

HOLY WEEK AT HOME

Celebrating the death, burial,
& resurrection of Christ
during quarantine

Thursday of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)

Introduction

The Sacred Paschal Triduum begins with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. The word *Triduum* comes from the Latin for "three days." These three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil are the highpoint of our entire liturgical year. Holy Thursday especially commemorates Jesus's command to serve others, modeled explicitly in the washing of feet and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do you serve others in your own family and community? Why is it important to connect our daily service to others with Jesus's command to do so?

Even when we are unable to gather to celebrate Eucharist, we are still called to be a eucharistic people. Jesus's self-gift in the Eucharist allows us to give freely of ourselves to others, following Jesus's instructions, "Do this in memory of me." Our own table fellowship with our family and friends is also a participation in the Eucharist, because the Eucharist by its very nature is deeply relational. If we limit our understanding of Eucharist to only what we receive at Mass, we are missing a major part of Christ's invitation to us. "Do this in memory of me" is a command and call to action. Do we dare to live our lives following the example of Christ?

Ritual at Home

The *pedilavium*, or footwashing, has been a Holy Thursday practice since as early as the seventh century. A concrete representation of our call to service, the foot washing in the Holy Thursday liturgy 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.

Opening 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 ritual moment 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.

Reading: John 13:1-15 (*Celebrating the Eucharist*, page 168)

Washing of Feet: *Placing a pitcher of warm water, a large bowl, and a towel in front of those gathered, one of the adults might invite everyone to sit in a circle on the ground.*

A designated leader reads:

We follow Jesus's example and celebrate our own washing of feet. Throughout our time together, pay close attention to what you are experiencing and how you feel.

I now invite you to slowly remove your shoes and socks. What do you feel? How do you think Jesus's friends must have felt as they were preparing for him to wash their feet? What do you imagine Jesus was thinking as he began washing?

The leader 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 leader says:

If washing feet with children:

(Name), I love you. Be kind to one another, help each other, and love everyone you meet.

If washing feet with only adults:

(Name), I love you and Christ loves you. Share the love of Christ with everyone you meet.

One person may wash the feet of all present or each person may 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.

Intercessions: Confident that Jesus Christ hears our prayer,
let us offer our petitions with open hearts.

For all who serve in our church: May they follow the example of Christ and uphold the dignity of all people.

For all who serve in our community and country: May they work for the good of all people, especially people who are poor and relegated to the margins of society.

For all who serve others every day, especially parents, guardians, teachers, coaches, and all who practice selflessness and self-gift: May they find comfort and hope knowing that their actions make a difference to so many.

For all gathered here: May we live lives of service to God and others, even when it is difficult or requires extra effort.

The Lord's Prayer: Gathering these prayers together,
as well as those we hold in the silence of our hearts,
we pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father . . .

Prayer: Loving God,
We praise you in a special way today as we celebrate Holy Thursday.
Be with us as we continue our journey through Holy Week,
that we may more closely align our lives with yours,
knowing our call to serve others
following the example you gave.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

All are invited to share a sign of Christ's peace.

Conversation Starters

1. What images, words, or phrases do you associate with Holy Thursday?
2. How does Jesus call you to serve others in your everyday actions and interactions?
3. How might you explain the connection between the washing of feet and Eucharist?

Continuing the Conversation

The Eucharist is rooted in community and table fellowship. What does table fellowship look like in your own home? What are some ways you can commit or recommit to the sharing of family meals? Perhaps today would be a good opportunity to cook and eat dinner together. Each family member can take on a specific role, from cooking, to setting the table, to washing the dishes. It is in spending time together that we can live the "thanksgiving" at the heart of Eucharist.