

Devotional acts at home for Maundy Thursday

The Washing of the Feet

On Maundy Thursday we re-enact that gesture of Jesus that reveals the power of God.

In the act of washing his disciples' feet, Jesus shows himself to be literally and completely at their service – the form of a slave – kneeling down in the dust to perform a menial task for them.

Maundy comes from the Latin 'mandatum', Christ's mandate, his command that we should love one another. It is a name given to today which is directly inspired by the foot-washing. For here we see Christ as an example of humility, in the fact that *he* washes *our* feet; Christ is the sanctifier of our weakness and sin and he goes further washing the feet that have been charged with the task of taking the good news to all the world.

Jesus' example is a simple yet profound reminder of how power, authority and significance are always, in Christian terms, connected with service. How can we do the same for others? How do we wash the feet of others? And if we're good at that, or if our motives for service have been confused with pride as we all know they can be, do we need to allow others to serve us?

Of course in a 'normal' Holy Week, this is an act performed in Church by the clergy. But given that this year our devotions can only take place at home I invite you to do something rather different. For those who live with family, and especially those of you with small children, we invite you to carry out this ritual with your loved ones before your main meal. You'll need a bowl of water, some

soap and a towel (obviously don't involve someone in the household if they are self-isolating and ensure good hand hygiene always!)

First, read the gospel of John chapter 13 verses 1-15 together.

'Now 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. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then 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. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus 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." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After 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? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you'.

If there's 3 or more of you, appoint someone to wash and another to dry.

Music to play during the act:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1BTWCpEFRQ> Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est – Durufle (*Where charity and love are, there God is*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqt005j1dB0> If ye love me – Tallis

To pray together afterwards:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, on this night your Son Jesus Christ girded himself with a towel and, taking the form of a servant, washed the feet of his disciples. Grant that we might follow his example and love one another as he loved us. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Father...

May Christ our Saviour give us his peace. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Watch

The Taking of Christ – Caravaggio, 1602



There are seven figures in the painting: from left to right they are John, Jesus, Judas, three soldiers (the one farthest to the right barely visible in the rear), and a man holding a lantern to the scene. They are standing, and only the upper three-quarters of their bodies are depicted. Judas has just kissed Jesus to identify him for the soldiers. The figures are arrayed before a very dark background, in which the setting is obscured. The main light source is not evident in the painting but comes from the upper left; the lesser light source is the lantern held by the man at the right (believed to be a self-portrait of Caravaggio; also, presumably, representing St Peter, who would first betray Jesus by denying him, and then go on to bring the light of Christ to the world). At the far left, a man (St John) is fleeing; his arms are raised, his mouth is open in a gasp, his cloak is flying and being snatched back by a soldier. The flight of the terrified John contrasts with the entrance of the artist; scholars claim that

Caravaggio is making the point that even a sinner one thousand years after the resurrection has a better understanding of Christ than does his friend.

Two of the more puzzling details of the painting are, one, the fact that the heads of Jesus and St. John seem to visually meld together in the upper left corner, and, two, the fact of the prominent presence, in the very centre of the canvas and in the foremost plane of the picture, of the arresting officer's highly polished, metal-clad arm. Regarding the detail of the polished metal arm of the soldier in the centre of the picture, Franco Mormando suggests that it was meant by the artist to serve as a mirror, a mirror of self-reflection and examination of conscience: as do many spiritual writers and preachers of the period, the artist may be 'inviting his viewers to see themselves reflected in the behaviour of Judas' through their own daily acts of betrayal of Jesus, that is, through their sin.

You will recall that when we mark Maundy Thursday in Church, Mass concludes with 'The Watch' where we accompany our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in silent prayer at the Altar of Repose.

Instead this year, you may wish to print this image and use it for as a focus for a time of meditation and silent prayer.

Read through the 'Watch Gospel' first.

Luke 22:31-62

³¹ "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." ³³ And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" ³⁴ Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me." ³⁵ He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." ³⁶ He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed

what is written about me is being fulfilled.”³⁸ They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” He replied, “It is enough.”

³⁹ He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” ⁴¹ Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” [⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴ In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.] ⁴⁵ When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” ⁴⁹ When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” ⁵⁰ Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸ A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” ⁵⁹ Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰ But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him,

“Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.”⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

God our Father, your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end and drank the cup prepared for him: may we who share his table watch with him through the night of suffering and be faithful. **Amen.**

Silence is kept.

If you find it helpful to pray with music you might like to play these:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11BTWCpEFRQ> Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est – Durufle (*Where charity and love are, there God is*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqt005j1dB0> If ye love me – Tallis