

Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: Love and Do As You Will

Love, and do what you will. This directive comes from St. Augustine of Hippo. It is often misinterpreted. It is from a sermon Augustine gave on 1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God." When Augustine said, "Love and do as you will," he meant that we need to be so fully united in love with God, that no matter what we were to do, it would be an expression of our love for God.

Jesus loved, and did what He willed. He was so united with God His Father and our Father, that His actions gave us a glimpse, only a glimpse mind you, but a glimpse of the depth of His love.

He washed the feet of His disciples. He loved His Father so closely, that He humbled Himself to serve those whom His Father had chosen to spread His Kingdom. He emptied Himself. A slave could not be forced to wash someone's feet. That was an action so despicable that a master could not require his slave to wash his feet. But Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. It was an expression of His love for the Father. It was a message to His disciples. Jesus would empty Himself for them, for mankind. He would accept the humiliation of the cross, for that act of service would restore life to God's loved ones.

He told his disciples to do what He had done. **Mandatum!** He told them to wash the feet of others as an expression of their love for God. Throughout history, the saints, canonized and not canonized, washed the feet of others as their way of loving God. Perhaps the clearest and most recent example of this was the saint of our lifetime, St. Teresa of Calcutta. Mother Teresa cared for the poorest of the poor because she loved God. She washed the sores of lepers because it was clear to her that she needed to do this to express her love for the Father. She was not concerned about whether those she cared for were Christian or Hindi or Moslem, she was excited that in each of the people she served she was loving God.

How many of us have performed rather difficult tasks out of love for God? This has been part of the life of everyone here. A good example is changing dirty diapers. You have done this or still do this not just out of love for your child, you do this out of love for God who gave you this child.

Mandatum! We are called to love God with our whole heart, our whole mind and our whole soul. We are called to serve others not just as a humanitarian act, not just to better the world, but to serve the presence of God in those whom He created in His Image and Likeness.

Many people ask, as Judas asked, "What's in it for me?" Many people will only do that which gives them gratification. Jesus was not concerned with that. He was not concerned with what was in it for Him. He was only concerned with loving His Father. "What you have seen me do, you must do." **Mandatum!** If we are concerned with our

love for God, then our actions will be an expression of this love.

Love and do what you will. He took bread and said, "This is my Body." He took wine and said, "This is my blood." And He gave it to them. The union of the Son with the Father, the Union that itself is God the Spirit, that union of love compelled Him to give Himself totally to His disciples. He instituted the Eucharist, as a new expression not just of the Passover, but an expression of the new relationship God would have with his people. "This is the blood of the New Covenant." It is the Blood of the new relationship with God, the new life with God. The Last Supper was really the First Supper as the covenant is renewed every time we celebrate Mass.

The Eucharist is flesh. The Eucharist is Blood. It is the Gift of Jesus on the cross, emptying Himself for all eternity, loving His Father in a way we could never have imagined. Flesh and Blood are broken and shed for us. It is Jesus' way of loving us. It is His way of loving His Father.

Love and do as you want. When we are united to the Lord in the Eucharist, when we receive communion, we are united to the Lord loving His Father and loving His people. United in love, we are compelled to give ourselves for others. The *Mandatum* is a mandate to love.

We celebrate this love tonight by adding two particularly beautiful symbolic actions to our liturgy. We wash the feet of 12 parishioners. This is just an action that proclaims that those who wish to establish and to serve the Kingdom of God, must empty themselves, giving themselves totally to God in service of others.

After communion we celebrate another symbolic action. We process with the Blessed Sacrament through the Church and from the Church to the chapel. The symbolism is a return to the events that followed the Last Supper. Jesus left the Upper Room and went across the Kidron Valley to Gethsemane, to the Garden of Olives. There He prayed to His Father that He might complete the act of love He knew He was called upon to do. He felt the horrors of his imminent suffering and death. He prayed that this cup of suffering be taken from Him, But He was determined to do whatever the will of the Father was calling Him to accomplish. In our own symbolic recreation of the Garden of Olives, we pray before the Lord that we have the courage to fulfill our *mandatum*, the particular mission the Lord calls us to complete.

So we pray tonight for the faith and the courage to love and do as we will.