

## Holy Thursday

My three brothers, two sisters and I, when we were kids, sometimes we fought with each other. I can still hear my mother shouting, “Would you kids please stop fighting?” Or, “Could you please just get along?” Eventually we changed our ways, and today the six of us enjoy a good friendship. One reason is the example of our parents. I never remember my parents fighting with each other. Ever. I’m sure they had their disagreements, but they always demonstrated how people who live in close quarters could get along.

The gospels indicate that Jesus’ disciples fought with each other. In one episode they argue over which of them was the greatest. Peter was bullheaded. Matthew was a tax collector. Simon was a zealot. Judas stole money from them. These were not people who made many friends. After Pentecost, the Book of Acts says they lived united in mind and heart, which makes you think that before Pentecost they did not. Jesus probably said what parents often say: “Would you please stop fighting? Could you please just get along?” John’s gospel directly addressed the problem. In the other gospels you hear Jesus say, “Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Love your enemy.” But in John’s gospel he says this: “Love one another.” It’s addressed to the disciples: “Would you guys please get along? Would you please just love one another?”

On the night before he died, Jesus had one last chance to teach his disciples how to live. He did it with words, but also with actions. He loved them completely, so much that he was about to give his life for them. Parents know this feeling too: They’d do anything for their kids. They would even die for their kids. Of course they would feed and clothe them, clean up after them, and even wash their feet. By washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus foreshadowed that he was willing to give everything, which he would do the next day on the cross. He even washed the feet of Judas. He also washed feet to teach the disciples a lesson, a lesson that Peter would have missed if he had opted out. He wanted them to sacrifice - not for their neighbor or their enemy, but for their fellow disciples: “You ought to wash one another’s feet,” he said. “Don’t fight - serve one another.”

My brothers and sisters, we sometimes get into arguments with the people we love the most. They may be members of our families, our business associates, friends at school, or people we meet at church. We don’t have to literally wash their feet, but we have to be ready to love them, to sacrifice for them, even to lay down our lives for them. Sometimes it’s easier to love your enemy than to love the people who live with you. But this was Jesus’ command, what he wished the most of his disciples before he died: Could you please just get along? Love one another.