

Thursday of the Lord's Supper April 17, 2014

Children often ask a simple but profound question: Why? Even when an adult answers the question, the child asks another: But why?

Why do we gather with Jesus and his disciples in the Upper Room this evening? Why does Jesus wash their feet? Why does it happen on the Feast of Passover? Why does Jesus feed his disciples with bread and wine that are transformed into his body and blood? Why? Why? Why?

On the night before he died Jesus gathered his disciples in the Upper Room for a Last Supper together. This evening, we **remember** that meal two thousand years ago; we **celebrate** that meal today with Catholics all over the world and in communion with the saints in heaven; we **anticipate** the messianic banquet at the end of the world when the just will sit at table with God for all eternity. This is why we gather in the Upper Room with the Lord this evening.

Why did Jesus wash the feet of his disciples? To give them an example of humble service in God's kingdom: "If I, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Jesus washes feet to teach us that we are to serve others, as he did. The washing of the feet is an expression of Jesus' love for his disciples. That is why he came into the world: to serve, to help us.

The washing of the feet is a sign, a symbol that means: "I am here to serve you – like Jesus." We must not simply **watch** others' feet being washed this evening. We are to **recommit** ourselves to serving others, to help others, especially the most vulnerable among us. Why does this Supper take place on the Feast of Passover? Our Jewish sisters and brothers have been celebrating Passover the last couple of days. They are in our prayer tonight. We heard the reading about the first Passover -- how the Israelites slaughtered lambs and marked their doorposts with the lambs' blood. When God came over Egypt, killing the firstborn of humans and animals, he passed over the homes of the Israelites. So, they were saved through the blood of the Passover lamb.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who has redeemed us by shedding his Precious Blood for our salvation. So, we also remember his passion and crucifixion and are in communion this evening with that eternal sacrifice. God is mysteriously at work in our world just as he was in Egypt over three thousand years ago, in the Upper Room in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, and in the celebration of the Eucharist today and every day.

Why does the Lord nourish his disciples with bread and wine transformed into his own Body and Blood? To satisfy the deepest hungers of the human heart. To give us the strength we need on our pilgrim journey, to show us the deep and enduring love that God has for us gathered here as a community of faith, a family of disciples.

Now, I know that these answers will not fully satisfy the child in any of us. They only lead to more Whys! Why? Because they immerse us deeper and deeper into the mystery of God. However, there is a time to set aside the questions and simply enjoy all that God has done for us. We have begun the Sacred Triduum, and we will raise new questions tomorrow and Saturday and Sunday. But for now, let us simply rest in God's loving embrace – allowing him to cleanse us of sin and feed us with his sacred Body and Blood.

Our Lady was with the disciples in the Upper Room until the time of Pentecost. Our Lady of Guadalupe is with us here and now, as she promised us through Saint Juan Diego. Let us allow her to embrace us with her maternal love.