



MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE WASHING OF THE FEET

Fr. Z's thoughts on the Mass of the Lord's Supper and the Washing of the Feet:

The Latin rubrics for the foot washing rite has words *virii selecti*, "chosen men". *Vir* means "a male person". The mighty Lewis & Short Dictionary say *vir* is "a male person, a man (opp. *femina*; cf. *mas*)."

If you have been properly informed about this, to insist that "men" (*virii*) means "men and women" is really to lie. *Homo* or plural *homines* might be argued to be of both sexes, but absolutely not *vir*.

If you have been informed that *vir* means only "men" and that excludes boys or youths, then you were probably misinformed.

Vir refers to a person's sex, not his age. There are specific Latin words to indicate categories of age in males, such as *puer*, *adolescens*, *iuvenis* and *senex*.

The word *vir* can tempt a strict interpretation of "man" in the sense of "adult male", but that would be too strict. Also, while clearly the Apostles were men, not boys or youths, the point is that they were "male", not that they were this age or that age. The Apostles were present in the Upper Room because they were chosen by Christ to be priests. And there is only a juridical, not an ontological, limitation on the age a male can be ordained.

Solutions

First, let it be remembered that the foot-washing thing during Holy Thursday's Mass of the Last Supper is an optional rite within the Mass of Holy Thursday. Many problems (and violations of law and good taste and common sense) could be avoided by choosing NOT to do it. All manner of absurdities are inflicted on God's people because of this option.

Second, let it be remembered that the Church's legislation allows for the washing of the feet of only men. MEN = VIRI = MEN. Even if some claim to have received permission to wash the feet of women, and even if the claims were true, those permissions would in no way change the law for the rest of the world. Period. Furthermore, I have never seen a letter or a copy of a letter from the Congregation in Rome granting such a permission. I doubt anyone else has either.

Third, the rite of washing of the feet of men harks to Christ washing the feet of the Apostles... not just the feet of anyone out there in the highways and byways.

Finally, Dr. Edward Peters [well known Canon Lawyer] would like to see this rite moved out of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and into the Holy Thursday Chrism Mass. An interesting idea.

-Father John Zuhlsdorf

Dr. Peters solution is a very interesting one considering the true meaning and origin behind the rite. The rite which was only brought into the Mass in the last 60 years has its strongest meaning between a superior and those who are subject to him. For example, in the rule of St. Benedict a visitor is to have the washing rite carried out by the Abbot on their first visit. Traditionally, before this rite was in the Mass, it was carried out later in the evening, in the chapter room of a religious community where the superior would wash the feet of those who are subject to his authority.

If this rite would be added to the Chrism Mass then the one who would be washing the feet would be the bishop who could choose those who have promised him obedience to be the ones to represent the apostles. In a parish setting, the faithful do not fall under the same kind of obedience as we would distinguish between bishop and lesser clerics or abbots and their monks.

Have a blessed Holy Week.

-Father Murphy



THE POWER OF CHRIST'S BLOOD

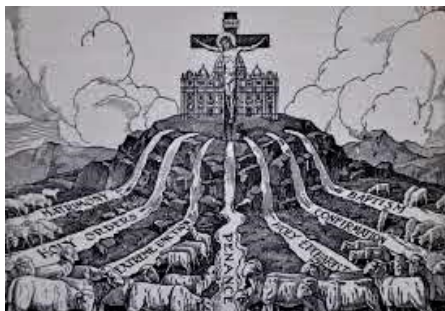
If we wish to understand the power of Christ's blood we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. *Sacrifice a lamb without blemish*, commanded Moses, and *sprinkle its blood on your doors*. If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord's blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so how much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master's side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of Baptism and the blood, of the Holy Eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord's side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasurer and made it my own. So also with the lamb: The Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

There flowed from his side water and blood. Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from Baptism, *the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit*, and from the Holy Eucharist. Since the symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: *Bone of my bones and flesh from my flesh!* As God then took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

Do you understand then how Christ united his bride to himself and what food he gives all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those who he himself has given life.

From *Christian Prayer*, Reading 12 from Office of Readings is a suggested Holy Week reading. It was written by John Chrysostom, an important Early Church Father.



THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

by Dan Burke

O Jesus Crucified, teach me the science of the Cross; make me understand the value of suffering.

The Passion of Jesus teaches us in a concrete way that in the Christian life we must be able to accept suffering for the love of God. This is a hard, repugnant lesson for our nature, which prefers pleasure and happiness; however, it comes from Jesus, the Teacher of truth and of life, the loving Teacher of our souls, who desires only our real good. If He commends suffering to us, it is because suffering contains a great treasure.



Suffering in itself is an evil and cannot be agreeable; if Jesus willed to embrace it in all its plenitude and if He offers it to us, inviting us to esteem and love it, it is only in view of a superior good which cannot be attained by any other means—the sublime good of the redemption and the sanctification of our souls.

Although man, by his twofold nature, is subject to suffering, God willed to exempt our first parents from it by their preternatural gifts; but through sin, these gifts were lost forever, and suffering inevitably entered our life. The gamut of sufferings which has harassed humanity is the direct outcome of the disorder caused by sin, not only by original sin, but also by actual sins.

Yet the Church chants: *O happy fault!* Why? The answer lies in the infinite love of God which transforms everything and draws from the double evil of sin and suffering the great good of the redemption of the human race. When Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind, He also assumed their consequences, that is, suffering and death; and this suffering, embraced by Him during His whole life, and especially in His Passion, became the instrument of our redemption. Pain, the result of sin, becomes in Jesus and with Jesus, the means of destroying sin itself. Thus a Christian may not consider pain only as an undesirable burden from which he must necessarily recoil, but he must see in it much more—a means of redemption and sanctification.

"O Lord, You do not like to make us suffer, but You know it is the only way to prepare us to know You as You know Yourself, to prepare us to become like You. You know well that if You sent me but a shadow of earthly happiness, I should cling to it with all the intense ardor of my heart, and so You refuse me even this shadow ... because You wish that my heart be wholly Yours.

"I am happy not to be free from suffering here; suffering united with love is the only thing that seems desirable to me in this vale of tears" (Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Letters, 32,50,23,40,58,224 – Story of a Soul).

Read more: <http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/2014/04/07/value-of-suffering>