



## Homily - Mass on Holy Thursday

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral  
Thursday, 2 April 2015

*Readings:* Exodus 12:1-8,11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

In St Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul tells his readers that they must have in them the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. He then goes on to speak of Jesus as the one who, though He was in the form of God, did not count His equality with God a thing to be held on to jealously. Rather, He humbled Himself, says Paul, even to the point of death.

To have the mind of Jesus: perhaps there is no better description than this of the fundamental identity and vocation of every Christian person. Our Christian faith, before it is a set of rules to obey or a set of teachings to believe, is all about a person, Jesus, whom we are invited to know, to love, to follow and to serve. St Paul was convinced that in doing this – in knowing, loving, following and serving Christ – we will find the way to a fullness of life and love that we could otherwise never hope to know. Christians are called to listen carefully and to trust the words of Jesus when He says, *"I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life"*.

While every page of the Gospels shines light on the mystery of Jesus, tonight's liturgy, and the scripture readings which are a part of it, speak particularly powerfully and clearly of the mind of Jesus. Tonight, and in these days of our Easter Triduum, we see more clearly than at any other time what it means to have the mind and, I would add, the heart of Jesus.

*He got up from the table, removed His outer garment and taking a towel wrapped it round His waist. He then poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet... "Do you understand," he said, "what I have done to you? If I have washed your feet you should wash each other's feet."*

As we see Jesus on His knees washing the feet of His disciples, on the very night on which He knows that He is facing death, we see a man overwhelmed by love, by humility, and by a profound desire to be of service to those whom He loves. We see a man who is deeply aware of who He is, and as deeply aware that it is because He is who He is that He must be on His knees washing His disciples' feet. This is not a man who demands that He be treated with deference, with honours, with respect for His exalted position. This is a man who knows that the most human, and most divine, thing we can do for each other is to serve each other in love.

Tonight, of course, we don't only see Jesus on His knees. We also see Him seated at the table, sharing a last meal with His disciples. What John's Gospel says of Jesus in relation to His washing of His disciples' feet – that He loved His own and showed how perfect His love was –



we must also say of this other scene. Jesus knew that His hour had come – He knew that He faced death – and He knew that this death was to be His last and greatest gift to His disciples. It was the gift of His fidelity and His love, both to His Father in heaven and to His disciples and all who would follow them. And because, in the mystery of God's plan, His death was to bring the gift of life, Jesus wanted to draw His own into the very same mystery – so that, in entering into the mystery of His death, they might enter into the mystery of His life. *“Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes,”* says Paul.

Yes, we proclaim His death but, in doing so, we also proclaim the new life He brings. *“I am offering my body and my blood – my life – to be broken and spilled for many so that they may have life. Do this in memory of me. Unite yourself to me in my Eucharist, so that you too, in the strength of my love and my presence within you, will be able to offer your body and your blood – your life – so that many might have life.”*

This is the secret of the Eucharist: that it offers to us a communion, an intimacy with Jesus which is so profound that we become one with Him. His life flows into us and works a miracle of healing and transformation. We begin to see as He sees, and hear as He hears, and understand as He understands and love as He loves. It is not magic, and can only happen if we are open to this healing and transforming power, but because of the Eucharist, the Lord's gift of Himself to us, this “impossible dream” that we might be fully and freely all that God has created us to be, becomes not an impossible dream but a real and accessible reality, if we want it to be. We can become one with Jesus, we can live the same depth of life and love He lived, we can be shaped by Him into the person He created us to be – if we want to be and are prepared to allow Him to do this for us.

This evening, Jesus is saying to us: *“Be servants and life-givers to and for others as I am the life-giver. Let me fill you with my life so that, in you, I may continue to be a life-giver for the world”*. This is what St Paul means when he says to us: *“You must have in you the same mind that was in Christ Jesus”*.

In our liturgy this evening, the Lord reveals Himself to us as the humble and generous servant whose love impels Him to make His whole life, and His death, a gift for the life of the world. As His disciples, as His brothers and sisters, as His friends, we are called, even dared, to allow ourselves to be drawn into Him, so that He, the humble foot-washer who gives His life away for others, may continue to be, also through us, the saving presence of God in our lives and in the life of our world.