



HOLY THURSDAY

Ritual At Home: Washing of Feet

Foot washing has been a Holy Thursday practice since the seventh century. It is a concrete representation of our call to service and reminds us of Jesus's example and command. If we truly understand this command, however, we realize that we are called to do more than literally wash feet. Rather, this is a ritual that reminds us of our call to serve others through the concrete realities of life.

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross and then offer the following prayer:

Loving God, You show us by example how to love others. Today as we celebrate Holy Thursday, we remember when you washed the feet of your disciples. Give us the strength to wash each other's feet, not only in the action of today, but in all moments of our lives. May we as a family recommit ourselves to the service of others. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

2. Invite someone to proclaim the Gospel:

(This text is based on the translation used in the Lectionary for Masses with Children and is easier for young people to understand.)

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

It was before Passover, and Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to return to the Father. He had always loved his followers in this world, and he loved them to the very end. Even before the evening meal started, the devil had made Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, decide to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that he had come from God and would go back to God. He also knew that the Father had given him complete power. So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing.

But when he came to Simon Peter, that disciple asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand." "You will never wash my feet!" Peter replied. "If I don't wash

- Gather these items in advance. Get the whole family involved in the preparations
 - A large bowl
 - A pitcher or smaller container to be used for pouring
 - A large towel to put under the bowl of water, and several others for drying hands and feet
- Place your family Bible on the table, if you have one, opened up to the Gospel reading of the day (**John 13:1-15**)

you," Jesus told him, "you don't really belong to me." Peter said, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head." Jesus answered, "People who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet.

And you, my disciples, are clean, except for one of you." Jesus knew who would betray him. That is why he said, "except for one of you."

After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and had put his outer garment back on, he sat down again. Then he said: "Do you understand what I have done? You call me your teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am. And if your Lord and teacher has washed your feet, you should do the same for each other. I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.





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3. Explain:

In Jesus' time, people had to walk everywhere unless they were one of the few people who had a horse or a donkey. Most people wore sandals or went barefoot if they couldn't afford sandals. It was dry and dusty in Jesus' part of the world, and after walking many miles each day their feet would be dirty. When someone entered a house, the host would provide for the guest to have his or her feet washed, usually by a servant. So when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, they were shocked because he was acting like a servant, not like a master or a teacher. He was trying to teach them that we should all be servants to one another. No one should be a master over someone else and we should all take turns serving and being served.

4. Invite the people in your family do what Jesus told us to do—wash one another's feet.

Everyone (adults included) should take off their shoes and socks.

The first person takes the feet of one person and places them in the bowl. Pouring some water over the feet, and looking the person in the eye, the foot washer says: (Name), I love you and God loves you. Share the love of Christ with everyone you meet.

Each person should take a turn, washing the feet of their neighbor after their own feet have been washed. After washing each person's feet, gently dry their feet with the towel.

(Although adults may be more self-conscious about having their feet washed, please allow the children this privilege. They will feel honored to do this for someone else who usually serves them.)

5. When you are done, share about the experience together, using the following points as a guide.

What did it feel like to get your feet washed? Was it uncomfortable to allow someone else serve you? Did any of you feel a little bit like Peter did?

This action is an expression of love and service, just like when Jesus did this for his friends. What kinds of actions do you think Jesus was trying to teach us that we should do for others? How can we keep their eyes open for ways we can serve others?

What are some ways that we can serve others during this current crisis?

