

July 23, 2021 Youth Jubilee Rally/Eucharistic Adoration

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17

Our time together this evening--- the fun we shared, the songs we sang, the praises we proclaimed, the instruction we received; and most particularly this time of Adoration----it is all focused on the person of Jesus Christ Who is with us always in Word, Sacrament and Service. Scripture assures us that *Jesus Christ is the same—yesterday, today and forever!* In fact, we might say that the entire focus of this evening’s Jubilee Youth Rally is totally centered on the Mystery of Christ’s Real Presence among us in many different ways, and most profoundly here---in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. How blessed we are to have received this great Gift! What a joy it is to be able to share Christ with each other and with all our brothers and sisters here in southwest Michigan!

Jesus’ gift of Himself is not something we should take for granted. It’s a miracle of love that brings joy, peace and healing to our hearts. When we are privileged to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion, that spiritual Food nourishes our hungry souls. When we are worried, Jesus calms our fears. When we are lonely, He stands close to us and unites us with one another. When we are tempted, Jesus gives us extra grace. When we find ourselves thinking only of our own wants and needs, Jesus challenges us to serve others and to find the true purpose of our lives in caring for our sisters and brothers.

The Gospel Reading we just listened to is the familiar—but very powerful—account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, found in St. John’s Gospel (Jn.13:1-15). Recall that just before washing the disciples’ feet, during this sacred meal that we call “The Last Supper,” Jesus “instituted” the Eucharist, the Gift of His Body and Blood. He gave Himself—Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity—to His disciples (and to us!) to change us from people focused on ourselves, to women and men concerned about others. We might say that immediately after instituting the Holy Eucharist Jesus “put the Eucharist into action” by the washing of the disciples’ feet. He did this to make clear to them (and to us!) that the Gift of the Eucharist calls us to loving service, and gives us the spiritual strength/nourishment to do what otherwise would be too difficult, unsavory, or even, humiliating.

Listen to how St. John describes this situation: *“Fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning*

to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist."

"Fully aware" of how powerful He was—as God's Only Begotten Son— he chose to humble Himself by getting down on His knees and performing the lowly task of a servant. Far from assuming His rightful place as Lord and Master, He chose to practice what He preached when He said: *"The greatest among you must be the servant of all."*

That is why St. John, (who by the way is speaking from his own eye-witness vantage point), concludes his account of the washing of the Apostles' feet by telling us: *"So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."*

Do **we** realize???? Let's just stop and think about the Lord Jesus---Son of God in the Flesh----getting down on His sacred Hands and Knees, lowering Himself to the lowest point imaginable-----humbling Himself in such a way.....Who does that? Well, when you love another person, you take care of their needs, no matter what sacrifice that might mean for "the other". Parents spend the first years of every child's life going without sleep, and doing things it's not appropriate to mention here (but they involve diapers!!!)---and never give it a second thought; and they do the same things for the rest of their children's lives in untold numbers of other ways. Spouses do for one another acts of love, concern, kindness, care that you would never ask a stranger, or even your best friend, to do for you.

Anecdote about St. Mother Theresa---After observing what she and her Sisters did to care for those with leprosy, soothing their open sores, and washing their smelly wounds, one wealthy visitor said to Mother Theresa, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." And she quickly responded: "Neither would I!"

What Jesus is teaching us, FIRST of all, is an example of LOVING SERVICE. It might be repulsive for us to get down and wash someone else's feet----unless we

loved them. He did this to show His disciples (and all of us) that Love and Service are much more important than any worldly power, passing prestige, or being popular with the “in crowd” or enjoying all the latest fads. Jesus gives Himself to us in this great Sacrament of the Eucharist so that we will be spiritually fed, and then able to see more clearly---to see with the “eyes of Jesus”---to see HIM in those we encounter; and THAT’S what makes it possible for us to serve them, because when we see “others”, we are seeing, and serving, Jesus.

In addition to the Gift of the Eucharist (and the other Sacraments which provide us with regular “channels of Grace”), Jesus also gives us the power to do what He asks us to do through the Gift of His Holy Spirit. He regularly told His Apostles *not to be afraid*, because when He was “taken up from them”, He would then send His Holy Spirit to guide them, and to strengthen them. Because of the essential role that the Holy Spirit will play in helping our Diocese carry out its mission in the years ahead, on August 28, the Feast of the great St. Augustine, our Diocesan Patron, I will be celebrating Mass to open a “**Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit**” here in our Beloved Diocese. More information will be available about this in the coming weeks, but it is my profound hope that this special observance of a Year of the Holy Spirit will enflame our hearts and souls with a fervent desire to be faithful to the call we have received from Christ to: “*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*”

Our Jubilee is truly something to celebrate, and it does give us all reason to look back at our rich history that deserves to be seen with pride and thanksgiving. But I also think that our Jubilee gives us reason to pause, and think intentionally about how we’re doing? What do we need to adjust, change or modify; what do we need to stop doing, keep doing, or start doing? Because we are missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, our primary focus must always be on “where is the Lord asking us to go”? And “what does He want us as a Diocese, or any one of us as individuals/families, to do in the future”?

Jesus has won for us our Salvation---He’s destroyed the overwhelming power of sin and final death---Alleluia!!!. Besides that, He has given us all that we could need: the Gift of Himself in the Eucharist to be our strength, our consolation, our Food for the Journey, and the Grace to see others how He wants us to see them---as brothers and sisters in Christ who must be Loved with the Love of Christ. And

in addition, He has sent us the Power of His Holy Spirit, to be our Defender, our Fuel, our Strength, the Giver of all spiritual Gifts so that our lives will bear Fruit in the Spirit.

As we conclude this “Youth Rally,” this holy and powerful evening of prayer in the very Presence of our Eucharistic Lord, let us thank God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—for the past 50 years. But, let us also ask the Holy Spirit to **set our hearts on fire** so that we will be **courageous** and **bold** in living our mission for the next 50 years.

And may our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly Present with us in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, help us to always give witness to the truth that *Jesus Christ is the same—yesterday, today and forever. Amen!*