

HOLY MASS: NO GREATER GIFT OF LOVE

KNOW YOUR FAITH SERIES

After reading about the last supper in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, during which Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the obvious question that readers ask is: “why doesn’t the evangelist John give us his own version of the last supper?”

Biblical scholars have asked as well. Most of them agree that since John wrote his gospel much later than the others, the Christian community by then was well established, and were very familiar with the origin of what was central to their faith: the institution of the Eucharist at the last supper.

John was more interested in showing the Eucharist as the expression of the **GREATEST ACT OF LOVE AND HUMILITY**, which is **SACRIFICIAL** and **TOTALLY SELF GIVING (PASSION AND DEATH BY CRUCIFIXION)**.

In the context of the last supper, Jesus teaches his apostles to imitate his **PROFOUND HUMILITY** when he performs the duty proper of a slave, that of washing the feet of the invited guests.

But Jesus goes even further in humiliating himself, by doing something which at the time was unthinkable and unacceptable for a Hebrew: a Hebrew person was not allowed to have a fellow Hebrew as a slave. Breaking all the known rules, Jesus does just that: **WASHING THE FEET** of his fellow Hebrew apostles. (John 13:1-5)

When the apostle Peter refuses to have his feet washed, because it’s a task not worthy of his master, Jesus seems to be saying through his reply: “the dirty feet are a sign of your sins of pride, anger, ego, jealousy, envy, and all other sins. Unless you acknowledge that reality in yourself, and **UNLESS I WASH YOU CLEAN** of your sins, you cannot have part in my Kingdom.” (John 13:6-8)

Later, as Jesus invites them to do to others what he has just done to them, he seems to be saying to them: “You have watched your Master humble himself. I removed my outer garment to wash you; that means that I have put aside the symbols of my teaching authority, and willingly put on the garment of a servant. As I was washing your feet, I kept my head down, looking at your feet and not up to see the faces, so that you may learn to serve everyone, no matter who they are, no matter their background... **AS I DID TO YOU, YOU ALSO OUGHT TO DO TO ONE ANOTHER.**” (John 13:14).

...This is the meaning of the Eucharist: it’s God’s **GREATEST GIFT OF LOVE** which was put in motion when Jesus, Son of God, lowered himself to men’s level, so that he could reach the bottom where each person had fallen because of addiction, poverty, wrong choices, hardship, marital breakdown, depression, unemployment, violence, and sins of any kind... There, at the very bottom **JESUS IS KNEELING, TOUCHING, and WASHING EVERYONE CLEAN**, as long as they allow him, as Peter did after his initial resistance.

That is why at the beginning of each Mass, we begin by acknowledging our sins and asking forgiveness, **SO WE MAY BE MADE WORTHY TO RECEIVE THE BREAD OF LIFE AND HAVE A SHARE WITH THE LORD.** (John 13:8).

THERE IS NO GREATER GIFT OF LOVE THAN THIS!

NEXT WEEK: “The BREAD of LIFE according to John”