

us of all the dirt our feet have accumulated in following Him. This is something holy. Do not let your feet remain dirty. Like battle wounds, the Lord kisses them and washes away the grime of our labours.

Pope Francis, Holy Thursday Mass, St. Peter's Basilica, 2 April 2015

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Jesus' life as a foot-washing servant would eventually lead to the adoption of humility as a widely admired virtue.

John Ortberg, 1957–

Related topics

For further study:

Eucharist; bread; wine; washing feet; covenant; paschal mystery; charity; Triduum; service

Closing Prayer

O God,
in the fullness of time you revealed your love
in Jesus the Lord.

On the eve of his death,
as a sign of your covenant,
he washed the feet of his disciples
and gave himself as food and drink.

Give us life at this sacred banquet
and joy in humble service,
that, bound to Christ in all things,
we may pass over from this world to your kingdom,
where he lives with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Holy Thursday*³

CPL • LBC Year C Holy Week Maundy Thursday.odt • 2022-04-02

³ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

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Maundy Thursday

Principal Service readings

Exodus 12.1-4(5-10)11-14 The Passover lamb
Psalm 116.1,10-17 I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving
1 Corinthians 11.23-26 The institution of the Eucharist
John 13.1-17,31b-35 Jesus washes his disciples' feet

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus washes his disciples' feet

¹Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' ⁸Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' ⁹Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ¹⁰Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?' ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.
¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

³¹Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

John 13.1-17, 31b-35 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Throughout the ministry of Jesus the 'hour' had not yet come. Here, though, the hour *has* come, as the narrator states (cf. 11.55-57; 12.20-24, 27-33). The two 'times' running through the story, the feasts of 'the Jews' and the 'hour' of Jesus, are determined by the hand of God. They now join together in one moment (13.1). Jesus will depart from the world of everyday events. The one who has been sent by the Father will now return to the Father. During his ministry he has gathered his disciples, a group he has called 'his own' (13.1, cf. 1.11-12; 10.3, 4, 12), and his journey through the hour will be a supreme demonstration of his love for them. To indicate both the time and the quality of his loving he uses the term 'to the end' (13.1). This sets the scene for the rest of the story: in the death of Jesus his love for his own is made known, and so God is made known (cf. 3.16-17). Thus the scene of the foot-washing is introduced, but there is additional information, that Judas will betray Jesus (13.2). So the design of God shown by Jesus clashes with the intentions of Satan.

It is restated again that Jesus 'had come from God and was going to God', but this has never been accepted, which has propelled Jesus towards his death. Jesus now rises from the table, prepares himself to act as a servant, and begins to wash the feet of the disciples (13.4-5). His love for his own and even for his betrayer is shown through his actions.

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Simon Peter objects to Jesus' washing his feet (13.6). But the foot-washing is part of God's design, and by his objection Peter shows he lacks understanding. He lacks openness to the revelation of God. The washing is a symbolic act, with overtones of baptism. Jesus says to Peter, 'later you will understand' (13.7). Something will happen between the 'now' and the 'then' that will aid understanding. On other occasions Jesus has acted and the disciples have not understood then, but only later, such as the cleansing of the Temple (2.13-22), and his entry into Jerusalem (12.12-16).

Jesus then looks away from the foot-washing, the example of his self-gift, towards the new example it establishes. As Jesus dresses and resumes his place at the table he questions the disciples' understanding of what he has done for them (13.12). He then answers his own question (13.14-15). The disciples have witnessed and participated in the foot-washing, but they need more instruction to understand correctly how Jesus is Teacher and Lord, and how this should impinge on their own lives. Jesus recall the foot-washing as he tells his disciples to repeat among themselves what he has done for them (13.14). Jesus' exhortation is not to moral performance but to the imitation of his own self-giving. The word *hypodeigma* is used, found only here in the New Testament (also in 2 Maccabees 6.28; 4 Maccabees 17.20-23; Wisdom 44.16), it is associated with an exemplary death. 'The command to lose oneself in self-giving unto death in imitation of the *hypodeigma* of Jesus has been ritualized in baptism.'² Although the passage is not 'about baptism', it seem to presuppose the ritual within the life and practice of the Johannine community.

Quotations

1

From our feet, we can tell how the rest of our body is doing. The way we follow the Lord reveals how our heart is faring. The wounds on our feet, our sprains and our weariness, are signs of how we have followed Him, of the paths we have taken in seeking the lost sheep and in leading the flock to green pastures and still waters. The Lord washes us and cleanses

² *The gospel of John* / Francis J. Moloney. – Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998. – ISBN-13 978-0-8146-5967-0. – p.376.