



Holy Thursday

HOMILY

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly, so I am. If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you."

These words of Jesus ring in our minds and hearts tonight as we celebrate together this Mass of the Lord's Supper. In one sense this Last Supper with his disciples is the final act of the Lord's life and ministry before he enters into the mystery of his passion in the garden of Gethsemane. In another and perhaps truer sense it is in fact the beginning of the Lord's passion for what he does symbolically with his disciples gathered around him tonight he will bring to brutal reality on the cross. As Jesus gets down on his hands and knees to humbly wash the feet of his disciples he shows them exactly what he had meant when he said earlier to them, *"I have not come to be served but to serve"*.

When he takes the bread and the wine and gives them to the disciples, telling them that the bread is now his body, and the wine is now his blood, broken and poured out for them, he shows them exactly what he had meant when he had said earlier to them, *"I have come to give my life as a ransom for many"*. And when with his dying breath he cries out on the cross, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"*, he shows his disciples what he meant when he had earlier said to them, anticipating his saving death on the cross, *"I have come that you might have life, and have it to the full"*. What Jesus said about his lowly act of foot-washing he could equally have said about his gift of himself in the Eucharist and his gift of himself on the cross: *I have given you an example so that you might copy what I have done for you.*

We Christians are people who take Jesus at his word. When he says to us, *"Come to me if you labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest"* we realise that we have a place to go when things get too much for us. When he goes on to say, *"Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart"* we know that we are being drawn into a precious secret about what will bring us true peace. When he says to Simon Peter, and through him to us, *"Have courage, do not be afraid, I am with you"*, we know that he is holding out his hand to save us when we feel as if we are sinking beneath the waves that threaten us. And when he says, as he did at the Last Supper and as he does every time the Eucharist is celebrated in his Church, *"Do this in memory of me"* we hear the call to live life as God meant it to be lived: as a generous, loving and selfless gift to all those whom God places in our lives.



In all of this we take Jesus at his word when he says to us, clearly and insistently, "*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*".

Tonight we see Jesus humbling washing the feet of his disciples. We see him give himself to them, and to us, under the appearances of bread and wine. We see him rise from the table and courageously head out into the darkness, fearful of what he knows awaits him, but fully determined to remain faithful to his Father to the end. We begin to understand what following his Way, and living according to his Truth, and embracing the Life he offers us, will mean for us. It will ask much more of us than perhaps we think we can give. And yet, in a very real sense, what other choice do we have? Like Simon Peter, who saw so many others walk away from Jesus because it was all too hard, we too know that in the end we have nowhere else to go and no-one else to whom we can turn because only Jesus has the words of life.

Tonight then, let us take deep into our hearts the Lord's own promise, fulfilled so powerfully and so intimately in every celebration of the Eucharist: *have courage, do not be afraid, for I am with you*.