

Maundy Thursday Homily
04/02/26

Good evening everyone

It's always nice to see you all.

Welcome to the most important days of the year.

It begins on Palm Sunday and before we know it, it's Maundy Thursday, and there's a tension.

There's a confrontation between the way the world is structured, and the way the love ethic of Jesus of Nazareth is structured.

This is the source of the rebuttal we hear from Peter, and understandably so.

What Jesus is impressing upon the disciples is that he is in fact here to serve them and what Peter cannot wrap his head around is why the one who processed into Jerusalem as a King, is now serving him...

And more often than I realize, i'm in the same boat as Peter!

Jesus is the revelation of the great "I AM" and I'll follow Him wherever he leads me.

So when I signed up for Duke Divinity School and I started working in a church there, I prayed "Jesus let me serve you."

Then I graduated and landed here in Missouri and I started working in the church, and my mindset was still the same...

Jesus, I'm here to serve you! You're the King of Kings, and the Lord of all creation. I bow before you.

And Jesus looks at the disciples, Jesus looks at me... and he flips the script and says

"Go, and serve them."

"Go and love them the way that I have loved you.

The ones who have dirty feet and dirty souls. Go, love and serve them.

Go and love them the best way you know how, in the ways that I have uniquely equipped you for and taught you to. Go.

This is not another to-do in the week, it's a call on our lives that has been gifted to us.

The gift we've been given is the mandate to love our neighbor the way Christ has loved us and taught us to.

It truly is a gift to do that. To love so openly. So radically.

As we do so we see hope in the eyes of those around us. We see the living God alive in our relationships.

And in the midst of this act of service, Jesus reminds the disciples and all of us of something so critical for their place and time,

so critical for our place and time,

And critical for the next generations and their capacity to love others...

Jesus is teaching them that the proper place for social hierarchy within the love ethic of Jesus of Nazareth, is in the trash.

We have created barriers and hierarchies to keep the haves from the have nots, determining who is worthy or not in our own eyes... and that is our creation.

And Jesus comes to us saying that we are not to be concerned with that.

"I get it, you call me teacher and you call me Lord, and I have served you. So you shall wash the feet of others and serve them."

And if you read in between the lines here, we can almost hear James and John, the brothers trying to secure their place at the right and left of Jesus saying "ooohhhh, i see. So the servants are first!"

And Jesus has to keep teaching them...

"No, what I'm not saying is that servants are greater than their masters, nor the messenger greater than the one who sent them."

What if we just put aside the social hierarchy business for a minute...

What if we loved and served those around us without judgment...

A profound message, especially for us today.

I am aware of the difficulty this can have, and the challenges this places upon our lives.

It gets hard. Going against the grain of the social structure to love the way Jesus does, it gets hard.

And when it does, we return to the teacher and ask for guidance. We return to Jesus.

In our private devotionals and in our prayers...
and especially on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

We are reminded of this very night, and we go to the altar and we kneel and feed on the spiritual food that sustains us.

And the reason that we, the clergy, face the cross as we pray over and bless the bread and wine is because we need to receive this same nourishment and sustenance as well.

We're all reminded of the love that God has, even for us,
and we're better able to communicate that love to a world in desperate need of the reminder that they too are worth loving, and that there is a different way.

As we are fed, we are better prepared to go and love that world with the love ethic of Jesus Christ.

Prepared to better live out the love of God.
To lead lives worthy of the mandate that has been gifted to us.

Amen.