

St. Philip the Apostle

Roman Catholic Church



Thursday, May 4, 2023

-- Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

-- Fr. Sherdel's Morning Mass Intention: ***William Sheaffer***

First Reading: Acts 13:13-25

From Paphos, Paul and his companions set sail and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. But John left them and returned to Jerusalem. They continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered into the synagogue and took their seats. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue officials sent word to them, "My brothers, if one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

So Paul got up, motioned with his hand, and said, "Fellow children of Israel and you others who are God-fearing, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out, and for about forty years he put up with them in the desert. When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance at the end of about four hundred and fifty years. After these things he provided judges up to Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king. God gave them Saul, son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. Then he removed him and raised up David as their king; of him he testified, I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish. From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'"

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:2-3, 21-22, 25, 27

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

The favors of the Lord I will sing forever;
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever";
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. ***R/.***

"I have found David, my servant;
with my holy oil I have anointed him,
That my hand may be always with him,
and that my arm may make him strong." ***R/.***

"My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him,
and through my name shall his horn be exalted.
He shall say of me, 'You are my father,
my God, the Rock, my savior.'" ***R/.***

Gospel: John 13:16-20

When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Reflection

If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. (John 13:17)

Why did Jesus wash the feet of the apostles on the night before he died? That task was reserved for slaves — and the apostles' feet were probably no dirtier on that night than on any other.

The answer lies with Jesus himself. Though he is more than a prophet, his foot washing was a prophetic action in the tradition of some of the great Old Testament prophets. Consider, for example, Hosea, who married an unfaithful woman to symbolize God's faithfulness to Israel (1:1-2). Or Ezekiel, who cut off his beard with a sword to signify the exile of his people (5:1-4). Or Jeremiah, who smashed a clay pot to illustrate Judah's fate if they persisted in sin (19:1-15). Their actions spoke volumes to the people they were meant for — often far more than their words.

Jesus' washing of the apostles' feet speaks volumes to us as well. It tells us that he, the Lord of the universe, came to serve and not to be served. It also tells us that he expected his disciples to follow his example and become servants, too. And they did, proclaiming the good news of salvation far and wide, even at the cost of their lives.

Whose feet are you washing today? Maybe you are a parent of small children, and your day is filled with acts of service — even literally washing your child's feet! Maybe you serve at your parish, scheduling lectors or bringing Communion to the sick. Maybe you aren't able to leave your home very often, so you spend your time interceding for the needs of your family or the world. In all of these ways, you are doing what Jesus commanded. You are washing people's feet!

For Christians, service is a way of life. It's the way God wants us to approach the world: paying attention to the needs around us and trying to meet them. It's also a privilege because we are imitating our Master. So on those days when you are tired of serving, when you can't seem to take even a small break, picture Jesus kneeling down to wash the feet of his apostles. Let his example give you the strength to keep on serving in any way the Lord is calling you.

Jesus, I want to serve your people today. Give me the grace to do it.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan,
and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls.
Amen.