

Our Sunday Readings

for Holy Thursday:
 EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14
 PSALM 116:12-13, 15-18
 I CORINTHIANS 11:23-26
 JOHN 13:1-15
 for Easter:
 LUKE 24:1-12 or JOHN 20:1-9

Making Sense of it All

JOHN 13:1-15

Reading closely

1. How do you imagine this scene?
2. What might people have been feeling?
3. What all might the disciples have been expecting at this point?
4. Why might Judas have accepted the devil's prompting?
5. How might the disciples have reacted when Jesus started washing their feet?
6. How might they have reacted when Jesus said he'd *given them a model to follow*?

Living the word

7. What actions from our culture are like washing someone's feet?
8. How readily do you follow the model of Jesus? Where is his example leading you?

HOLY THURSDAY

His hour to be lifted up

The first part of John's Gospel is called *The Book of Signs* because in it Jesus works signs that reveal he is from God. The second half, *The Book of Glory*, starts with chapter 13, when Jesus' *hour had come*. Jesus' *hour* is his crucifixion and resurrection, one inseparable action.

Nasty feet

In a world of sandals and unpaved roads, feet got quite dirty. The job of washing feet was relegated to slaves. It might also be done by someone who wanted to show their complete love and devotion to someone else.

A symbolic action

Jesus makes the washing of feet a symbolic gesture that will help his disciples interpret his crucifixion. This story, unique to John's Gospel, shows how Jesus, whose status makes him worthy of the highest honor, assumes the role of the least among us. Those who wish to follow him to glory must act the same way (v.8).

Peter Misunderstands

In the other Gospels Peter rebukes Jesus for speaking about his forthcoming suffering and death (Mark 8:31-33). Here Peter acts similarly by refusing to let his master act the part of a slave. Jesus explains that his true disciples follow his example of humility and sacrifice.

When Peter invites more washing, Jesus tells him he's already *clean* because he and the others (except Judas) believe in Jesus. Now they must treat others with selfless, even degrading love.

LUKE 24:1-12

Entering the word

1. Imagine that you're one of the people who will go to Jesus' tomb.
 - a. What are you thinking and feeling when you wake up?
 - b. How do you meet up with the others? Do you speak to each other?
 - c. How long is your walk? Is it an easy or rough path?
 - d. What are you carrying?
 - e. Do your feelings change as you arrive at the tomb?
 - f. How would you describe the tomb and its surroundings?
 - g. What do you say and do when you discover Jesus' body is missing?
 - h. What all is going on inside you when the *two men in dazzling garments appear*?
 - i. What do you remember of Jesus' words?
 - j. What, if anything, do you say to each other as you leave the tomb?
 - k. Why do you go to the male disciples?
 - l. What all do the male disciples say when you tell them what happened?
 - m. Do you talk with Peter?

Living the word

2. Have you gotten used to Jesus' resurrection, or does it startle and amaze you?
3. How readily do you share the story of Jesus?
4. When have people scoffed at you for proclaiming or living the gospel?

EASTER SUNDAY

Reactions to the empty tomb

Some Jews at this time believed that God would raise the just to eternal life, but only when he exercised final judgment over the earth. No Jew expected a lone individual to rise from the dead. The women are thus *puzzled* when they find the tomb empty. Other disciples think their story is an *idle tale or nonsense*.

Remembering what Jesus said

The two men dressed in radiant clothes are angels, heavenly messengers who help the women understand what's happened, though first they scold the women for expecting to find Jesus dead in the tomb.

The angels then recall Jesus' own words. Although Jesus had said that he would be killed and raised up, his followers couldn't understand what he meant. Now that it's all happened, the women *remember his words* and believe.

The church is born in Jerusalem

Jesus' ministry began in Galilee and ended in Jerusalem. In the Book of Acts Luke shows how the early church is born in Jerusalem and grows from there.

In Luke's Gospel the story of the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus all happen in Jerusalem. These stories unite and empower Jesus' followers. In Acts they boldly testify that God raised up Jesus, the true king whose way of peace the city had rejected.

PRAYER

Father,
 look with love upon your people,
 the love which our Lord Jesus Christ showed us
 when he delivered himself to death
 and suffered the agony of the cross.
 Forgive us when we fail to imitate his perfect love.
 Open our eyes to the ways we must grow as
 disciples.
 Give us the strength to continue following his way
 of humility, reconciliation, and peace.
 We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and
 Savior.
 Amen.