



GOSPEL: John 13:1–15

In this Gospel account of the Last Supper, John focuses on what happened after the meal. In fact, John’s Gospel is the only one that tells the story of the foot washing. Jesus took a towel and basin and did the job of the lowliest of servants. In Jesus’s time, most teachers were waited on by their disciples. Some groups even purchased servants. In Jesus’s band, the servant was the Master. He always had been, even though his disciples did not recognize it. That was unthinkable, unheard of, and almost impossible to accept. Peter balked at having Jesus perform such a menial task.

This action, of the Master serving his disciples in such a humble way, is a complete role reversal. By bowing down to wash the feet of his disciples, Jesus redefines his relationship with them. From that point on, the relationship changes from “followers” to “friends.” This action is filled with a profoundly different way of viewing service. Jesus washed their feet because he wanted to impress upon the disciples that no task is too small and that no one is above someone else so much that he or she cannot be compassionate to another.

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WASHING FEET

The foot washing in John's Gospel takes place at the point at which we would expect to find the Last Supper. It is as if John is saying that the Eucharist is about life, is about how we live, and means servanthood. So, living the example of Jesus after the homily, we wash one another's feet. This action is called the *Mandatum*, which is Latin for "commandment." By washing one another's feet, we are fulfilling Jesus's supreme commandment to love one another as he has loved us. As with all the actions during the Triduum, we are not dramatizing Jesus's washing the feet of his disciples; instead, we are participating in this humble action of service to rehearse and remember who we are called to be and what we are called to do as Christians in the world. Jesus very specifically tells us that not only should we serve others, but we should serve humbly and lovingly. In serving others, we are not only helping them but also humbling ourselves and admitting that we are not perfect.

Consider finding the time today to name a part of your life, a part of yourself, you want to surrender to the Lord to be embraced and loved. Like Peter, each of us needs to feel the resistance that might be inside us. We have to let Jesus wash our feet, let Jesus give himself to us, let him be our servant; in return, we will become servants for others. Consider these questions as you spend time in prayer or conversation today:

- † **Where in your life do you need to be more open to Jesus's kneeling before you?**

- † **Where are the places in your life where you need to stoop down and wash someone else's feet?**

- † **Think about an experience of witnessing humble service. How did it touch you? How were you challenged?**

EUCCHARIST TRANSFER OF THE EUCHARIST

Because there is no Liturgy of the Eucharist at the Good Friday liturgy, enough bread is consecrated on Holy Thursday for use at both liturgies. After Communion on Holy Thursday, the Body of Christ that will be used on Good Friday is transferred to a reservation chapel (the location where the tabernacle is placed). This is typically a separate location where people can pray and meditate privately. The Eucharist remains in the reservation chapel until Communion at the Good Friday liturgy.

The priest puts on a vestment resembling a shawl, known as the humeral veil, which is worn over the shoulders. After the priest receives the veil, he approaches the altar and solemnly receives the Blessed Sacrament. After he receives it, he processes to the reservation chapel. Some churches have a reservation chapel, and others create one for this night. During the transfer, everyone joins in song. In some churches, the entire assembly participates in the procession. There is no blessing or dismissal; rather, the liturgy ends in silence because we are not finished. This same assembly is called to gather tomorrow as we continue our Passover feast.

Following the transfer of the Eucharist, many people may remain in the chapel for prayer and Eucharistic Adoration. You may wish to do so as well. The Church recommends the following readings for reflection on Holy Thursday:

- John, chapters 14–17
- Psalm 22
- the Book of Lamentations

FAST THE PASCHAL FAST

Following the Holy Thursday liturgy, the Paschal fast (Easter fast) begins. This fast lasts until the conclusion of the Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday evening. Unlike the fasting we do on Fridays during Lent, this fast is not one of penance; instead, it is like a fast before a major life event, one of great anticipation and excitement. We fast from food so we can grow in our hunger for God's Word. We fast from work and all other distractions so we can enter into these days more deeply and with greater anticipation. We fast because we are so filled with God that anything else is a distraction. We keep the fast so that the joy of the Resurrection is even sweeter!

✠ **What are some ways you can participate in the Paschal fast beyond simply fasting from food?**