

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Each year when we recall Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples, my mind springs back to my youth. When I was real young, maybe about the age of our soon-to-be First Communicants here, we really loved Saturday mornings in our house. Saturday was the only day my Dad was home and able to sleep late. Late probably meant about 8:00 o'clock. My Mom would be up making breakfast and me and my sisters would sneak into their bedroom, thinking Dad was still asleep. We would whoop and holler and jump on him. He would sit up real fast and let out a mighty roar, scaring us more than we tried to scare him. After giving all of us bear hugs and throwing us up in the air, he would ask, "Well, do you love me?" Each of us would say, "Yeah, Daddy, I love you!" He would then say, "Prove it! Kiss my feet!" We would go Uuu! and Uug! But, he would say, "If you don't kiss my feet, you don't really love me." So, each of us in turn, would climb down off the bed, and get in line to kiss Daddy's feet. Then, we would all jump back up in the bed and the bear hugs and tossing us around would continue until our Mom called us to breakfast.

Tonight as we remember and re-enact how Jesus washed and kissed the feet of his disciples, not only to show them how much he loved them, but to give them a lesson in how they were, and how we are, to love one another. We need to show our love for each other in actions as simple and humble as washing and kissing feet. My Dad put a little different twist on the foot-kissing thing, but he taught us that it was important to show that real love demands something more than mere words. Real love demands outward signs or actions.

In a couple of minutes, Deacon Gene and I, as the leaders of our Church Family, will wash and kiss the feet of our First Communicants, who will represent our whole parish, This is our way of saying to all of you that we love you, and as we love you, that's how Jesus wants all of us to have the same love for each other.

Tonight, we also celebrate Jesus loving us so much that he gives himself to us by changing bread and wine into His Body and Blood so that he can always be with us in the gift of the Eucharist, and we never, ever have to be afraid of being alone. And we celebrate too tonight the gift of the holy priesthood, through which He gives to the Church in people as weak and sinful as me the power to make Him really present to His disciples, whenever we come together to celebrate Eucharist in memory of him.

All of these gifts that Jesus gives us that we celebrate tonight: the example of his washing and kissing the feet of his disciples; the Holy Eucharist; and the Sacred Priesthood are God's way of saying to each and every one of us, and all of his people, "I love you!" All he asks of us, in return, is for us to say back to him, "I love you too!", and to show that love is real by our loving one another. Such is the awesomeness of God's love for us! Our action in this Mass is the way in which he has given us the outward sign by which we can say, "Yes, Lord, we love you too!" and then making it real in all the ways we love each other when we walk outside this Church tonight.