

21. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The service of Jesus”

Jn 13:1-11

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "You are not all clean."

We all live from God's love, for everything we receive comes from this source and is nourished by it. God wants to show His love to the utmost to His creatures, whom He wants to elevate to the status of His children. By sending His Son into the world, who became man for us, this love was visibly manifested.

Jesus knew that the hour of His death was imminent. It was the hour of which He had spoken again and again, the hour that would bring redemption to humanity. In this context, He celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples, who had followed Him. He loved them, as well as all those whom the Father had entrusted to Him, to the end. However, there was one among the disciples who did not want to accept this love. We have already met him in other situations: when he did not understand the tender gesture of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with a precious perfume of spikenard and wiped them with her hair (Jn 12:3-4). We have also heard that, being in charge of the bag, he

appropriated what was put into it, in a way that did not correspond to the communion with Jesus and the other disciples. Sin had entered into his heart, sin of which he evidently did not repent and which darkened his heart to the point of gaining dominion over it.

Indeed, when a person does not repent of sin, the devil gains power over him and he succumbs more and more to his destructive influence. *'The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.'* Unfortunately, as we shall see below, he did not resist these malevolent whispers.

Jesus, on the other hand, gives us an eloquent sign of His love. He, the Son of God, to whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18), the Master, Lord and King of all men, washes the feet of His disciples and wipes them with a towel.

This gesture was so unexpected by the disciples that Peter at first refused to allow his Lord to wash his feet. This scene reminds us of the time when Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptized by Him: *'John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness."* (Mt 3:14-15).

In today's passage, Jesus makes Peter understand that, even if he does not yet understand, this gesture is necessary to have part with Him.

It is often difficult for us to understand at first glance what true greatness and love consist in. It consists in serving, as Jesus tells us and teaches us by His own example. God comes to serve people and invites everyone to understand and imitate Him (Mk 10:45).

Since God Himself is the first to do so, He shows us the secret of life: true mastery consists in serving. The Son of God washes the feet of His disciples; a gesture which the Church repeats every Holy Thursday at the celebration of the Last Supper, thus emphasising time and again that all ecclesial authority must be at the service of God and mankind.

How necessary it is for us men to know that true greatness is in service! In fact, it is also in service that true brotherhood in Christ is shown, which is to be extended to all men.

Thus we become brothers in Christ in the service of our loving Heavenly Father, and that changes the world! What a message this is! And God, for His part, grants all the graces necessary to make it a reality.

But first we must entrust ourselves to the Son of God and follow Him. Jesus is ready to draw all men to Himself, after having accomplished His work of love on the cross.

The Lord says to His disciples: *'You are clean'*, clean for having accepted His Word, for having followed Him and thus lived in the truth. However, Jesus spoke of one who was not clean. It was the one who was submissive to the devil, who seduced him to betray Jesus.