



The Holy See

MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Paliano House of Detention (Frosinone)

Holy Thursday, 13 April 2017

[Multimedia]

Jesus was having supper with them, the Last Supper, and as the Gospel says, he “knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father” (Jn 13:1). He knew he had been betrayed and that he would be handed over by Judas that very night. “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (*ibid.*). This is how God loves: to the end. He gives His life up for each one of us, and he is proud of this and wants to do this because He has love”; “to love to the end”. It is not easy because we are all sinners. We all have shortcomings, defects, many things. We all know how to love but we are not like God who loves without thinking of the consequences; to the end. And he gives an example. To show this, He who was the “boss”, who was God, washed his disciples’ feet. It was a custom of that time to wash feet before lunch and supper because there was no asphalt and people walked about in the dust. Therefore, one of the gestures to receive someone at home, also for a meal, was to wash their feet. This was done by slaves, those who were enslaved. But Jesus overturns this and does this Himself. Simon did not want him to do it, but Jesus explained that it was so, that he had come into the world to serve, to serve us, to make himself a slave for us, to give his life for us, to love until the end.

Today, as I was arriving, there were many people on the street who were hailing [my arrival]; “the Pope is coming, the boss. The head of the Church...”. The head of the Church is Jesus, no joking around! The Pope represents Jesus and I would like to do the same as He did. In this ceremony, the parish priest washes the feet of the faithful. There is a reversal of roles. The one who appears to be the greatest must do the work of the slave in order to sow love; to sow love among us. I do not say to you today to go and wash each other’s feet. That would be a joke. But the symbol, the example yes: I would say that if you can offer some help, provide a service here in prison to your companion, do so.

Because this is love. This is the way to wash feet; it is being at the service of others. Once, the disciples were arguing amongst themselves as to who was the greatest, the most important one. And Jesus said: "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves". And this is what He did. This is what God does with us. He serves us. He is the servant. All of us who are "poor things". Everyone! But he is great. He is good. And he loves us as we are. For this reason, let us think about God, about Jesus, during the ceremony. It is not a ceremony of folklore. It is a gesture to remember what Jesus gave. Following this, he took bread and he gave us His body. He took wine and he gave us His blood. This is how God's love is. Today, let us only think of God's love.