

Holy Thursday

Your death may be a long time away. That's how most of us envision it. You may have a few goals you would like to achieve before then: places you would like to see, adventures you would like to have, people you hope to meet. Because of a movie on this theme from 2007, many people call those desires the bucket list, the goals they want to reach before they kick the bucket. For most of us that list exclusively contains pleasures.

Imagine for a moment that you knew about your life what Jesus knew about his life at the beginning of tonight's gospel: "Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father." What would you do with the last day of your life?

Jesus' bucket list included an actual bucket. He chose not to smell the cedars of Lebanon, float in the Salt Sea, or cruise the Nile. No, John says, "He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end." During the Last Supper, fully aware that he was returning to God, Jesus took a break from the meal. At this rather odd moment, between bites, he removed his garments, "took a towel and tied it around his waist." He poured water into his bucket. The others were probably not sitting at a table as Leonardo da Vinci legislated, but reclining on cushions on the floor, their heads forming a circle around the food in the middle. That made it easier for Jesus to walk the perimeter, from feet to feet, or sole to sole. On the night before he died, knowing that his hour had come, he determined he would get the most pleasure by refreshing the feet of his followers.

They followed him for instruction, not for personal valet service. So he complied by interpreting this parable, not a story he made up, but an action he performed. They called him teacher and master, and they were right. But then he gave them a task. He assigned them a different kind of bucket list: "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I've given you a model.... As I have done, you should also do," he said.

Your death may be a long time away. You may have goals to achieve, pleasures to have. You may have a bucket list, but what is your Christian bucket list? Who are the people it would pleasure you to serve? In what way could you wash their feet? How could you bring refreshment to someone you love before you die?

This Lent we have confronted our sins and weaknesses, we have uncovered our passions and lack of discipline, we have recommitted ourselves to charity, especially to those closest to us. As we commemorate Jesus' final hours, let us also receive his final teaching. Let us find pleasure in serving someone else. If we live that way now, we will be ready for the day when Christ calls us to pass from this world to the Father.