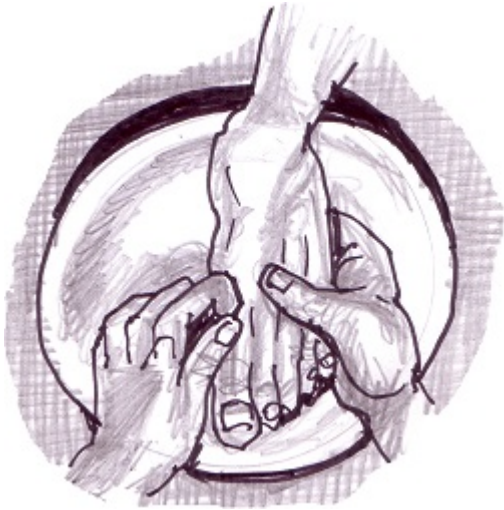


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Holy Thursday 2021

As we enter the Triduum, Scripture comes true in our hearing and in our doing. Here is a short reflection for where the communal ritual of the foot washing is not held because of COVID-19.

The virus not only prevented us from gathering this past year, it also deprives us of one of the more intimate sacramental moments we have as church when we are invited to touch, wash and dry one another's feet. Distant from each other or virtually present, we are still on holy ground, like Moses at the burning bush. God is with us, so let us imagine we are removing our shoes and socks to expose our feet to show how vulnerable we are to this world, to God and to one another.

Pause

John, the most liturgical of the Gospels, oddly substitutes the washing of the feet for the institution of the Eucharist. On the night before he died, Jesus wanted to show his disciples the meaning of the Eucharist in an unforgettable way. He performed the lowest task of the lowliest servant by kneeling to wash their feet. It was his final parable. He came to serve not be served, to give his life as a humble servant.

“Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him” (John 13:4). Let us imagine we are preparing to take towel, bowl and pitcher to lovingly wash the feet of a stranger or someone we know? Whose feet will you wash? Who will wash your feet?

Pause

What inspired Jesus to wash his disciples' feet? One chapter before, it was Mary of Bethany who knelt to anoint his head and feet with precious oil. On another occasion, a woman came and knelt, washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Jesus wanted his disciples to know this same outpouring of loving service as the essence of the Gospel of mercy they were to take into the world.

Women inspired the Gospel of loving service. Let us pause to thank and reverence the women in our lives and all women.

Pause

Our feet are the essential workers of the body. We reflect on all the men and women who served us this past year by being there, standing at counters in grocery store checkouts, in classrooms, by delivering mail and packages, standing in hospital rooms and at their posts in a hundred ways to keep our world going. Let us pause to thank and reverence those men and women who stood by us quietly and humbly served us this past year.

Pause

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good tidings” (Isaiah 52:7). God gave us feet to make us evangelists. Wherever our feet take us, we have the chance to be good news to others. Let us reflect on this past year. Have our actual or virtual feet, phone calls, emails or texts, brought joy and encouragement?

Pause

By this ritual commemoration of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, we are again baptized for service. The Catholic Community is defined by service. Others will know us by our feet, standing with the poor, marching for justice, going wherever we are needed to serve. This ritual comes true when we take it from our homes and churches into the streets of our towns and cities, into the pathways of this world wherever we go. God is present in all things and in all people. Let our feet find and serve him and our brothers and sisters.

We rejoiced when we heard them say, “Let us go to the house of the Lord. Even now our feet are standing in your courts” (Psalm 122:2).

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