**Thursday of the Lord's Supper**

**Today's Homily: He Began to Wash the Disciple's Feet**

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Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14  
Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
John 13:1-15

On the night of the Last Supper, when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, God descends to the point of becoming a servant and a slave. Jesus washes our feet and purifies us so that we may share in the Eucharistic table, which is a foretaste of the wedding banquet of heaven (see Benedict XVI, 13 April 2006).

Jesus fully manifests his humility by making himself a servant, by laying down the clothes of his divine glory, and wrapping the towel of humanity around his waist. The Good Shepherd comes to us as the Lamb of God who gives himself to us and leads us to the green pastures where we find rest. By washing his disciple's feet, he opens up the path that leads them through the valley and to the heavenly banquet (see Benedict XVI, 20 March 2008). In the same way, Jesus purifies us. Purity is a divine gift that, if welcomed in faith, enables us to see God in heaven: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God".

On earth, we are purified in the Sacraments, when Jesus kneels again at our feet and washes them. When Peter finally allows Jesus to wash his feet, Jesus makes a distinction between bathing and washing one's feet. This can be interpreted as a difference between the first bath of the Sacrament of Baptism and the second washing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The holy bath of Baptism purifies us once and for all and is not repeated. It radically changes our lives and immerses us into Christ's death and resurrection. It introduces us into the communion of saints. However, we also need the washing of the feet, the cleansing of our daily sins. When we fall into sin after Baptism, we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this second Sacrament, "the Lord washes our dirty feet ever anew and we can be seated at table with him" (Benedict XVI, 20 March 2008). If we accept God's love in the Sacrament, we are cleansed by his grace; if, on the other hand, we reject God's love like Judas, we remain dirty and wallow in the filth of sin.

The Eucharist tonight commemorates God's saving action that redeems us from sin. It is the memorial of the Cross and Resurrection that does not simply recall the past, but draws us into the presence of Christ's love (see Benedict XVI, 5 April 2007). Through the Cross, through the Resurrection from the dead and through the Ascension into heaven, Jesus transforms humanity and brings it into the presence of God. By accepting Jesus' love, we are transformed from being human into being a share in God's glory.

This glory is beheld by us in the wedding-feast of heaven. The Eucharist we celebrate tonight is a share in this heavenly wedding-feast. The wedding at Cana saw Jesus transform water into wine, but Jesus knew then that his hour had not yet come. Tonight, however, his hour is come and it is time for God to provide the people of all nations with the wine of salvation, as promised by the prophets (see Isaiah 25: 6-8). As Isaiah' prophesies, this is the time when death will be swallowed up and the effects of Adam and Eve's sin will be undone.

At the Last Supper and on the Cross, Jesus provides us with the wine of salvation. This wine of salvation, the wine of the new covenant, is Jesus' blood. Jesus unites himself to the twelve apostles through his blood, the blood of the new covenant. By means of this new covenant, Jesus reveals that he is the Bridegroom and the new Israel established through his disciples is the bride of God. In this new wedding covenant, it is no longer the blood of bulls and goats that will be poured out, but the blood of Jesus (B. Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 51). At the Last Supper, Jesus gives the greatest wedding gift that he can give his bride: the gift of himself. The wine of his blood takes away our sins, purifying us to enter into God's presence and unites us to God forever (B. Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 54). This is the mystery we celebrate tonight and tomorrow: the mystery of the Eucharist, the mystery of our redemption, the mystery of Christ's sacrifice, the mystery of God's love for each one of us.