

Holy Thursday

April 9

In the Gospels Jesus often sits down at dinner with his disciples and friends, with Pharisees and Scribes, with tax collectors and public sinners. He sits in table fellowship with them, enjoying food and drink and expecting to engage in good conversation.

When he sits down with Pharisees and Scribes, the result is **not** table fellowship but alienation and controversy. When he sits down with tax collectors and public sinners, the encounter and dialogue lead to reconciliation, fellowship, salvation. This evening, we gather -- whether here or in your home -- with Jesus and his disciples in the Upper Room for the Last Supper. What will our experience be? What do we **want** it to be?

The Eucharist nourishes us for our pilgrimage of faith. It immerses us in the Paschal mystery -- Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. How awesome is the Eucharist!

At the Last Supper, Jesus acts out a simple but profound parable. Like a servant, he washes the feet of his disciples. He gives them -- and us -- an example of humble service in God's kingdom. Jesus washes feet to teach us that we are to serve others, as he did. Most of all, the washing of the feet shows Jesus' unconditional abiding love for his disciples -- vividly shown on the Cross tomorrow.

We are not worthy of this action. We are sinners. But God's name is mercy. He is full of compassion, as Pope Francis reminds us often. Jesus' new commandment at the Last Supper is: Love one another as I have loved you -- holding nothing back, excluding no one from the love of God poured out into our hearts, seeing that the basic needs of everyone are met.

This evening, we gather united in mind and heart even though we are separated by restrictions because of the pandemic. The Lord is with each of us and among us. Let us receive him in a spiritual communion although we are prevented from physically receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus. Let us recommit ourselves to serving others, to helping others, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Pope Francis says this time of crisis "invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be foundering." Let us hand over our fears to the Lord so that he can conquer them. We are the Mystical Body of Christ!