

Holy Thursday
March 28, 2013
All Saints Parish
Rev. Fred Daley

A Bent Over God

In recent homilies here at All Saints, we've been reflecting a bit about one of the occupational hazards of religion: that the incidentals often become the essentials and the essentials become the incidentals.

Our Holy Thursday liturgy focuses on one of the essentials that are at the core of being a Christian, a Roman Catholic in good standing, a disciple of Jesus. We could say that the Last Supper was the final lecture of Jesus before heading to Calvary, to suffer, to die and to rise.

Imagine the shock at that Passover supper 2,000 years ago when Jesus – the teacher, the master, the creator of the one billion year universe

- leaves the table...
- takes off his cloak...
- rolls up his sleeves...
- ties a towel around His waist...
- bends over...

and ...*washes the feet of His disciples!*

The spiritual writer Henri Nouwen describes the scene:

"We have a bent over God who invites us to bend over and serve one another in love."

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"Do you realize what I have done for you? If I, your teacher, washed your feet, then you ought to wash one another's feet."

"I have given you a model to follow, what I have done, you should do also."

Service - Service - Service: Serving one another in LOVE.

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On this holy night, Jesus invites us to reconnect ourselves, as members of our All Saints Community, to his vision..., the dream of the reign of God: a world, a church, a parish, neighborhoods, families, relationships, work-places - where we love and serve one another.

Whether we be pope, president, pastor or parent, as sisters and brothers - children of God, we are called to serve one another in love:

- The husband and wife who defer to one another in love, and who put up with each other's short comings out of love, are washing each other's feet.
- Parents and guardians (like those here with our First Communion children tonight) who accept their primary responsibility for their children's growth in faith and prayer, are washing their child's feet.
- Adult children who attend to the needs of their aging parents, are washing their parents' feet.
- Those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, visit the prisoner, heal the broken-hearted, work for justice and peace are washing the feet of their sisters and brothers.

Serving one another in love is central, is at the core of being a Christian. In fact, without commitment to service, we are not truly disciples of Jesus.

Our new pope Francis, in his first days in the Chair of Peter, is moving the hearts of so many throughout the world and giving such hope and new life in the Church, primarily because he is teaching us by example to serve one another in love. He's showing us how to be a '*servant leader*'....

Earlier today, he left the Vatican and went to a youth detention center in Rome to celebrate the Mass of the Last Supper where he washed the feet of twelve young men and women, including two Muslims. This was the first time a Pope had celebrated this Liturgy outside of the Vatican.

Our picture displayed here in the Sanctuary is of Pope Francis on Holy Thursday back in 2010, washing the feet of 12 young men dying of AIDS in a Buenos Aires Hospice – the lepers of their time..., the poorest of the poor.

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And so sisters and brothers, I ask you now to take a couple of moments in prayer reflecting on the essential commandment of service as disciples of Jesus: am I living a life of service in love? If you so desire, I ask you to respond to this question:

My brothers and sisters, as disciples of Jesus, members and friends of our All Saints Parish community, do you on this Holy Thursday 2013 recommit yourselves to Jesus' command to serve one another in love?

As your pastor, your *servant-leader*, I recommit myself to serve this community in love.

And now, as a sign of our commitment to serve one another in love, I will wash the feet of our First Communion candidates and then, we all have the opportunity to wash and dry one another's hands - symbolizing what Jesus has done and what we also should do. Amen!