

# Maundy Thursday

**ENTIRELY CLEAN!**

**John 13:1-17, 31-35**

**Maundy Thursday**

**Analysis by Ron Starenko**

1Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4got up from the table, took off his robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand. "8Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. 14So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have

set you an example, that you should also do as I have done to you. 16Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

31When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified and God has been glorified in him. 32If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also ought to love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

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## **DIAGNOSIS: The Unwashed**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *“You Will Never Wash My Feet!”*

There must be something terribly offensive (almost something unclean) about Jesus’ act of washing the disciples’ feet. Jesus cuts across social, cultural, ethnic, and gender boundaries. We have a problem with that. And Peter, speaking on our behalf, raises a protest. As if surprised, he asks, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet” (v. 6)? Then he, along with all of us, outraged by Jesus’ violation of our cherished order of things, lashes back, “You will never wash my feet” (v. 8)! In the process we all become the unwashed.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *“You Do Not Know What I Am Doing”*

Hard-hearted, Peter is further offended by Jesus’ insight that

in his unwashed state he just doesn't get it. Jesus tells him, "You do not know what I am doing" (v. 7). How could any of us know what he is doing, as long as we are hiding behind our cleanliness, our imagined order of how things ought to be, our self-sufficiency, our domination of others? Unwashed within, we are blind to our hostility against Jesus, believing that his healing is misguided. Could it be that we, without saving faith, are unclean, unacceptable before God, the unwashed, traveling down the wrong path and not even know it?

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – “No Share With Me”**

Finally, Peter receives the most offensive blow of all, when Jesus speaks a condemning word, "You (will) have 'no share with me'" (v. 8). Tell me, how scary is that, to remain unwashed and unaware, with no way out, forever cut off from the mercy of God, when the healing of our Lord is no longer available to us? Judas missed the show altogether. Peter was on the verge of making the same exit. To come to our end without the benefits of the Lord's cleansing is an eternal disaster.

## **PROGNOSIS: The Baptized**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – “Unless I Wash You”**

Jesus nevertheless, proceeds to wash feet, and more. In the face of resistance Jesus speaks a saving word to Peter – and all of us no less – that there is hope for us, he says, only if “I wash you” (v. 14). Jesus knew what it would take to make us clean entirely. Already, in preparation for the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he would be going to the Father in death. He knew that nothing less than his innocent suffering and death could remove the stain of our uncleanness and unworthiness. For such a task Jesus knew that he had been born and baptized, to exchange his wholeness for our unhealth. Jesus knew that only in crossing over what separates us all from God

could he present us before his Father washed and cleansed. Dying as the unclean one, cursed and abandoned, Jesus makes eternally valid the Good News that in him we are now entirely clean.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *“Lord, Not My Feet Only But Also My Hands and My Head”*

When presented with the truth, the gift within his grasp, Simon Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head” (v. 9). He lays hold of the gift, accepts the exchange of Jesus’ life for his death, as if praying with the Psalmist, “Have mercy on my, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:1,2,7,10). Such a gift, of all that is new, we receive in our Baptism, the gift we continue to receive at the Table of mercy. We live only by Word and Sacrament, by the Holy Spirit working faith in our hearts to trust the promise that inside and out we are as clean as our Lord himself.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *“Wash One Another’s Feet”*

The outcome of such receiving is a new and radical giving, as Jesus says, “For I have set you an example, that you also do as I have done to you” (v. 15). The bottom line is “love one another” (v. 34). In the company of Jesus there are no distinctions, no ranks, no special privileges. In communion with Jesus, mutual love builds community, as we “discern the body” (1 Cor. 11:29), as hostility, hatred, separating ourselves from others, and seeking the domination of others all give way to a common life where forgiveness and healing becomes the sign of discipleship. For Peter and the other disciples, including us latter-day ones, the new commandment to love one another

empowers us to go over the boundary lines, creating community,  
to be the whole people of God, entirely clean!