

Prayer Service for Holy Thursday

INTRODUCTION

Holy Thursday begins what is known as the Easter Triduum: the three days celebrating events surrounding the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Thursday liturgy invites us to enter more deeply the mystery of Christ's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper: There at table with his friends, He gives Himself over to them under the appearance of bread and wine, a foretaste of when He will give Himself over to vanquish the power of sin and evil, rise to new life, and redeem the human race. The Gospel reading used in today's Eucharist is John's account of Christ washing His disciples' feet. This is the example we are to follow – what Henri Nouwen calls the “downward mobility” of service – Eucharist made visible in the witness of self-giving love.

OPENING SONG

Please join in our opening song, (Sugg. *Gather Comprehensive Ed.: Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*, verses 1-3 #661 or Spirit and Song 1: Prayer of St. Francis #199)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin today's prayer with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: Lord, as we prepare to enter the mystery of these three most holy days, we ask you to illumine our minds and hearts with the hope and promise of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Give us eyes to see Him in the breaking of the bread and hearts that reach out to Him in service to one another. We ask you this through Christ our Lord. Amen

And now, let us listen to God's word.

READING

A reading from the Gospel of John (Jn 13, 1-12)

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father.

He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.

The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over.

So, during supper,

fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power

and that he had come from God and was returning to God,

he rose from supper and took off his outer garments.

He took a towel and tied it around his waist.

Then he poured water into a basin

and began to wash the disciples' feet

and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

"Master, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him,

"What I am doing, you do not understand now,

but you will understand later."

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him,

"Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me."

Simon Peter said to him,
"Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."
Jesus said to him,
"Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed,
for he is clean all over;
so you are clean, but not all."
For he knew who would betray him;
for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when he had washed their feet
and put his garments back on and reclined at table again,
he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you?
You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am.
If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet,
you ought to wash one another's feet.
I have given you a model to follow,
so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Let us pray for the Church. That all the baptized come to greater unity and understanding. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
2. Let us pray for the world. That persons everywhere will heed the call to peace written on every human heart. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
3. Let us pray for those who suffer quietly in our communities of work and daily life. That they might encounter in us the love of Christ brought out through the celebrations of these most holy days. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
4. Let us pray for our school community, family members and friends. That they might experience the joy and peace of the risen Christ this Easter. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
5. Let us pray for those we serve – in our homes, schools and communities – that they might receive what they need to grow and thrive as God's children. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
6. For our own intentions spoke in the quiet of our hearts.... We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Let us gather all our prayers, spoken aloud and in the quiet of our hearts and unite them with one voice, using the words Jesus gave us: ***Our Father...***

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Lord, we thank You for the gift of Your Son. May our entry into the mysteries of His life, death and resurrection give us the confidence to live with unshakeable faith in Your faithful and abiding love. We make this prayer to You in His name. Amen.
And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

Please join in our closing song, (Sugg. *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*, verses 4-6 or a continuation of The Prayer of St. Francis.)