

HOMILY ~ HOLY THURSDAY APRIL 14, 2022

*There is no greater love says the Lord,
than to lay down your life for a friend.
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no greater love,
than to lay down your life for a friend.*

There is no greater love than the love that Jesus has for each one of us. He suffered on the cross and died for our salvation. This is probably the greatest demonstration of his love, but it is certainly not the first or the last. All of the Readings today give examples of how much God loves us. In the First Reading, we hear how God protected the Jewish people by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. The Jewish people celebrate the Feast of the Passover to this very day. They not only remember how God protected them in the past, but how he continues to care for them today. God led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. He led them, cared for them and never abandoned them. Their journey was not easy, but God never abandoned them. I think we are on a kind of Journey to the Promised Land, and it is not easy. With the war in the Ukraine, the pandemic, all of the polarity and hostility in the world, life is hard. I do not think God causes the suffering in the world, but he allows it to happen. Why does he allow this to happen? I am not sure I have a good answer for that, but I have some thoughts. I think there are things that we need to work through in this life to become better people. If a child always got what they wanted whenever they wanted it and never had any struggles or suffering, we would probably call them spoiled. What kind of an adult would they grow up to be? They would be unable to cope with life. I think maybe the better question is to ask *what is the good that comes from the suffering?* God always brings good from our suffering if we allow it to happen and if we recognize it. It gives me great comfort knowing how much God loves us, that he will never leave us and that he will continue to care for us and lead us. God has seen us through our difficulties and suffering in the past, and he will continue to do so in the future. We do have to remember that we have not gotten to the Promised Land yet. Our Promised Land is heaven.

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus demonstrated his love for his disciples by washing their feet. He humbled himself to do this. Remember that the people at the time walked everywhere either with bare feet or with open sandals.

The roads they walked on were not paved roads but dirt roads; and they were the same roads that animals walked on, so they would be walking through animal droppings. Only servants would wash feet. Notice Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, but none of the disciples offered to do so. Many of the disciples were common fishermen, not at the top of the social ladder. They knew it would be humiliating for them to wash feet, but that is what Jesus did. He even washed the feet of Judas, knowing that he had already betrayed him. Jesus washed the feet of his enemy, and we are called to do the same.

In the Second Reading, we hear how Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He knew that he was about to suffer and die for our salvation, but he was worried about us. He knew that we are physical and spiritual beings; and he knew that he had to remain with us in a physical and spiritual way, hence the Eucharist. We remember that Jesus loves us just the way we are. Jesus continued to love Judas in spite of the fact that he betrayed him. Jesus also gave him the Eucharist. All this talk about withholding the Eucharist from certain people or groups, I wonder what Jesus thinks of that. Pope Francis tells us: *"The Eucharist is the bread of sinners not a reward of saints."* He also said that he has never denied Communion and warns against politicizing the Eucharist. If only we could begin to love one another the way Jesus loves us.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim