

Fr Ryan Homily – Holy Thursday 4-6-23

Read: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Oh I say this every year at this point, but I love this mass, this night so much. It's my favorite evening of the year, more than Christmas, more than even Easter. Why because Jesus is doing so much. He's setting up so much for us at the Last Supper it's just mind blowing. It's amazing all that Jesus does on Holy Thursday. And we listen to this gospel, it's one of the most beautiful lines for me in all of scripture. It says that Jesus loved His own in the world and He loved them until the end. He loves you to the end. What does that mean to love them to the end? I suppose there could be many possible meanings to that. Like He loved them to the end of His life. He loved them to the point He poured out everything. He loved them with all His strength. And today Jesus shows the depth of His love and how He has loved you to the end with really three beautiful realities that He gives to us at the Last Supper. He gives the washing of the feet, He gives us the Eucharist, and He gives us the priesthood. And so I wanna just take a moment and look at each one of these gifts. Each one of these ways that God shows the depth of His love for us. How He's loved each of you and me to the end. So first He gives us the washing of the feet or at least that's the first I wanna talk about. He does something, He gives us something it's not a sacrament but it's a reminder for us of everything that Jesus has been about His entire ministry. He wasn't washing their feet so much because they were dirty, He was teaching them a lesson through this. That everything He has been about in the world, though He is God, though He is Lord and Master, He lowers Himself to serve us. Everything He said was to serve us. Everything He ever did was to serve us. His entire life was a life of humility and of service pouring Himself out for us as a brother. What a gift! The God of the universe who could sit back and demand that we serve Him is so humble He gets down and serves us. And then He calls us to do the same for others. To live the same way in all that we do. We're called to go and wash the feet of others and tonight as is traditional during the Holy Thursday liturgy is I'll be washing the feet of several of our parishioners. And these twelve men and women this evening, each in their own way, has captured what it means to lower yourself like Jesus and to serve their brothers and sisters. Whether it's here in the parish, in our school St. John Bosco or in the greater community. And there are so many others that do so much for our Lord here as well. I see several faces from Holy Name of Mary

Parish, our parish out there as well, you do so much for your parish. But I think every one of these twelve represents the best of who we are each in their own way. And it's just an honor to kneel and wash their feet tonight as their pastor as the Lord knelt and washed His disciples feet on Holy Thursday. So each of you twelve this evening, Shawn and Sue, Kyle and Adelee, Micayla and Glen, Emily, Rick, Tracy, Elizabeth, Natalie and Missy, just to know how grateful our Lord is for you. That He sees what you have done for Him. That He's thankful for you and for your service and to know how grateful I am for each of you as well. From the bottom of my heart for all that you do for Him in service. None of it's lost on me, none of it is lost on our Lord. He appreciates each of you twelve and everyone in this church this evening. Jesus that night also He gives us the gift of the Eucharist. Himself in this humble disguise of bread and wine. He humbles Himself so much in the Eucharist that a lot of people who come to mass don't even know that it's Him up here on the altar. But it is. It's Jesus our Lord and Master with us truly 100% present. Seen by those who can look with the eyes of faith and that's why we call the Eucharist the source and summit of our faith. And what's striking me so much this evening about the Eucharist is how tangible it is. That the Lord wants to love us to the end and show us the depth of His love and He knows the way that we've been made is we need something tangible, something to touch. I mean COVID drove that home. If we had to be separated from those that we love, even for a little while, it hurts. It's painful when we're kept from those people. We know how meaningful it is just to hear their voice on the phone, to see their face maybe on a screen, but to see them, to hold their hand. The importance of a hug. Sometimes we need something tangible to convince us that the love is real and so the Lord gives us this gift of the Eucharist so that we can see, and we can hold, and we can physically receive into ourselves so that we know He really is with us to the end. And as a priest sometimes I have the privilege of bringing the Holy Eucharist to someone who's dying. Maybe in their last days, sometimes in their final hours, and to be able to anoint them and if they're still able to receive the Eucharist – like what a gift. To me it's a reminder that Jesus loves us all the way to end of our earthly life and He'll love us all the way to Heaven. And then Jesus on Holy Thursday He also gives the gift of the priesthood. But that's obviously very dear to me as that's the vocation He's called me to. And He gives us the priesthood to give us the sacraments. He gives us the priesthood so that His love can remain tangible. That it's not merely a spiritual thing but He remains present through real

people. As unworthy as His servants are so that His love can remain present to the end of the world. And if you'll just indulge me for a minute I wanna share with you something St. John Vianney wrote about the priesthood. John Vianney is the patron saint of parish priests. I wanna share this because I think it captures what the church treasures so much about this vocation and why Jesus felt the need to establish the priesthood in His name on the night of the Last Supper. To give us the priesthood on the last night of His earthly life with us. So St. John Vianney tells us this. He said if we had not the sacrament of holy orders we should not have the Lord anymore. Who placed Him there in the tabernacle? It was the priest. Who was it that received your souls entrance into life? The priest. Who nourishes it to give it strength to make it's pilgrimage? The Priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God by washing that soul for the last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The Priest. It's always the priest. And if the soul comes to the point of death, who will raise it up and who will restore it to calmness and peace? Again, the priest. You cannot recall a single blessing from God without finding side by side with that recollection the image of the priest. And I have to say it's a pretty amazing thing being a priest. Standing where I stand for mass – it's awesome! To hold a piece of bread and say words and in your fingertips it changes to Jesus! Like I can't even describe how amazing that is! To be a priest and sit in the confessional, to be a minister of God's mercy is a gift. To stand in my shoes next to someone who is dying and be able to anoint them and give them the apostolic pardon so that when they pass from this life they go straight to the arms of Jesus. It is incredible! And why He has chosen me for that honor I have no idea, I trust He has his reasons. But St. John Vianney he goes on to say the priest will not understand the greatness of his office until he is in Heaven. If he understood it on earth, he would die. Not of fear but of love. That says a lot because I feel like I have an idea of how great the priesthood is. I've studied it for eight years; I've been living it for ten and yet it's still so much bigger than we can grasp who live it. And so we praise God for all the priests that we have known throughout our lives, for all the ways in which the Lord has shown us His love concretely through them. They're always gonna fail us. Every priest will always fail us. Right, we're like anybody else we're broken, we're sinners, we have faults, we will make mistakes. You all know that firsthand having me as your pastor. So I thank you for all the times you've had to have patience with me, patience with me without my even knowing it. All the times you had to silently forgive me when I wasn't who I should've been for you. But Jesus is

always faithful to His people. He will always be present and acting through the priest no matter how far he falls short of God's plan. No matter how much we might disappoint you or let you down, Jesus never will. He's always gonna do what He says He's gonna do through His priests. And so this evening we praise God for the gift of His love that He has shown us through the washing of the feet, through the Eucharist, and through the priesthood. Jesus gave us so much at the Last Supper and we now ask for the grace to stay with Him tonight. At the Last Supper and then as He goes out to pray in the garden and as He goes to the cross tomorrow and then into the tomb. Because at every step, at every step, He was loving you to the end in everything He did. And we ask for the grace to stay with Him so that we might also love Him to the end.

Amen