



Washing away our reluctance to serve

Holy Thursday – The Lord's Supper

Prepare: Read John 13:1-15

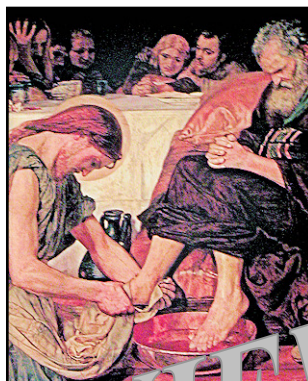
Jesus did not come into this world to be served, although he is God and surely deserves it. He came to serve. He came to serve *you*. And through you, he wants to serve everyone you know.

After inviting us to sit back and enjoy being served by our wonderful God, Jesus says in today's Gospel passage: "I have given you a model to follow — what I have done for you, you should also do." His foot-washing ceremony is a model of service. It means loving others so much that we do good deeds for them, including the people we dislike, those whose feet are dirty and disgusting. In other words, while we're upset about the folks who have not served us the way we think they should (and probably we're right), we unite ourselves to Jesus by becoming Eucharist for them.

What does it mean to "be Eucharist"? Receiving the body and blood of Jesus unites us to him and to his whole Body, the Church. We walk up to Christ in the communion line as individuals, responsible for our own conversions, saying, "I am not worthy to receive you...", but after we receive the Eucharist, we return to our pews as members of the Body, "with union" (the meaning of "communion").

As part of Christ's body, we're commissioned to go out from Mass and be Eucharist — be the real presence of Christ — in the world.

Years ago, God drove home to me this point. In a prayer meeting, I surprisingly found myself washing the feet of a friend who had betrayed me and my family and some friends through his alcoholism and lust. I tell you, his feet were ugly!



But much uglier was his refusal to accept the truth.

What did the foot-washing accomplish? It made a clear statement about mercy. On a personal level, it gave me the opportunity to show him that I was willing to serve him if he was willing to accept me as part of a healing process. He wasn't, and eventually had to report him to the authorities, but the foot-washing ceremony healed me of my own unwillingness to love unconditionally. Jesus washed *my* feet along with my heart. And I gained a much greater understanding of the love that Jesus has for me every time he washes my ugly feet.

Remember, though, that Jesus never gives up on anyone. Years later, he washed the feet of our old friend with the gift of mercy in a much firmer way. God gave him a redemptive time of earthly purgatory in the form of a painful disease that started with his feet and worked its way up through the rest of his body. Confined to bed, enduring pain that medications couldn't totally eliminate, he allowed the disease to purge him of his pride and his addictions. And Jesus embraced him with passionate love.

To be able to do good for others when it's not pleasant, first understand why Jesus washes your feet. Spend time in prayer visualizing your own personal foot-washing ceremony with Jesus. Imagine him kneeling in front of you gently rinsing off the dirt from your feet.

Then ask Jesus how you are being called to go and do likewise.