

Homily. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. 18 April 2019.

It was when Jesus was at His most self-possessed and powerful that He chose to wash His disciples' feet. John tells us this when he says; Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into His hands, and that He had come from God and was returning to God, so he got up from the table, took off His outer garment, bent low and began to wash His disciples feet.

This is a description of someone who knows where they've come from, what they're doing and where they're going. It means that the washing, serving act of Jesus was no hasty idea, no attempt to induce His disciples to stick by Him in His coming time of trial, no plea from a desperate man as He neared His end. Quite the opposite in fact, because Jesus action was that of a truly free person, a choice to love and to serve even though He knew full well that the very same feet He washed were best made for running, not for standing their ground. And, run they did, with Judas galloping off to betray Him, Peter tripping over himself denying he even knew Jesus, and the rest fleeing away to safety.

Yet, knowing all of this about them, Jesus still made Himself into their loving servant, humbly washing off the dirt and grime that clung to them, assuring Peter that he must take this wash if he was going to have anything in common with the Him. This was Jesus choice and action, that of a free man who decided to love them, and who has decided to love us despite knowing how dirty our feet are and what they are capable of doing.

John doesn't tell us about the words of the Institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper as the other gospel's do. John covered that in chapter 6, Jesus teaching on the Bread of Life. What Jesus does here is show us what the Eucharist means which is His free choice to love and serve and give Himself away even when it's neither merited nor deserved. It's this choice that we are to eat in and make our own. It's this sort of servant loving that we're asked to drink into ourselves, so that we can become as self-possessed as Jesus was, freely choosing to humbly love and serve others in the Spirit of His power.

At the end of the scene Jesus says; You call me Master and Lord, and rightly, so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. In a few moments we'll be able to do exactly that, copying what Jesus did. What we're doing is more than repeating a yearly ritual, in the same way that the Mass is much more than slavishly repeating the Last Supper. What we're doing tonight, and every time we gather, is allowing Jesus into ourselves, absorbing Him and His love, letting it shape us into copies of the servant Christ.

We're do all of this in remembrance of Him, of His loving sacrifice and generosity for us, even when we can never deserve such a gift, and all so that we can in some way be His gift for others. This is the way it will forever be until we're all washed clean in the life-giving blood of the Lamb of God who wipes away the sins of the world.