

## HOMILY HOLY THURSDAY

April 17, 2025

There is no greater love says the Lord,  
than to lay down your life for a friend.

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I am very aware this Holy Thursday of the unconditional love that Jesus has for us. He loves us unconditionally just the way we are today. There is nothing we can do to make him love us any more and there is nothing we can do to make him love us any less. This unconditional love can be very empowering in our lives.

When we think about how Jesus suffered for us, we usually go right to the crucifixion. Not to minimize this great physical suffering, I think the emotional suffering he endured on that first Holy Thursday was at least as bad or worse. Look at what happened. Jesus was betrayed by the 12 apostles, his closest friends. These were the 12 men that he lived with and ministered with for three years. There is nothing worse emotionally than being betrayed by a close friend. Jesus was aware of the betrayal from the beginning of the Last Supper. Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Peter was to deny knowing Jesus three times. All of the disciples hid in the upper room while Jesus was on the road to Calvary. Do you think Jesus forgave them? Jesus washed all of their feet. And that was a dirty business. In those days, there were no cars or Ubers, or buses in fact there were no paved roads. People walked on dirt roads with open sandals or bare feet, the same roads that animals walked on. You can only imagine what that was like when it rained. Their feet were dirty. Foot washing was allocated to slaves, but Jesus washed the feet of his best friends whom he knew would betray him. And

when Jesus went to wash Peter's feet, Peter did not want to let him do that. He did not want Jesus to serve him but it seems like he was unaware of how Jesus had been serving him for the last three years. This was Peter, the rock upon whom Jesus was to build his church, and he still did not get what Jesus was teaching. That must have been disappointing to Jesus. Jesus worried about what would happen to the disciples after he was murdered and after he went home to his Father. Jesus knew that the disciples would need him to be with them physically to sustain them, so he gave those sinners the Eucharist. He gave us sinners the Eucharist. And after the Last Supper, when Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane and asked the disciples to pray with him, they slept. At that point Jesus could have disappeared into the hills never to be seen again to stop the suffering. How many of us would have done just that? But Jesus stayed and loved us unconditionally. If he would have disappeared into the hills, we would not be here today, we would not be saved. Jesus has this unconditional love for us. This love empowers us to love him and to love others as we love ourselves.

During Lent, we have been focusing upon relationships, service and faith, the three pillars of a successful life, a life of meaning, purpose and fulfillment in this world and the next. The relatively new area of positive psychology presents this as new, and it is supported by evidence based research. But, maybe it is nothing new. Maybe it is what Jesus has been teaching us for the past 2,000 years by word and example. To love one another through our relationships, to show our love through service, and to have faith in Jesus as we walk our spiritual journey. Not only is it the right thing to do, our lives are happier if we do it. Jesus suffered greatly because of his unconditional love for us? What are we willing to do to love God and love one another?