

Wellspring

Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel reading of today's mass is from the beginning of the last discourse of Jesus on his new commandment (John 13:31-35). This excerpt will become meaningful if we read and reflect on the whole chapter, John 13:1-38 rather than just the reading prescribed for today's mass. Let us review the whole chapter.

Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. Great things happened during this meal. He had washed the feet of his disciples and called them to follow his example in gracious, humble and selfless service. Try to imagine this scene. You are sitting at the table with Jesus and his friends on the night before he died. A confusing sorrow overshadows you. Yet a mysterious hope has settled in your heart. Suddenly, Jesus is standing before you with a bowl of water in hand and apron around his waist. How amazing and awe inspiring it is to think of God in an apron with a bowl of water ready to wash your feet!!! Take a moment to meditate on it!

Jesus, the master and Lord, bent his knees before his disciples with a bowl of water and washed their feet. Take a moment and imagine him with an apron around his waist and a bowl of water in his hands, on his knees, before you, ready to wash your feet!!! We would feel more free and comfortable if we could trade places. We wouldn't mind kneeling before Jesus to wash his feet!! Peter wanted to trade places. But Jesus said to Peter that he must accept this "foot-washing" as essential to being with his master. Jesus then washed the feet of his disciples and called them to follow his example in gracious and self-sacrificing service. Today we are challenged to accept the cleansing, forgiving, healing and transforming power of "foot-washing" and offer it to one another in selfless service after the example of our master, Jesus.

Jesus also wanted the disciples to know that redeeming the world would cost him his life and that he was choosing death and that it was his chosen act of "surrender" to the will of his Father. Jesus was accepting death in fidelity, in loyalty, in love, and in total giving. And one of the disciples was going to betray him who loved and trusted!

Tension mounted among the twelve disciples as Jesus told them that one of them would betray him. Questions about who the betrayer was, suspicion of each other and many other factors created confusion. It is amazing to know how Jesus tried to help the disciples become aware of what was happening and what was going to happen to him. They just failed to understand. They were too preoccupied with themselves and their ambitions. Does it sound familiar?

Jesus made a final and special appeal to the heart of Judas. For the host to offer a special morsel from the dish was a sign of special friendship. When Jesus handed Judas Iscariot the “bit of food”, the “dipped morsel”, it was an offer of “special friendship”, a final appeal to the heart of Judas. But the heart of Judas was unmoved, full of greed, darkness, hate and didn’t see the light or the love that was offered. Judas left never to return! Jesus told Peter as he affirmed his loyalty to his master that even he would deny him (Jesus) “three times before the cock crowed.” This was a tough time for Jesus and his disciples.

Judas left, rejecting the love that Jesus offered (John 13:31-35, today’s Gospel reading). Jesus then told his disciples that they were to live and love as he did, “love one another as I have loved you.” The standard of life and love went far beyond what they had known. It was no longer, “an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth” or “treat others as they treat you” or “treat others as you wish to be treated” or “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” The standard of life and love for the disciples of Jesus became, “love one another as I have loved you”. The disciples were to love as the master loved - not as others love them, not as they wish to be loved and not as they love themselves, but as the master himself loved!

The master’s love was benevolent, unconditional, unconquerable, invincible, and steadfast. This is love without competition, comparison, control and discrimination. This is all embracing love, love of all people – the saint and the sinner, the rich and the poor, the proud and haughty, the humble and meek. This is sacrificial love, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” This is total giving without expecting a return. This is loving the other because of who you are – you are a disciple of Christ, you live in him – and not because of who the other is!

I am reminded of a poem by one of the greatest poets of India Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941),

“This is my prayer to thee, my Lord - strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.” (Tagore).

The poem gives us powerful words for reflection and prayer. They were the words and thoughts of Jesus nineteen centuries before Tagore. I want to encourage you to take a few moments to reflect on and praying to the Lord for filling the “penury (emptiness) in my heart,” for strength “to bear my joys and sorrows,” “to make my love fruitful in service,” “never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might,” “to raise my mind high above daily trifles,” and to surrender my strength to thy will with love.”

May your love transcend competition, control, jealousies, hatred and the like! May your love mature and become generous, selfless, sacrificial following the command of our master, Jesus!

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 15, 2022

**Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And he will be this all the more perfectly, the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.
(Pope John XXIII)**

Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Acts 14:21-27

Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town. Paul's disciples formed a circle around him and protected him.

Be grateful for your circle of friends! Help each other remain safe from all harm!

Like good pastors, Paul and Barnabas continued their missionary journey, instructing people and encouraging them to stand strong in the face of difficulties.

The Gospel of today reminds us that love is the quality and character of the disciples of Jesus. It is this love that moved Paul and Barnabas to carry the message of Jesus risking their lives.

Stay focused on your mission. Be faithful to your mission even when things don't turn out the way expect.

Psalm 145

This is a psalm composed for public worship. It is an acrostic (alphabetic) poem, the verses of which begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Psalm focuses primarily on God's compassion, especially for the underprivileged and depressed. It is a daily reminder of praising the unfathomable greatness of God, which goes beyond all our theologies, philosophies and doctrines. Verse 4 invites us to meditate on the wondrous acts of God and to pass on this memory to the future generations.

Verses 8-9 express the most basic faith of the O.T. about the very nature of God: "steadfast love", "compassion" all-embracing love, abundant love. Verses 9-10 – All God's works give thanks because of the "all-embracing love". The whole Psalm proclaims God's name: "Steadfast love"

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you.

Revelation 21:1-5

John tells us about his vision of the faithful, after sufferings have been endured, enjoying the eternal presence of God, where "God will wipe every tear from their eyes" and make all things new. He saw a "new heaven and a new earth". With this vision, he affirmed, "God's dwelling is with the human race".

Be mindful of the presence of God in your life!

John 13:31-35

Jesus and the disciples were around the Passover table. Tension mounted among the twelve disciples as Jesus told them that one of them would betray him. Questions about who the betrayer was, suspicion of each other...many such factors created confusion. It is amazing to know how Jesus tried to help the disciples become aware of what was happening and what was going to happen to him. They just failed to understand. They were too preoccupied with themselves and their ambitions.

Jesus made a final and special appeal to the heart of Judas. For the host to offer a special morsel from the dish was a sign of special friendship. When Jesus handed Judas Iscariot the "bit of food", the "dipped morsel", it was an offer of "special friendship", a final appeal to the heart. But the heart of Judas was unmoved, full of greed, darkness, hate and didn't see the light or the love that was offered. Judas left never to return!

Be alert! Stay awake! Be sensitive to those around you and their concerns, needs, struggles, etc. Learn to see beyond yourself! Listen to the heart of those around you! Be compassionate!

After Judas left, rejecting the love that was offered, Jesus told the disciples that they were to live and love as he did: “love one another as I have loved you”. The standard of life and love went far beyond what they had known. It was no more, “love your neighbor as yourself” ...it became, “love one another as I have loved you”.

The disciples were to love as the master loved...not as others love them, not as they wish to be loved and not as they love themselves, but as the master himself loved! This is unconditional love...love unconquerable, invincible. This is love without competition, comparison, control and discrimination.

This all-embracing love...the way God loves...love of all people, the rich and the poor, the proud and haughty, the humble and meek. This is self-sacrificing love, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”.

May your love transcend competition and control...May your love transcend ill feelings, jealousies, hatred, etc....May you reach out in selfless and generous service!

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, May 15 - Saint Isidore the Farmer and 18 other saints are remembered this day.

Isidore was born into a poor but very devout family in Madrid around the year 1070. He was named Isidore from the name of their patron, St. Isidore of Seville. When he was barely old enough to wield a hoe, Isidore entered the service of John de Vergas, a wealthy landowner from Madrid, and worked faithfully on his estate outside the city for the rest of his life.

He married a young woman as simple and upright as himself who also became a saint—Maria de la Cabeza. They had one son, who died as a child. Isidore had deep religious feelings and habits. He rose early in the morning to go to church and spent many a holiday devoutly visiting the churches of Madrid and surrounding areas. All day long, as he walked behind the plow, he communed with God. His devotion, one might say, became a problem, for his fellow workers sometimes complained that he often showed up late because of lingering in church too long.

He was known for his love of the poor and shared what he had, even his meals, with the poor. There are accounts of Isidore's supplying them miraculously with food. He had a great concern for the proper treatment of animals as well. He died on May 15, 1130 and was canonized a saint on March 12, 1622 with Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Teresa of Avila and Philip Neri.

Together, the group is known in Spain as "the five saints." Isidore has become the patron of farmers and rural communities. He is the patron of Madrid, Spain, and of the United States National Rural Life Conference.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Every Christian must be convinced of his fundamental
and vital duty of bearing witness to the truth
in which he believes and the grace that has transformed him.
(Pope John XXIII)**