

Sermon

HOMILY FOR HOLY THURSDAY - Yr. C

From an early age, we are taught that winning means everything. And losing often spells disappointment, or maybe we're just not good enough! Doesn't this competitive world require that we be the very best, we can be? For coming in first, brings with it, recognition, honor, and the esteem of others. In this world there is nothing more humiliating than losing, not getting that promotion, not passing that test, or not receiving the recognition, we feel we deserve.

But being first also has its drawbacks, whether it be in sports, the business world, or in politics. For the worldly successful are often inclined to be self-centered, self-seeking, and over-bearing! Their sole motivation is often directed toward advancing themselves, perpetuating their dominance, promoting their own agenda. Seldom do they care about the needs of others!

But, when it comes to spiritual matters, the tables are reversed! In the realm of religion, coming in LAST, often means being considered FIRST! Didn't Jesus warn us that material success and worldly ambition are at odds with God? Being FIRST on earth, may very well mean being considered LAST in heaven! Therefore, Jesus calls us to subdue our ego, our selfish desires to be first; and to practice instead, the virtues of humility, self-denial, and self-giving love. Looking out for the other guy, for whom, we are so often responsible.

You see humility serves at the very foundation of charity. It opens our hearts to look beyond ourselves, and to be of service to others. It means to practice Jesus' Commandment to love God, first and foremost, and our neighbor, even as He has loved us!

Jesus drives this point home in today's Gospel, while washing the feet of Peter, and the other Apostles. He did it first, to wash away the dirt and dust of all worldliness, that still clung to them. Secondly, we are told in Luke's Gospel, that after the last supper, "a dispute arose among them, as to who should be considered the

greatest!" It seems that ambition blinded the Apostles to all that Jesus had taught them. In response, Jesus explained, "Earthly kings lord it over their people. Yet, it cannot be that way with you! Let the greatest among you, be as the least, the master, as their servant!"

For the new Church to survive, its leaders must learn the true meaning of humility, to better serve the People of God. And Jesus had to reminded them, that "He came NOT TO BE SERVED, but TO SERVE," even to the point of offering his own life, as ransom for the sins of many! He also emphasized the truth, that he who exalts himself now, will most likely, be humbled later!

So to drive these points home, before returning to the Father, he chose to wash their feet. He washed their feet as an example of humility, as lesson in self-giving service to others, and to prepare them for the task of continuing His mission of salvation on earth. To do this the Apostles would have to learn and practice self-denial, to counter their instincts for honor and self-exaltation. And For the Church to survive and prosper, She must be led by good and humble shepherds, after the example of Jesus Himself!

Therefore, Peter would henceforth be called the first among the Apostles, but with it the corresponding responsibility of serving and strenghtening the others, in service to the Church. Therefore, he would be called the "Servant of the servants of the poor." Just as Jesus came into this world to bear the burdens of others, as their suffering servant, so too Peter must learn to do the same!

And Jesus shares this same lesson with all of us today. For by practicing humility in service to others, we, who are least on earth, will become great in heaven! You see, Jesus tells us that its OK to loose - at least once in a while!

God bless you all