

**Shredded:
Holy Thursday
April 2, 2015**

A friend told me she waited in line for nearly an hour last Saturday afternoon.

It was 'Community Shred Day' at her local credit union, you see, and she had shredding to do.

Her mother retired from teaching third grade twenty-one years ago this spring.

All these years she has kept the grade-books from her last ten years in the classroom.

For many of those years they were neatly lined upon the bottom shelf of the bookcase in her home office.

When asked why she kept them, she said she wanted to be able remember the children.

When she moved in with her daughter last fall, though, there was nowhere to put them and so it seemed

it was finally time to dispose of them.

As for my friend, she wouldn't have thought twice about tossing them into the recycling bin.

It has been such a long time, after all.

"But, no," she insisted. "Those grades are confidential."

And so for the last six months they have sat next to her home shredder, waiting to be destroyed.

Only it was not a small job and it didn't get done and it didn't get done.

When my friend heard she could easily drop them off and someone else would shred

them for her, I suggested that was the day.

And so she sat in her recliner and carefully pulled out the class lists --- holding on to the names of children who by now may well have third graders of their own --- and letting her daughter tear out all the rest of the pages and place them into a box and which she put into the back of my car.

And by now, these several days later, those probably long forgotten grades are obliterated -- gone to join bank records and old tax forms and who knows what else in a semi-truck load full of confetti sized pieces of paper.

All that is left are the names of hundreds of children which a long retired elementary school teacher can't quite bear to get rid of.

Now to be sure, this is certainly not an adequate comparison

for the way in which Jesus deals with you and me.

Even so, in this Gospel for Maundy Thursday, we hear about Jesus kneeling at the feet of the disciples, serving them. We hear about him washing their feet.

We hear Peter protesting, “You will never wash my feet.”

Or we retreat into our shame and lament, “God can’t love me because I don’t deserve it.”

“You will never wash my feet.”

It has been said, “There is nothing more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.”

And yet, this grace that Jesus gives comes with a mandate; or, recalling our Catholic heritage:

Jesus says, “I give you a new commandment, that you love

one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, knowing full well what would happen to him later that same night. And we hear these words as we embark into the darkness of the Paschal Triduum, the holy journey through Christ's Passion, death and resurrection.

The disciples were given Jesus' mandate to love one another as Jesus loves them just hours before one of their own would double cross Jesus and hand him over to his accusers.

And yes, we hear him say that this washing is necessary and now they are clean.

Their Teacher and Friend, Master and Lord washes them clean.

By Jesus' action, all is forgiven and forgotten except for his profound love for them.

And yes, on this day Jesus extends to them and to all of us a New Commandment calling us to love one another in the same way he has loved us.

And so yes, isn't this a little like an old third grade teacher -- still loving those children enough after all these years to guard their privacy --- and still holding them close enough to heart to seek to remember them even now?

Not by how well they did or did not do --- but by the simple certainty that they were and they are and they once sat in her classroom?

Isn't that a little like how Jesus loved us and loves us still?

Judging us not by what we have done or not done, but

always only with a heart of
love?

Tonight, as Jesus' love is
poured out as warm water
cleansing and soothing tired
and worn skin; as bread and
wine is made holy food and
drink, we come to receive what
we have not earned and what
we do not deserve.

The unconditional love of God
by His Son's death on the
Cross.