

“Unless you wash each other’s feet. . .”

What’s so Holy about Holy Thursday?

A head count at the various liturgies of Holy Week would underscore a curious fact about us Catholics: Give us palms and crosses—we’ll come. Give us Holy Thursday’s elemental call to selfless service, and Holy Saturday’s ritualized recounting of our 3000 years of faith and history—we’ll take a pass. We love the pageantry and devotion of Palm Sunday and Good Friday, and nearly forget the essential importance and transformative power of Holy Thursday and the Easter Vigil.

What is up with that?

Decades of devotional emphasis and the absence in too many parishes of a nurturing of a Catechumenate and development of the Rites of Initiation might be part of the reason. But at the core of the merely modest energy around these essential feasts is something more elemental. Where the pageantry and procession of Palm Sunday reminds us of “something” that we experienced as kids, and Good Friday gives us a feeling of melancholy for the suffering and death which Jesus endured “for our sins,” Holy Thursday and Easter Vigil call us to do more than *feel* something. They call us to actually *do* something.

What does Holy Thursday call us to do?

It couldn’t be more clearly stated by Jesus than by his simple statement, the Mandatum at the core of our belief as his followers: “If I, whom you call Master and Teacher, have washed your feet, so you must wash each other’s feet.”



The power and beauty of this mandate, of course, is not limited to the literal act of foot washing, but, like any other powerful ritual, is steeped in symbol and metaphor. The experience of the Washing of Feet at the Holy Thursday liturgy amplifies the tradition from

being a simple re-enactment of a long-past action of Christ, to its becoming a transformative catalyst that challenge us now to adopt Christ’s attitude of selfless service, a transformation that can pervade our culture as a Church, and as a species. At home. In the office. At the store. In our car. In every facet of our lives.

With this amplifying of the call to service in mind, Corpus Christi Parish will at this Holy Thursday change what has traditionally been an “invitation only” demonstration where altar ministers would wash the feet of 12 selected parishioners, to a become ritual where ALL parishioners are asked to participate, both as washers of feet, and as “washees.” The hope is that the combined powerful gestures of humility and service will help our parish become ever-increasingly united in a shared commitment to humble service of one another.

Given this enhanced focus on the Washing of the Feet at Holy Thursday Liturgy, we encourage all parishioners to come to this powerful liturgy, open to the beauty of this ritual and prepared, as we continue our Lenten journey from comfort to conversion, to participate fully as one who is washed, and one who washes.