

Experience of passivity as a moment of true repentance

Commentary on Maundy Thursday by Sr. Danièle Faltz (9.4.2020)

In these weeks we have got a feel for what service to people and dedication can mean in its fulness. So, we have a crucial key to a deeper understanding of Maundy Thursday.

Jesus faces death. Because he loves people and loves them to perfection, he fulfils the service of slaves of washing feet. In doing so, he sends a sign: "As I have done, so do me." In the sign of washing the feet, Jesus anticipates what is accomplished on the cross. And that is exactly what happens in the signs of bread and wine: Jesus makes himself completely available, he holds back nothing of his being, he wants to be food for us, he wants to fill us with his life, he wants to be one with us. In both signs he gives himself entirely out of love.

It is certainly not difficult to recognise love and devotion in the service that is actually being carried out. Spontaneously you can give examples, countless examples from the past few weeks.

Understanding the Eucharist as food for our life, as indispensable food, is a little more difficult. Perhaps the – the current, necessarily imposed, waiver of participation in the Holy Mass will help us to feel something of this indispensability. What you can't or shouldn't have in general becomes all the more desirable and increases your longing for it.

Peter plays an important role in the foot washing account. When Jesus comes to him and wants to wash his feet, he defends himself violently. He cannot allow his Lord and Master to kneel before him, the disciple, to do this slave service.

All sick and elderly people who rely on the help of others every day can empathise with this. They know how much humility it takes to be dependent and accept help. They certainly understand Peter: he was an active person; his master shouldn't ask him to serve him.

Perhaps some of us have had to practise this humility in the past few weeks: either because we were sick ourselves or even because we could not help because we were not able to be active. It is also integral to humility to admit that in this crisis I am completely powerless, unable to offer relief. I am even forbidden to visit elderly or sick people. The only thing that is expected of me is to stay at home.

The experience of this passivity that many of us experience and suffer during these weeks may also help us to better understand the secret of our faith. It could be a moment of real conversion: God is in the service of man and not the other way around. It is not I who is important, it is not I who has to please God, it is not I whose service in the church is essential, I am not the salvation of people, but God - and God alone.

So this special Maundy Thursday - without physical participation in the Eucharist - could make us ready to let God act on us, to open ourselves up to him, to focus our entire efforts on accepting and living his love in us. Let what he wants for us happen to us. And be thankful that Eucharist means "to say thank you"

Source: Luxemburger Wort

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