



The Holy See

MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"Our Father" Church

Rebibbia New Complex District Prison, Rome

Holy Thursday, 2 April 2015

[Multimedia]

On this Thursday, Jesus was at table with the disciples, celebrating the feast of Passover. And the passage of the Gospel which we heard contains a phrase that is the very core of what Jesus did for us: "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). Jesus loved us. Jesus loves us. Without limit, always, to the end". Jesus' love for us knows no limits: always more and more. He never tires of loving anyone. He loves us all, to the point of giving his life for us. Yes, giving his life for us; yes, giving his life for all of us, giving his life for each one of us. And every one of us can say: "He gave his life for me". Everyone: He gave His life for you, for you, for you, for you, for me, for him... [pointing to the inmates] for each person, by first and last name. His love is like that: personal. Jesus' love never disappoints, because He never tires of loving, just as He never tires of forgiving, never tires of embracing us. This is the first thing that I wanted to say to you: Jesus loved us, every one of us, to the end.

And then, He does something that the disciples don't understand: washing the feet. In that time, this was usual, it was customary, because when the people arrived in a home, their feet were dirty with the dust of the road; there were no cobblestones at that time.... There were dusty roads. And at the entrance to the house, they washed their feet. It was not done by the master of the house but by the slaves. That was the task of a slave. And like a slave, Jesus washes our feet, the feet of his disciples, and that is why He says: "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand" (Jn 13:7). Jesus' love is so great that He became a slave to serve us, to heal us, to cleanse us.

Today, in this Mass, the Church would like the priest to wash the feet of 12 people, in memory of

the 12 Apostles. But in our hearts we must be certain, we must be sure that, when the Lord washes our feet, He washes us entirely, He purifies us, He lets us feel his love yet again. There is a very beautiful phrase in the Bible, the prophet Isaiah says: “Can a mother forget her child? But even if a mother could forget her child, I will never forget you” (cf. 49:15). God’s love for us is like this.

And today I will wash the feet of 12 of you, but all of you are in these brothers and sisters, all of you, everyone. Everyone who lives here. You represent them. But I too need to be washed by the Lord, and for this you pray during the Mass, that the Lord also wash away my impurities, that I might become a better servant to you, a better slave at the service of the people, as Jesus was. Now let us begin this part of the celebration.