

HOMILY ~ HOLY THURSDAY MARCH 28, 2024

***Jesus walked this lonesome valley;
He had to walk it by himself.
Oh, nobody else could walk it for him;
He had to walk it by himself.***

I am in a rather somber mood this evening because I have been empathizing with Jesus, feeling what he felt. He was surrounded by people most of that time, but he was walking the journey by himself. Remember Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He felt what we would have felt. He was betrayed by the people closest to him and that must have been devastating to him. Think of the person closest to you. How would it feel if they betrayed you? Jesus was betrayed by Judas, who was one of the 12 who had been with him for three years. One of his best friends sold him for 30 pieces of silver. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when he was praying to the Father in agony knowing what was about to happen, the disciples could not stay awake to pray with him. He was walking the journey alone. After Jesus was arrested, no one helped him. Peter denied even knowing him. When he died on the cross, only John and the women had the courage to stand there at the foot of the cross. The other 11 apostles were hiding in the upper room. His best friends betrayed him. How would that feel? Knowing that all of this was about to happen, what did Jesus do? He forgave them, and he washed their feet.

That foot washing was a humbling experience. Remember that the people at the time walked everywhere with either bare feet or with open sandals. The roads they walked on were not paved but dirt roads, and they would be muddy when it rained. 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 other disciples objected, and none of them offered to help. He had to do this by himself. 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 Jesus forgave his best friends who betrayed him and humbled himself to wash their feet. We are called to do the same.

Think of the people in your life that you have a hard time forgiving. Sometimes we need to humble ourselves to forgive, and sometimes we need friends and relatives to help us with humility. There was a very

wealthy head of a large company who was waiting in line with his wife to get his driver's license renewed. Frustrated at how long it was taking, he grumbled to his wife, *"Don't they know who I am?"* She replied, *"Yeah, you're a janitor's son who got lucky."* Ouch! Sometimes forgiveness takes humility. Sometimes people ask me, *"Fr. Jim, do you expect me to let them get away with what they did?"* I got news for you, they already did. Forgive them and wash their feet. Forgiveness takes humility.

Not only did Jesus give us the example of washing his disciples' feet, he also gave us the Eucharist because he was worried about us. He knew that we are physical and spiritual beings and that he had to remain with us in a physical and spiritual way. The Eucharist is a great gift. We remember that Jesus forgives us, serves us and loves us just the way we are. Jesus continued to forgive, serve and love his best friends even when they betrayed him. If only we could begin to forgive one another, serve one another and love one another just the way we are, the way Jesus loves us. That would change the world. Are we going to let Jesus walk that journey by himself?

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim