

## Holy Thursday 2008

### LESSON: Jesus Meets Our Greatest Need: To Be Loved

Every human being has **two needs** that are **deeper** than **any other**.

We need **to be loved**, and we need **to love**.

This is because we are created in **God's image**, and **God is love** – *Deus Caritas Est*.



- ✍ The Holy Trinity is divine love, fully alive, each Person, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **loving** the others and being **loved** by them.
- ✍ And we are created in **that** image; we are made to **follow** that example.
- ✍ We can have all the money in the world, all the popularity, power, and success you can imagine,
- ✍ but if we aren't **loved**, through and through, just because of who we are, with **no strings attached**,
- ✍ and if we don't **love** someone else enough to **sacrifice ourselves** for them,
- ✍ we will be miserable.

Jesus **knew** that we needed these two things.

Through his suffering and death, his **Passion**, which begins tonight, he **gave** them to us.

St John tells us: "He **loved** his own who were in the world, and he loved them **to the end**."

This means that Jesus gave us the **utmost proof** of his love, his **Passion**, incontrovertible evidence that there is **no limit** to his love for **each one** of us.

And tonight, on Holy Thursday, he gave us **three great gifts** that would extend his **Passion**, the **proof of his love**, throughout **all** of history.

- ✍ He gave us the **Eucharist** - his **real presence** nourishing us in every Tabernacle and every Holy Communion.
- ✍ He gave us the **priesthood** - a sacramental **multiplication** through all time and space of his own merciful, wise, and healing love.
- ✍ And he gave us the **commandment of**



**true love**, so we would know **how** to love truly: by **servicing others**, not indulging ourselves, just as he washed his disciples' feet.

Through these tremendous, eternal gifts, God **redeems** us, meeting the **two deepest needs** of every human heart.

## **ILLUSTRATION: The Today Show Goes to Confession**

**Each** of these gifts meets **both** of our two deepest needs.

Take for example the **priesthood**.

The priesthood is God's way of being **present** in our lives as a teacher, father, and guide, without **overwhelming** us.

- ✍ He sends his graces through **priests**, **real** men we can **relate** too.
- ✍ No more **thunder** and clouds of **fire and smoke**, as in the Old Testament.
- ✍ He **lowers** himself to our level, so he can **raise** us to **his** level.

The night before Pope John Paul II's funeral, Rome was filled with an estimated **5 million pilgrims** who had come for the funeral Mass.



- ✍ The city could barely hold them; **thousands and thousands** spent the night, literally, **in the streets**.
- ✍ Wherever they were gathered, **all over** the city, the **whole night through**, you could see **priests** hearing confessions in **makeshift, outdoor confessionals**, with signs around their necks or hanging from their chairs listing the **languages** they spoke.
- ✍ All night long God was **proving his love**, **gently** administering his mercy and guidance through confession.

The next morning, one of the morning shows **interviewed** one of these priests.

- ✍ He was tired, hungry, and unshaven, but his eyes were **glowing** with joy.
- ✍ They asked him what he had been doing all night.

- ✍ "Hearing confessions in the streets of Rome," he answered.
- ✍ "Old people?" they asked. "Some old, mostly young," he responded.
- ✍ The interviewer then asked, "We know that young people liked John Paul II because he was a **celebrity**. But why would they want to go to **confession**? Don't they all want to **change** the Church's teachings about sin anyway?"
- ✍ The priest **smiled** and said, "The only thing these kids want to change is **themselves**. And John Paul II reminded them that, with Christ's grace, they **can**. **That's** why they came to confession."
- ✍ The show cut immediately to a **commercial**.

This is the **gift** Christ left us all in the **priesthood**:

- ✍ a powerful, sacramental, living and breathing **help** along life's difficult path:
- ✍ a gift that both **proves** we are **loved**, and **strengthens** us **to love**.

Through the gift of Holy Orders:



- ✍ the priest is empowered to be the Sacramental Presence of Christ in the world
- ✍ he extends the power of Christ's victory into people's lives – here and now
- ✍ bringing them new life (in baptism), healing (in the anointing of the sick & reconciliation with God and His Church), empowering (through the special gift and power of the Holy Spirit), and nourishing (in the Eucharist).

But daily, the priest stands as a constant witness to the totality of God's love

- ✍ praying with and for the people entrusted to his care
- ✍ ministering to them in their needs and suffering
- ✍ rejoicing with them in their triumphs

At the Chrism Mass on Monday, the priests renew their priestly commitment as the Bishop asks them:

- ✍ At your ordination, you accepted the responsibilities of the priesthood out of love for the Lord Jesus and His Church. Are you resolved to unite yourself more closely to Christ and to try to become more like him by joyfully sacrificing your own pleasure and ambition to bring his peace and love to your brothers and sisters? I am.

- ✍ Are you resolved to be faithful ministers of the mysteries of God, to celebrate the Eucharist and the other liturgical services with sincere devotion? Are you resolved to imitate Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd of the Church, by teaching the Christian faith without thinking of your own profit, solely for the well-being of the people you were sent to serve? I am.



Then, addressing the people, the bishop says:

- ✍ My brothers and sisters, pray for your priests. Ask the Lord to bless them with the fullness of His love, to help them be faithful ministers of Christ the High Priest, so that they will be able to lead you to Him the fountain of your salvation.
- ✍ The people respond: “Lord Jesus Christ, hear us and answer our prayer.”

Pray for me! Continue to pray for me! Your prayers for me have sustained me these past 10 months as, alone, I tried to minister to God’s people – and your prayers have borne fruit as Bishop has assigned us another priest! But continue to pray for me! That I may truly be the Sacramental Presence of Christ in your midst.

## **APPLICATION: Doing What Jesus Asked**

Holy Thursday is the night Jesus **gave** us these great gifts (the Eucharist, the priesthood and the command of love).



This is the night when we **thank** him for them by **celebrating** this liturgy, and the rest of Holy Week, **sincerely and prayerfully**, from our hearts.

But let's also thank him by **doing what he told us to do**.

From the **dawn of civilization** until the birth of Jesus, fallen humanity had been **searching** for the way to satisfy the human soul's deepest needs.

Now Jesus has **shown us the way**.

- ✍ We **let him love us** with an eternal, unconditional love through **worthily** receiving the **sacraments**, and we in turn **love** by following his example, by **washing the feet of those around us**.
- ✍ We were **made** for that - for a love that isn't **self-indulgent**, but **self-giving!**

Imagine how different the world would be if **every Catholic** followed Christ's example, thinking first and foremost about making those **around** him happy.

- ✍ So much **family strife** would simply **disappear** if we each were **humble enough** to put ourselves in **third** place behind God and our family members.
- ✍ We would spread so much **peace of mind** if we dedicated ourselves to **work and study** without worrying about getting the **credit**, but simply doing our **very best** and helping those around us do the **same**.
- ✍ And imagine how much our society would be **transformed** if **every Catholic** started using more of their free time to **reach out to their neighbors in need**, instead of spending **so much** time, talent, and treasure coming up with more **titillating ways to entertain ourselves**.



Today we will thank Christ for the gifts that meet our **deepest needs**; (the Eucharist, the priesthood and the command of love). As the liturgy ends tonight, we place the Holy Eucharist in the repository, surrounded beautifully with candles and flowers.

But let's also place ourselves there – physically and spiritually – by **promising** to follow Christ more closely, and trusting in the power of his **grace** to help us **keep** that promise.

