

Here we are again, coming together on this very special day in the Christian world. It is the day that marks the end of Lent and the beginning of the Sacred Triduum - three very sacred days in our faith tradition. The celebration this night is so special that in almost every parish there may only be one liturgy. This evening is so special; we hope everyone can be together in one celebration.

Tonight we celebrate the gift of the Eucharist. We might celebrate the Eucharist every day, or certainly every Sunday, but tonight we celebrate its gift to us and its meaning in the context of the life giving story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection for us. And, tonight, we also celebrate the gift of ministry. We are given a lesson in how we are to give ourselves to and for each other.

With the Exodus story of the Passover tradition and with Paul's account of the Last Supper story, we are free to enjoy John's account of that special night. It has a spectacular feel to it. In John's gospel he doesn't tell us that Jesus gave us his body and blood at the supper and then after the supper washed his disciples' feet. He doesn't mention the gift of the Eucharist at all! This is not an oversight. This story of the washing of the feet is the story of the Eucharist. This story explains the Eucharist. It tells us what it means. Jesus knows we were created in God's image

and likeness, so by washing his disciples' feet, Jesus is saying, "This is my body; This is my blood; Do this in memory of me." And, he is also saying, "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

This is why on this special night we act out the Gospel. We need to act it out to feel it, to let the experience of seeing it happen touch our hearts. By surrendering to his Passion and Death on the Cross, Jesus washes our feet. By being broken and given for us in the Eucharist, Jesus is giving us an example and a commandment for how we are to be broken and given for each other, by washing each other's feet.

The foot washing teaches several things. It is not easy to have our feet washed... They are not always very attractive. It is a part of our bodies that we rarely let others touch or caress. And, it is not easy to wash the feet of another. This is all a powerful drama representing the power of love.

It is not easy for me to let you love me. It is not easy for me to love you. Parts of me are not very acceptable. I'll let you love certain parts of me, but rarely will I let anyone close to the "smelliest" and most unattractive parts of me. And, when I love you, I often will love you when you are most presentable or attractive. When you put me off or when you are not at your best, I don't do so well at loving.

Jesus loves us unconditionally, that is, without any stipulation. He loves us, not because we deserve it. He loves us because we need loving. He tells us to love the same way. Tonight we are given his Eucharistic, the self-sacrificing example of how to love each other.

Tonight, when we watch this example of his love for us, and when we receive the Eucharist together, let us let Jesus love us. We can pray in our hearts, "Lord, let your body and blood bring me into the most intimate communion with you tonight.

In the words of a song by Brandon Heath we can say;

Give me your eyes for just one second

Give me your eyes so I can see

Everything that I keep missing

Give me your love for humanity

Give me your arms for the broken hearted

Ones that are far beyond my reach.

Give me your heart for the ones forgotten

Give me your eyes so I can see

On this special night, may we all feel the desire of Jesus that we all be one, through our sharing of this Eucharistic love."