

Holy Thursday (Lord's Supper)

Gospel text (Jn 13,1-15): It was before the feast of the Passover.

Jesus realized that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, and as He had loved those who were his own in the world, He would love them with perfect love. They were at supper and the devil had already put into the mind of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray. Jesus knew that the Father had entrusted all things to him, and as He had come from God, He was going to God. So He got up from table, removed his garment and taking a towel, wrapped it around his waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel He was wearing.

When he came to Simon Peter, Simon said to him, «Why, Lord, you want to wash my feet!». Jesus said, «What I am doing you cannot understand now, but afterwards you will understand it». Peter replied, «You shall never wash my feet». Jesus answered him, «If I do not wash you, you can have no part with me». Then Simon Peter said, «Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!». Jesus replied, «Whoever has taken a bath does not need to wash (except the feet), for he is clean all over. You are clean, though not all of you». Jesus knew who was to betray him; because of this he said, «Not all of you are clean».

When Jesus had finished washing their feet, He put on his garment again, went back to the table and said to them, «Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also must wash one another's feet. I have just given you an example that as I have done, you also may do».

«If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also must wash one another's feet»

Mons. José Ángel SAIZ Meneses, Archbishop of Seville

(Sevilla, Spain)

Today, we remember the first Holy Thursday of history, when Jesus Christ gathers his disciples to celebrate the Passover. It is then He inaugurates the new Passover of the new Covenant when his sacrifice is offered for our salvation.

Along with Eucharist, Christ institutes the ministerial priesthood with which the sacrament of the Eucharist is to be perpetuated. The preface of the Chrism Mass reveals its meaning: «He chooses men to share his sacred ministry by the laying on of hands. He appoints them to renew in his name the sacrifice of our redemption as they set before your family his paschal meal. He calls them to lead your people in love, nourish them by your word, and strengthen them through the sacraments».

And that very same Thursday, Jesus gives us his new commandment of love: «Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another» (Jn 13:34). Before, love was based upon the expected reward in return, or upon the fulfillment of an imposed norm. Now, Christian love is based upon Christ. He loves us to the point of giving his life: this must be the measure of the disciple's love and the signal, the characteristic of Christian recognition.

However, man has no capacity to love like this. It is not simply the fruit of an effort but God's wonderful gift. Fortunately, He is Love and —at the same time— source of love that we receive through the Eucharistic Bread.

Finally, today we should mull over the washing of the feet. With a servant's attitude, Jesus washes the Apostles' feet, and He recommends them to wash one another's feet (cf. Jn 13:14). There is something more than a lesson in humility in the Master's gesture. It is like an anticipation, like a symbol of his Passion, of the total humiliation He has to suffer to save all men.

Theologian Romano Guardini says that «the attitude of our littleness bowing down in front of the great is not yet an attitude of humility. It is simply, an attitude to truth. But when the great bows down before our littleness that is true humility». This is why Jesus Christ is really humble. Before this humble Christ our usual patterns shatter. Jesus Christ turn human values over while inviting us to follow him to build a better and different world based on service.

