

Newman Institute  
**Why Read the Bible?**  
**The Washing of the Feet (John 13)**  
(4)  
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**Welcome**

- Next Sunday's Second Reading.
- Starting with ourselves.
- The Table of the Faith (I).
- Why is the Bible?
- How to read the Bible.
- The Table of the Faith (II).
- Conversation.
- A Prayer.

**Next Sunday's Second Reading  
Lectionary (Jerusalem Bible)**

His state was divine,  
yet Christ Jesus did not cling  
to his equality with God  
but emptied himself  
to assume the condition of a slave  
and became as men are;  
and being as all men are,  
he was humbler yet,  
even to accepting death,  
death on a cross.  
But God raised him high  
and gave him the name  
which is above all other names  
so that all beings  
in the heavens, on earth and in the  
underworld,  
should bend the knee at the name of  
Jesus  
and that every tongue should acclaim  
Jesus Christ as Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**New English Translation**

Philippians 2:5 You should have the same  
attitude toward one another that Christ  
Jesus had,  
6 who though he existed in the form  
of God  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be grasped,  
7 but emptied himself  
by taking on the form of a slave,  
by looking like other men,  
and by sharing in human nature.  
8 He humbled himself,  
by becoming obedient to the point  
of death  
—even death on a cross!  
9 As a result God highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,  
10 so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee will bow  
—in heaven and on earth and under  
the earth—  
11 and every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord  
to the glory of God the Father.

**Starting with ourselves**

- An image or a sentence that “stayed” with you?
- There may be more than one
- Some examples....

A voice I did not know said to me “I freed  
your should from the burden.” (Psalm  
81:5-6)

We could say more but could never say  
enough; let the final word be: “He is the  
all.” (Sirach 43:27)

Look, now is the acceptable time; look,  
now is the day of salvation! (2Corinthians  
6:2)

God's love has been poured into our  
hearts through the Holy Spirit that has  
been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. (Psalm 55:22)

- Brief sharing with your neighbour
- Brief sharing with us all

### The Table of the Faith (I)

- Come back to it later, but now:
  1. My own journey
  2. My community
  3. Living the faith
  4. Why I believe
- Scripture helps in each moment, as we shall see

### What is the Bible?

- Where is the Word of God to be found?
- The Word of God is to be found chiefly in the Scriptures.
- But not only...also in life and love, people and nature, wonder of all sorts...

*The Book is the very voice of the pilgrim People of God, and only within the faith of this People are we, so to speak, attuned to understand sacred Scripture.*  
Pope Benedict XVI in "The Word of God"

*faithfully re-expressed for the modern world.*  
Church of Ireland website

*The Bible tells of God's relationship with God's people through the centuries. This record always needs to be interpreted in the context of the church's faith, prayer and worship, and in such a way that what scripture said for its original audience is*

*God's word consoles and encourages us. At the same time it challenges us, frees us from the bondage of our selfishness and summons us to conversion. Because his word has the power to change our lives and to lead us out of darkness into the light.*  
Pope Francis, on the First Sunday of the Word of God

### How to read the Bible

*It is shallow enough for a child not to drown, yet deep enough for an elephant to swim in it.*  
St Augustine

*Metaphors for God drawn from human experience can easily be literalised. While we are immediately aware that the personal God is not really a rock or a mother eagle, it is easy enough to imagine that God is really a king or a father.*  
Sandra Marie Schneiders

*Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*  
St Jerome

- The Bible is a library.
- The Bible is record of relationship.
- Images of God, people, love etc. all evolved.
- Parts will speak at different times.
- Our experience today can open the word of God.
- The Word of God sheds light on our experience.
- This is the key to lectio divina.
- Aware that the Bible comes from a remote past.
- It takes time, familiarity, experience and prayer.
- No one line or verse will say it all.
- The Bible is to be read in the light of the whole.
- Still, God speaks to us today through the written Word of God.
- Different translations.
- Helps in understanding.

- Building up a familiarity, Sunday by Sunday.
- Universalis app is really useful.
- Don't be afraid to write on your Bible.

## **Table of the Faiths (II)**

### **My own journey**

- Search or quest for meaning.
- Longings of the heart.
- Becoming a "Hearer of the Word."
- Everywhere...including (chiefly!) in the Scriptures
- Especially perhaps in the Psalms.

### **My community**

- Belonging to the faith community
- Scripture at the heart of all we do.
- The regeneration of the Church can have no other genesis than Scripture.
- Scripture and the Synodal Pathway in our time.
- Especially perhaps with the help St Paul.

### **Living my faith**

- Encounter, first of all.
- Then, conversion and discipleship.
- 1. Discipleship and compassion.
- 2. Discipleship and service.
- 3. Discipleship and justice.
- 4. Discipleship and joy.
- Especially perhaps in the Prophets and the Gospels.

### **Why I believe**

- Scripture as a privilege place for exposing faith.
- But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. (1Peter 3:15)
- First, to ourselves.
- Gradually with others and even to others.
- Especially perhaps in the Wisdom Books and St Paul again.

## **Prayer**

Lord, inspire me to read your Scriptures  
and to meditate upon them day and night.  
I beg you to give me real understanding of what I read,  
that I in turn may put its precepts into practice.  
Yet, I know that understanding and good intentions are worthless,  
unless rooted in your graceful love.  
So I ask that the words of Scripture may also be not just signs on a page.  
but channels of grace into my heart. Amen.

(Origen, AD c.184-c.254)

## The Washing of the Feet

### Welcome

- John's Gospel
- The Hebrew Bible
- The Synoptic Tradition
- Reading "across" the Gospel
- Salvation in John
- And so...

### John's Gospel

- Very different to the other three Gospels:
- Longer scenes
- Longer discourses
- More symbolic, spiritual and theological
- Much less historical (with exceptions)
- Jesus is very much in charge
- Reading in the light of the Old Testament
- Noticing any links with the synoptic tradition (Mark)
- Reading "across" the Gospel itself (e.g. "water")

John 13:1 Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, that he should betray Jesus. 3 Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,

4 he got up from the meal, removed his outer clothes, took a towel and tied it around himself. 5 He poured water into the washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.

John 13:6 Then he came to Simon Peter. Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not understand what I am doing now, but you will understand after these things." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus replied, "The one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not every one of you." 11 (For Jesus knew the one who was going to betray him. For this reason he said, "Not every one of you is clean.")

John 13:12 So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on, he took his place at the table again and said to them, "Do you understand what I have done for you? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and do so correctly, for that is what I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example —you should do just as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the solemn truth, the slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent as a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

John 13:18 "What I am saying does not refer to all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who eats my bread has turned against me.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am he. 20 I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

A v.1

B v.2-3

C vv.4-5

Jesus' departure

Judas and the devil

preparation for the washing of the feet

	D vv.6-12	dialogue with Peter
	C* vv.12-20	Explanation the washing of the feet
	B* vv. 21-30	Judas and the devil
A* vv. 31-38		Jesus' departure

## The Jewish Bible

### Old Testament:

1. Prophetic gestures/enacted prophecies (very many)
  2. The Suffering Servant Songs (Isaiah 40-55)
  3. The word "example" (2 and 4 Maccabees)
- Enacted prophecies
  - Hosea marries a prostitute - Hosea 1-3
  - Isaiah gives symbolic names to his children - Is 7:3; 8:14
  - Jeremiah: the almond tree and the pot - Jer 1:11-14; the waistcloth hidden by the Euphrates Jer 13:1-11; the potter - Jer 18:1-12; the jug - Jer 19; the figs - Jer 24; the yoke - Jer 27-28; buying the field - Jer 32
  - Ezekiel makes a model of Jerusalem - Ez 4:1-3; the rationed food - Ez 4:9-19; the hair - Ez 5; Ezekiel with the exile's baggage - Ez 12:1-16; Ezekiel's "non-bereavement" - Ez 24:15-27
  - (Jesus: The appointment of the Twelve, open table-fellowship, the taking of a little child, the entry into Jerusalem, the Temple action, the cursing of the fig tree, and the Lord's Supper.)
  - In Second Isaiah (40-55), God's help to Israel is expressed in three ways: creation/redemption, the vindication of the Servant and the return to Zion.
  - There are four Suffering Servant Songs: 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12.
  - The "servant" is both the individual prophet and all of Israel.
  - In context, the suffering of the servant was exemplary, for the benefit of the community (and not substitutionary)
  - These mysterious poems proved to be an especially rich resource for early Christian reflection on the cross.
  - Fourth Song: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Isa 52:13 "Look, my servant will succeed!  
He will be elevated, lifted high, and greatly exalted-

Isa 53:11 Having suffered, he will reflect on his work,  
he will be satisfied when he understands what he has done.  
"My servant will acquit many,  
for he carried their sins.

John 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, etc.

Isa 52:13 "Look, my servant will succeed!  
He will be elevated, lifted high, and greatly exalted-

John 12:38 ...so that the word of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled. He said, "Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Isa 53:1 Who would have believed what we just heard? When was the Lord's power revealed through him?

- Greek has different words for "example"
- Charaktēr
- Eikōn
- Hupodeigma
- Hupogrammos
- Tupos / hupotoposis

- Hypodeigma
- An example of behaviour used for purposes of moral instruction, example, model, pattern.
- An indication of something that appears at a subsequent time, outline, sketch, symbol.

2 Macc 6:27 Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age 28 and leave to the young a noble **example** (*hypodeigma*) of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws. When he had said this, he went at once to the rack.

2 Macc 6:31 So in this way he died, leaving in his death an **example** (*hypodeigma*) of nobility and a memorial

of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

4 Macc 17:23 For the tyrant Antiochus, when he saw the courage of their virtue and their endurance under the tortures, proclaimed them to his soldiers as an **example** (*hypodeigma*) for their own endurance, 24 and this made them brave and courageous for infantry battle and siege, and he ravaged and conquered all his enemies.

### The Synoptic Tradition

1. The Last Supper (all three Synoptic Gospels)
2. The teaching on Service (Mark 8-10)
3. Linking the Supper and service (Luke 12 and 22)

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Synoptics	Lord's Supper	Crucifixion		First day of the week
	<b>Eve of Passover</b>	<b>Passover</b>		
John	Last Supper	Crucifixion		First day of the week
		<b>Eve of Passover</b>	<b>Passover</b>	

Mark 10:41 Now when the other ten heard this, they became angry with James and John. 42 Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognised as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them. 43 But it is not this way among you. Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:35-45 = Matthew 20:20-28

Luke 22:24 A dispute also started among them over which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 So Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, have them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them!

Luke 17:7 “Would any one of you say to your slave who comes in from the field after ploughing or shepherding sheep, ‘Come at once and sit down for a meal’? 8 Won’t the master instead say to him, ‘Get my dinner ready, and make yourself ready to serve me while I eat and drink. Then you may eat and drink’?”

### Reading “across” the Gospel

1. The introduction to John 13
2. Service and healing as theme (John 3:14-15)
3. Love as a theme (John 3:16)
4. Water as a symbol: 21 times
5. Jesus’ death as an act of loving service and healing

**John 13:1** Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end. **2** The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Jesus. **3** Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,

**4** he got up (= rose) from the meal, removed (= laid down) his outer clothes, took a towel and tied it around himself. **5** He poured water into the washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.

**John 13:6** Then he came to Simon Peter. Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” **7** Jesus replied, “You do not understand what I am doing now, but you will understand after these things.” **8** Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” **9** Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!” **10** Jesus replied, “The one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not every

one of you.” **11** (For Jesus knew the one who was going to betray him. For this reason he said, “Not every one of you is clean.”)

**John 13:12** So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on, he took his place at the table again and said to them, “Do you understand what I have done for you? **13** You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and do so correctly, for that is what I am. **14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too ought to wash one another’s feet. **15** For I have given you an example (= hupodeigma)—you should do just as I have done for you. **16** I tell you the solemn truth, the slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent as a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

**John 13:18** “What I am saying does not refer to all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the scripture, ‘*The one who eats my bread has turned against me.*’ **19** I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am he. **20** I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

### Salvation in John

- 3 dimensions: love, healing and service
- 2 mediations: Passover and New Creation
- 1 Enactment: the Holy Spirit
- *NB this is opposite of the Western tradition.*
- *NB John’s Gospel knows nothing of Adam’s sin, God’s anger and Jesus’ death as punishment and price.*

**And so**

- The washing of the feet is unique to John and of obvious importance to the Gospel writer.
- It was inspired by certain parabolic sayings in the prophetic and synoptic traditions.
- In form, it is a prophetic gesture, an enacted prophecy.
- In the context, this prophetic gesture has the same “function” as the action and words over the bread and the wine.
- Jesus is articulating his disposition as he faces death.
- Thus, God is serving humanity in Jesus death and resurrection.

**Conversation**