

Holy Thursday 2017
04/13/17

Ever heard the expression: “Actions speak louder than words?” Author Louisa Blair said that Jesus not only wanted to set an example for His disciples, He wanted to reassure them of His tender love for them, for their simple, unadorned selves. And He does the same for every one of His children. Jesus is God in front of us, begging us to accept His love. Begging us. Showing us in a concrete way what it means to love and how little it takes to make that love come alive.

Even in His last hours, knowing that He would die soon, die for this group that would abandon Him, He humbly washed their feet. He loved and served and sacrificed and showed them and us the way, focusing on others when He should have been the focus. But we know that wasn’t the way He operated and certainly not the way He modeled.

In his daily reflections for Lent, Fr. Tom Connery tells a story about a massive snowstorm that hit the northeast quite hard last year. It seems Priscilla Arena was stranded for hours on the highway with little hope of being rescued. Fearing that death was imminent, she took out a sheet of loose-leaf paper to write what she believed would be her last words to her husband and children.

“Remember all the things that mommy taught you, never say you hate someone you love. Take pride in the things you do, especially your family. Don’t get angry at the small things; it’s a waste of precious time and energy. Realize that all people are different, but most people are good. My love will never die. Remember me always.”

What would we say to our loved ones if we thought we had only moments to live? What would we want to do if we knew we had only days to live? We see what Jesus did: He washed the feet of His disciples. This unusual act, the act of a slave, was one of the last things He did for His beloved disciples. Jesus became a servant, and that is how He wanted them to remember Him. It is not our words that speak the loudest, but our actions. And the actions that speak the loudest are those of love and service.

We don't have to wait until we are about to die in order to be a servant. We can start today, right where we are.

Let me conclude with a Holy Thursday prayer I've shared before; it's by Fr. Paul Wharton:

Dear Lord, I know you want to wash my feet. I know my fear, my resistance. I'm not clean. I'm embarrassed to admit to myself all the ways I am dishonest, self-indulgent, negligent, defensive, and failing in my relationship with you, with others – failing to love.

Wash me. Let me accept, embrace how your self-giving sets me free from my sin and offers to heal me. By your being broken and given, poured out and shared, make me whole. Let my heart be freed of its anxiety and fear, its anger and lust. Fill me with joy and peace, that I might give you praise.

Send me to wash, to forgive, to free, to nourish, to embrace and give life. By your grace, may the poor know that your mandate has touched my heart and the hearts of the community whose celebration of your love sustains me. Amen.

Shortly after he became pope, Francis set the bar pretty high. He went to a prison and not only washed the feet of some of the inmates, some of those feet belonged to women and Muslims. If the idea of washing someone else's feet causes you to squirm, ask yourself why? If Jesus and the pope can be servants, why can't we?