

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 17

Jesus said, “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”



—John 13:15

On Maundy Thursday evening, the church celebrates one of the most lovely and complex liturgies of the year. In most congregations, people gather to recall both the washing of feet and the institution of the first Eucharist—the two central acts of Jesus’ last meal with his friends. Even in the midst of Holy Week, the Eucharist is celebrated with joy. Often, the altar is stripped bare in preparation for Good Friday. But there is also the washing of feet.

Many congregations omit this practice, sometimes softening it by changing it to the washing of hands. In our culture, touching one another’s feet seems to break a taboo. Indeed it does. That is why it is so important, I think, to do what Jesus commanded—to practice this sign of vulnerability and love as we wash the feet of others and have our own feet washed. All pride is stripped away in this ritual, and our Christian charity is laid bare.

In this tender act, we see that in Jesus the distinctions between powerful and powerless are wiped away. How different would our culture be if we found ways to be servants and to be served on a daily basis?

—Scott Gunn