

Holy Thursday 2020

It was reported on the ABC Evening News today that the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City was being transformed into a temporary hospital to treat COVID-19 patients. When asked what he would want the those to be admitted to know, the rector of the Cathedral replied, "That they would be prayed for and that they will be cared for."

That Cathedral-hospital represents so much of what our faith calls us to be, in both the best and the worst of times. Pope Francis often speaks of the Christian community-the church- as a kind of "field hospital" for humanity, bringing nourishment and healing to both body and soul.

On Holy Thursday, we commemorate Christ's Last Supper with his disciples, the evening before his execution on a cross. During that meal, Jesus identified the broken bread and chalice of poured-out wine with his very self. Then taking the menial task of a servant, he washed the dirty, imperfectly shaped feet of his beloved students.

In the face of impending death, with his mortality breathing down his neck, Jesus teaches us what ultimately counts: that we will have fed the deepest hungers of the soul, that we will have compassionately served one another, lifting each other up, even unto our last breaths; that we would have loved, as he did, even unto the end.

Some seek a legacy of fame, prestige, of "really having made a statement," or filled the "bucket list." Nothing of that is terribly bad. But the Christian path is a different one. And, it bestows a different legacy: "They knew that they were prayed for and they were cared for."

"THEY" are found in New York and in our town. "They" are in our families and newly-arrived from other lands. "They" have the jobs that people dream of having as well as the ones nobody wants. "They" are the folks who have perfect feet and a "perfect" everything else in their lives. And "they" are the ones who are painfully aware that nothing much in their lives or anywhere else ever was, and ever will be perfect.

When we abandon this mission, we betray Christ, as Judas betrayed his teacher and friend. Sadly, human history is punctuated with moments when the students of Jesus have served their legacy "the kiss" of betrayal.

"May 'they' be prayed for and cared for." Although our Holy Thursday will be unconventional, may our resolve be undeterred.

+ We will celebrate the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper at 5:00 pm on Holy Thursday. In light of the health emergency, the Mass is closed to the public. Nonetheless, we ask everyone to be joined with us in prayer at this time.