

HOMILY  
VIGIL FOR BISHOP DONALD PELOTTE, S.S.S.

January 12, 2010

Thank you, Bishop Wall and Fr. Dana, for asking me to preach this evening. It is a great privilege for me to say a few words at the vigil for our beloved brother bishop, Donald Pelotte.

We are here to thank God and to praise him for the Christian life and Christian death of our brother, Bishop Donald. Because Bishop Donald made the decision to enter the priest of the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist was the center of his religious, priestly and Episcopal life.

St. Paul writes powerfully in his letter to the Romans that nothing can separate us from the love of God. In other words, there is nothing – no earthly nor cosmic power -- that is able to overcome the burning love that God has for us. God cannot help but love since God is love. This love was revealed through the person of Jesus Christ and throughout his sojourn and ministry here on earth.

Another place where Jesus manifests the love of the Father is through his gift of the Eucharist. We associate the Eucharist with God's love when we sing the hymn *Ubi Caritas, et amor, Ubi Caritas, Deus ibi est*, that Where charity and love abide there we find God. The Eucharist makes it

possible for us to be united with God who is love and with one another when we partake of the Bread of life in the Eucharist.

Bishop Pelotte was deeply committed our bishops' support group, *Jesus Caritas*. He would meet with the rest of us on a regular basis. We made a Holy Hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament and concelebrated the Eucharistic liturgy. The holy Hour was easy for him – it was just one hour – since as a novice of the Society of the Blessed Sacrament he shared with me that they would spend two hours each day before the Blessed Sacrament. I have fond memories of our celebrating Eucharist together with the Holy Father, John Paul II during our *as limina* visits and every day of the month-long Synod for America in Rome. Even now that he is not with us, he will continue a different kind of presence when we, the members of his support group say Mass.

Let me add that we shared other meals besides the Eucharist. At restaurants he would -- like a good Indian – order lamb chops, or, if not available, spaghetti with meat sauce.

At the beginning of John's gospel, when Jesus is asked, "Where do you live?" Jesus invites his first disciples to discover where he abides. They will be led to understand that he abides in us when we accept him as our Lord. We believe that he abides in us in a most special way when we

receive the Eucharist. Our union with Jesus is so intimate, so comforting, so life giving, so profound that we can hardly begin to describe his loving presence. The greatness of this mystery inspired St. Augustine to exclaim, “O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!”

Toward the end of the Gospel of John, as Jesus is preparing to leave his disciples in his bodily form, he assures them that in his Father's house there are many dwelling places and that he is going to prepare a place for them so that where he is they also may dwell. What Jesus is saying here is that there is room with him for those of us who place our faith in him. If we have made room for him in our hearts he will make room for us.

This cathedral reminds us of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our life of faith is like two hearts coming together, Jesus' heart and our heart together. As we open our heart to his love the two hearts become united in one love.

The pain of the loss of Bishop Pelotte is made easier to bear with the comforting words of Jesus' promise to those who serve him. He says it this way, “Where I am there my servant will be. And anyone who serves me, the Father will honor.” Bishop Pelotte was a true and faithful servant of Jesus throughout his life.

In New Mexico he always joined the other two bishops of the state in support of issues having to do with justice and peace. He supported

legislation that would assist the Native Americans and the poor. He was fully in favor of abolishing the death penalty and curbing pay day loans. Bishop Pelotte favored raising the minimum wage and restitution for victims of violent crimes. He fought with us the repeal of the food tax in New Mexico and was successful in prohibiting access to alcohol to minors and access to alcohol through drive-up windows.

I was always inspired by Bishop Pelotte in the way he implemented Vatican II, particularly in empowering the laity and women religious. He entrusted to you the administration of parishes and listened attentively to his Diocesan Pastoral Council.

It is because of his love of Jesus, devotion to the Eucharist, his faithful preaching of Jesus and his life of service that we can say he was truly a servant of Jesus and because of that the Father will honor him. There is room in God's house for Donald Pelotte.