucharist in our world today.