

HOMILY HOLY THURSDAY

April 1, 2021

Go back with me, if you will, to last year at the end of February, the beginning of March. What was your life like then? I was in Florida getting a little winter break before Lent and Easter. It was there that I started hearing about this coronavirus. I was not sure what to make of this. It seemed to be a big deal, but there did not seem to be many cases in the United States, and maybe the news media was just making news, there wasn't much, but I was not sure. And I was not sure what to do about it.

I think that is where the Disciples were at that first Holy Thursday 2,000 years ago. The day started out like any other Passover. They spent the day preparing for the evening meal. I am sure they were looking forward to having the Passover meal together and it started off very normal. Then, Jesus decides to wash his disciples' feet. Now this was a dirty job as they walked with bare feet or open sandals on the same roads where the animals walked if you know what I mean. This job was required as part of hospitality, but it was normally done by servants. While it was unusual for Jesus to do this, Jesus frequently did things that were not expected of him and he wanted to make a point, so it was not out of character for him. Jesus knows that they are not going to get it. He tells them: "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." He also tells them: "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do." He also tells them, in the next verse, not included in the reading we just heard: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another." This is really important. I am not sure why the Church left this out when they

assigned the reading for today. The disciples may have thought something was up, but they had no idea what. But Jesus was teaching them the lessons they would need to move forward.

Shortly after I got back from Florida everything shut down. I never expected that and none of us knew what to do. We were not prepared for a worldwide pandemic. Many of our support systems were taken away from us. We were forced into isolation from many of the people we count on. We could no longer join together as a Parish family. We could no longer celebrate Mass and receive the Eucharist. However, I think the same way Jesus taught the first disciples to move through that first Good Friday and Easter season, he is still teaching us today. Look at the example Jesus gave us of how to love one another. He washed his disciples' feet, which was not a very pleasant job. He did that because it was what they needed at the time. And he did not do it just for his friends. Remember Judas was there, and Jesus knew that he had already sold him out.

That is how we are to love one another, and not just our family and friends but everyone we come in contact with. I want to suggest to you this evening that loving one another involves being kind to one another. Kindness is different from being nice. When we meet someone and ask them: "How are you?" And you get the socially acceptable response: "I am fine." That is nice but that is not particularly kind. To be kind, when you meet someone you should be thinking: "How can I help?" This involves really trying to see what the individual needs and being open to helping if you can. And we need to give that help when the individual needs help, not when it is convenient. And I cannot give you a list of things you should be doing as it is related to what they need. That is how we are going to get through this pandemic together.

And we need to be able to accept help from other people. How does Peter respond to Jesus' offer to wash his feet? "You will never wash my feet." How often do we refuse to accept help from others? We all have need for help during this pandemic and we need to accept help from others. We also need to offer to help when we can and not only for our friends and family and not only when we are asked. Many people will never ask. This has been a terrible time of isolation. Nothing is normal and COVID has made coping with life's challenges more difficult. But we are bright resilient people. We can find ways to be kind to one another even during a pandemic. Keep this question in your mind when you encounter people. "How can I help?"