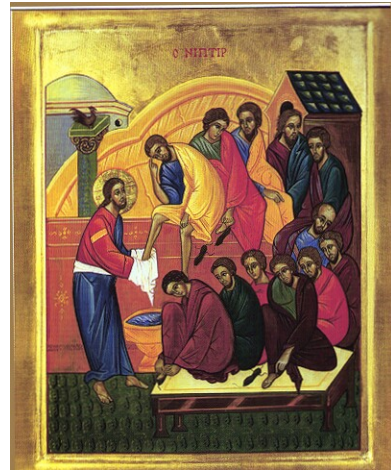


Holy Thursday, 2008

“If I do not wash you, you will have no part with Me.”
(John 13:8)

On this night we are obliged by the Church to speak of the most powerful mystery that is celebrated: the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, Sacrament and Sacrifice; of the Sacrament of the Sacrament of the Sacred Priesthood; and Christ's washing the feet of the Apostles as signifying fraternal charity.



Pope Benedict in his homily made the meaning of the washing of the feet very clear — the forty days of Lent are a time of spiritual cleansing of the soul through which the love of God grows in our hearts; a time in which we examine our consciences and frequently confess our sins so that our souls be as pure as possible for following Christ. Uniting all our sufferings with Him in His Agony in the Garden, throughout His trial and condemnation, the painful journey carrying His own Cross to Calvary; His final agonising death; his poor and lonely funeral to the sepulchre — and in that way to be able to share the fullness of the joy and blessings of His glorious rising from the dead. His warning to Peter, the prince of the Apostles, should echo in our own hearts at this time. And the sad happenings of this night are indeed a warning in themselves.

It was such a joy for me to hear a good Franciscan priest yesterday refer to “Spy Wednesday”. As school-children we always remembered it and talked about it with not a little excitement every year at this time. It was the day that Judas went to the Chief priests and Elders to ask what price they would pay if he betrayed Jesus into their hands. It was with those dark plans in his heart that he, one of the twelve, sat at the supper of this sacred night and with the others was ordained in the newly instituted sacred priesthood and took part in the first Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: and he heard those words to Peter; and he allowed Jesus to wash his feet; a lesson to all of us of how a state of sin can become a serious spiritual condition bringing a darkness upon the soul that destroys any unity with the perfect love and mercy of our Redeemer.

Let us seek that closeness to Christ that is made possible by the love He pours out upon us through the most powerful mystery of the sacrifice of the Mass and our becoming one with Him in Holy Communion — a union that we must make perfect by desiring to suffer and die with Him when the time comes for our departure from this earthly life. In the short time of adoration at the Altar of Repose, let our minds turn to the mother of sorrows; she did not know what this night was to bring to her beloved Son whom she adored as her God; but she, the “handmaid of the Lord”, remained serene and strong in faith though overwhelmed with sorrow; ready to go to

Him to when the Holy Spirit called, to be one in heart and mind and perfect love with all the pains and humiliation that He was to suffer, for our salvation and the glory of His Church.