

Holy Thursday

THE EUCHARIST & THE PRIESTHOOD

On Holy Thursday, we recall when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples. We call this the "institution" of the Mass, or the first Mass. At every Mass, the priest prays the words that Jesus prayed at the Last Supper:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT: FOR THIS IS MY BODY WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

and

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT: FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT, WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

On Holy Thursday, Jesus also washed his disciples' feet. Washing feet was the job of a servant, and when Jesus washed his disciples' feet it was a hint of what he would do on good Friday. It was another example of his humble, self-giving love. In the washing, we can see a sign of baptism. But we also see that Jesus is preparing the disciples for priesthood, as it was the custom in Jesus' time to complete a ritual washing before becoming a priest. Through the words he has given them and the way in which he has called and prepared them, the disciples are then able to bring Christ's presence to the world after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, we celebrate this day as the institution of the Eucharist and also of the priesthood.

WASHING OF THE FEET

If possible, attend the Holy Thursday Mass. In addition, consider washing your family's feet at home.

- + Make sure you have enough chairs for everyone participating.
- + Grab towels, a water basin large enough for feet, a pitcher, and a washcloth. Lay a towel down on the floor and place the basin on top of it.
- + Fill the pitcher with water.
- + If you haven't already read them, begin with the Gospel reading for Holy Thursday: John 13:1-15
- + The washing of the feet normally takes place after the homily. As a family, you might choose to discuss the reading for a moment.
- + Designate a foot washer (this is a beautiful role for a parent to fulfill). Explain the significance of the role: "Christ washed his disciple's feet in an act of love, service, and humility. I wash your feet today because I love you as Christ loves us."
- + Repeat this traditional antiphon as you gently wash each person's feet: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." John 13:34
- + Pour water over the feet and use the washcloth to physically wash the foot in the basin. Dry each foot with a towel and move to the next participant. Spouses, you can choose to wash each other's feet, or allow eager hands to help.

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS BY ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

O Jesus, eternal Priest, keep your priests within the shelter of Your Sacred Heart, where none may touch them.

Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch Your Sacred Body.

Keep unsullied their lips, daily purpled with your Precious Blood.

Keep pure and unearthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood.

Let Your holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion.

Bless their labors with abundant fruit and may the souls to whom they minister be their joy and consolation here and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.

Amen.