

“He loved them to the end.” This is how Jesus’ mission would be completed. And how did he show this? By taking the role of the servant.

Now the role of the servant doesn’t really exist in society today. In the past some people had servants.

Today no one would say that their job is to be a servant. Today we have independent contractors. Independent contractors are their own boss. They know who they are because the people who pay them send them a 1099 at the end of the year.

The whole idea of being a servant is, well, just wrong. It’s so not democratic. It’s so not free market. It’s so not cool. It so doesn’t make sense.

But in other ways we expect things to follow orders. My Blackberry is to follow my orders. My laptop is to follow my orders. These things don’t have feelings and don’t get to decide whether or not they want to do what I want them to do.

Is Jesus saying love is like that? Now that doesn’t make sense. Isn’t love about feelings?

Actually Jesus is saying that there is a lot feeling when it comes to love; but we cannot be independent contractors. We do not get to choose who we love and to choose who we do not love.

Well this takes all the fun out of love, doesn’t it?

Doesn’t love which include excitement and glamour and fun. Isn’t that what we want?

But then underneath all of that is the idea that love is quid pro quo. You give me this and I’ll give you that. It’s bartering. It’s an arrangement. And at the end I hope to come out with at least just as much as I have given.

But then isn’t that how relationships get all messed up? We have to admit that sometimes in our lives we have actually needed more than we could ever give back. That’s embarrassing.

But I think Jesus is saying that’s O.K. And it’s alright to approach love a different way.

God loves because that’s just what God does. God doesn’t pick and choose who to love because real love doesn’t do that. And God *is* love.

Things get all mixed up when we think love is our servant. No. *We* are to be servants of love.

It is no accident that the night the Eucharist was instituted Jesus makes this point about love. He wasn't just killing two birds with one stone before, well, he was killed. Jesus was never about efficiency. But Jesus is always about efficacy. What's efficacy? It's the power to produce an effect.

There is an efficacy in the Eucharist. It has the power to produce one effect: Love. Jesus loved his own to the end.

Before celebrating the last Passover with his disciples, Jesus *washed their feet*. With an act that was normally done by a servant, he wanted to impress upon the disciples minds a sense of what was about to take place.

Indeed, *his passion and death* constitute the fundamental *loving service* through which the Son of God sets humanity free from sin.

At the same time, Christ's passion and death reveal the profound meaning of the new commandment that he entrusted to the disciples: "*even as I have loved you, that you also love one another*" (Jn 13: 34).

And on that same night he gave his disciples and he gave you and me the Eucharist. "*Do this in remembrance of me*".

Christians, therefore, know that they must "remember" their Teacher by "washing one another's feet"; by becoming a servant of love.

And they know that they should remember Jesus by reliving the "memorial" of the Supper. Though how can we understand it? The bread and wine become the real presence of the living Christ.

This is what began to shape the Christian community from the outset, as we have heard Paul testify: "*As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*" (I Cor 11: 26).

The Eucharist isn't just remembering something that happened in the past. The concept of memorial means the bread and the wine, through the action of the Holy Spirit, truly become Christ present, who gives himself to be food for us on our journey on earth.

To become servants of love, to abide in him like branches joined to the vine and to love as he loved, it is necessary to be nourished with his Body and his Blood. In telling the disciples: "*Do this in memory of me*", the Lord bound the Church, that means you and me, to the living memorial of his Passover.

Although he was the only Priest of the New Covenant, he wanted and needed to have human beings who, consecrated by the Holy Spirit, would act in intimate union with him by distributing the food of life. The food of life is love.

While we focus on Christ who institutes the Eucharist, we become newly aware of the importance of our participation on the eternal priesthood of Christ. Our lives can only find meaning when we love as Christ loves.

About two hundred years ago there was a Roman Catholic boy in France who felt called to be a priest. At an early age he was accepted by a seminary. His family was so poor that they could not buy the clothes required by the seminary.

One day he heard his mother crying. He spied on her and was shocked. He saw that she had retrieved her wedding dress from storage and put it in front of her. It was something she had saved and meant much to her. He saw her cutting it into pieces. She then sewed the pieces into his clothing so that he could begin his studies.

She gave him more than clothes. She gave him the food of life. That food is love.

He became a missionary priest in Vietnam and later there was made bishop. As bishop he trained 56 Vietnamese men who became priests. I think because of his mother he was able to give them more than fine training. He gave them the food of life. That food is love. His theme over and over was to help these men imitate Christ. Christ is love!

The Christian community in Vietnam is strong because they have been fed the food of life. Etienne-Theodore's mother could have never imagined that because she was the servant of love countless numbers of Vietnamese people would become believers in this Gospel of love because of her commitment to love. She gave without asking anything in return.

In the Eucharist we discover that God gives us without asking anything in return. Let us love this way as well.

Let us ask the Lord to help us love with such generosity.

In the Eucharist we discover that we receive from God more than we could ever give back. Let us love this way as well.

Let us ask the Lord to help us love with such generosity.