

Holy Thursday..... 4/2/15

- 38 years ago today I stood before Bp. Donovan and he imposed hands upon me to ordain me as a deacon. For us in seminary, this was the point when we made our commitment to permanent celibacy.
- But the central commitment of a deacon is to be of service to God's people. That's true of permanent and transitional deacons alike. I did not lose that call when I was ordained a priest 14 months later.
- In a real sense, the deacon is an "icon" of what all followers of Jesus are supposed to be. And today's gospel makes that clear. Jesus literally gets down on his knees and does the work of a servant. He washes feet. He washes the feet of those who would be regarded as his servants.
- Pope Francis has taken that call seriously. A few weeks after being made Pope, on Holy Thursday, he washed feet. Other Popes have done that. But he washed the feet of inmates in a Rome prison. Some were not Catholic; one was even a Muslim.
- He was criticized in some circles for this. It was not "appropriate liturgy" for the Sacred Triduum. He could visit the prison another time, they said. But he has continued to be that servant Jesus was, even inviting local homeless people to tour the Sistine Chapel.
- He's also called us priests to get out of our offices and among the people. No less than Jesus, he expects those who would follow the Lord to get out and "wash each other's feet," so to speak.
- We come here tonight to commemorate what Jesus did on the night before he died, sharing his body and blood with us. In this Eucharist, we partake of Jesus himself, the one who poured out his life for us.
- When we do this, we are challenged to share ourselves with those in need around us. This Tuesday Bp. Thomas quoted Pope Francis, who said that we should be "unction" for others, and not hide behind our function.

-- In other words, we are challenged to bring healing to our part of the world, whether that be in our families, our communities, our neighborhoods, or our Church.

-- We are not just functionaries, doing a particular "job." I am not simply a dispenser of the Eucharist. I am expected to be a sign of God's presence and one who gives thanks for God's gifts to me and his people.

-- That's a challenge, and I do not always live up to it adequately. But I'm expected to try. And so are we all. We are not just mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, teachers, public servants, workers. We are signs of God's presence and God's service to all, especially the poor and weak.

-- That specific call enshrined in the diaconate has been mine for 38 years. That's about 70% of my lifetime at present. But God expects more than a 70% effort from me—he expects 100%.

-- When I receive the Eucharist...when you receive the Eucharist...we commit ourselves to that 100% effort. For Jesus Christ gave 100% of himself for us. He gave us his life...he gave us his very body and blood.