

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – John 13:1-15 –Roman Missal**

Before the Feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from the world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

## **Spiritual Reading**

*From an Easter homily by Saint Melito of Sardis, bishop*

There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: that mystery is Christ, and to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable to suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself; he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow. He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the land of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own Spirit, and

the members of our body with his own blood. He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One who smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that is our salvation. It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed him. In Abel he was slain, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, dishonored in the prophets. It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb, the lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of his was broken; in the earth his body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.

### **Washing the Feet – Lesson and Discussion**

“The washing of the feet, the institution of the Eucharist, and his death on the cross indicate how and to what point we must love our brothers in order to fulfill the Lord’s command.”[1]

**Does Jesus just want us to imitate His actions?** No. He wants us to imitate both His action of service and His intention and attitude of love. “It was not so much a matter of imitating relations with one another; they were each to consider and behave to each other as though each were the servant of the other. Only humility like this will make it possible to fulfill the command that Jesus is about to give: ‘A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another’ (ib. 34).”[2]

**Why did Jesus wash the feet of His disciples?** Jesus did this to show His apostles and each of us what it takes to follow Him. He washed their feet to be a perfect model of what a man should be to another man. “In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. He is ‘the perfect man,’[3] who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer and he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way. [4]”[5] It was also, “To give them a proof of His sincere love and great humility which they should imitate; to teach them that although free from sin, and not unworthy to receive His most holy body and blood, their feet needed cleansing, that is, that they should be purified from all evil inclinations which defile the heart, and prevent holy Communion from producing fruitful effects in the soul.”[6] Jesus tells the apostles, “Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over.” We may be “clean all over” or in the state of Grace, but we still but allow our Lord to cleanse us of every impurity.

**Why does the priest wash peoples’ feet during Mass?** Priests, as well as bishops and the Pope, wash the feet of others to show that if they are in the person of Christ and give their lives over to Him, they must live the example set before them by Jesus. “To commemorate the washing of the apostles’ feet by Christ, and to teach all, even the highest to exercise the necessary virtues of humility and charity towards all, even the lowest, according to the example given by Jesus.”[7]

**Was this action of Christ taken literally or is it just symbolic?** In the early Church, “it was almost a daily practice. St. Paul, when mentioning the qualities, which should adorn the Christian widow, includes that of washing the feet of the saints (1 Tim 5:10), that is, of the faithful. We find this act of humble charity practiced in the ages of persecution, and even later. The Acts of the saints of the first six centuries, and the homilies and writings of the holy fathers, are filled with allusions to it. Afterwards charity grew cold, and this particular way of exercising it was confined, almost exclusively, to monasteries. Still, from time to time it was practiced elsewhere...the holy king Robert of France, and, later Saint Louis, used to frequently wash the feet of the poor. The holy queen St. Margaret of Scotland, and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, did the same. The church with that same spirit which makes her treasure up every recommendation of her divine Lord, has introduced this act of humility into her liturgy, and it is today that she puts the great lesson before her children”[8]

**What else is done during the Mass on Holy Thursday?** “The crucifix is covered with a white veil in memory of the sacred institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The priest comes to the altar robed in white vestments; the Gloria in excelsis is solemnly sung, accompanied by the ringing of bells, and all Christians are exhorted to render praise and gratitude to the Lord for having instituted the Blessed Feast of Love; after the Gloria the bells are silent until Holy Saturday to indicated the Church’s mourning for the passion and death of Jesus; to urge us also to spend these days in silent sorrow, meditating on the sufferings of Christ, and in memory of the shameful flight of the apostles at the capture of their master, and their silence during these days. At the Mass the priest consecrates two hosts one of which He consumes at the Communion, and the other he preserves in the chalice for the following day, because no consecration takes place on Good Friday. The officiating priest does not give the usual kiss of peace before Communion, because on this day Judas betrayed his master with a kiss. After Mass, the consecrated host in the chalice, and the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, are taken in procession to the sacristy or repository, in memory of the earliest times of Christianity, when the consecrated hosts for the communicants and the sick, were kept in a place especially prepared, because there was no tabernacle on the altar. Moreover it also signifies Christ’s going to Mount Olivet, where His Godhead was concealed. After the procession the priests with the choir say Vespers in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.”[11]