

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Place a candle and a bowl of warm water at the center of your group with washcloths for each group member. Light the candle. Wet the washcloths and wash one another's hands in pairs.

LEADER: I see a new city coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her groom.

ALL: See, I make all things new.

LEADER: This is the dwelling place of God among humans. God will dwell with them, and they shall be God's people.

ALL: See, I make all things new.

LEADER: God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will no longer be death or mourning, crying out or pain.

ALL: See, I make all things new.

Love is a feeling, the warmth of an embrace when spouses finally find each other at home after work and commitments, the joy of getting flowers or holding a grandchild, the pleasure of someone making your favorite dessert.

Love is sometimes passionate, sexual, sensual, intimate. Love is attraction,



the excitement of meeting someone who reads as much or as widely, who cares about sustaining Earth, who values hope over cynicism, whom one can be oneself with.

Many people end their conversations on the phone, "Love you." In my family we tend to say, "More later." It's the same sentiment. The conversations will continue and keep us connected.

Love lived faithfully and sustained over time translates into actions. Love is a verb. Cook, clean, wash clothes, plan, shop, pay bills, fix. Like the bass drum in a marching band, these actions set the pace and rhythm of our days. Hard won achievements become cymbal crashes. Acts of kindness and

gratitude lift our hearts like twittering flutes.

As in Jesus' life, our lives sometimes ask more, even everything we can give. A sick child, a sick parent, mental illness, trips to the doctor, worry, fatigue. Our lives ask in the end all we have to give.

Jesus stakes his claim with us in our capacity to love one another. In each act we transcend our individual selves and free the power that heals and gives life, that holds families and friends together, that inspires service of country and church, that draws neighbors into communities.

● Whose love inspires your own?

GOSPEL



Love one another as I have loved you.

NARRATOR: After Judas went out, Jesus began to speak.

JESUS: Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will, in turn, glorify him soon. Children, I am with you only a little longer.

A new commandment I give you: love one another.

As I have loved you, so also you should love one another.

In this way, all will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another.

John 13.31-35

one another as Jesus does is to love to the end, all the way, with one's whole life unto death. Discipleship in John's community is not about status but about footwashing and service.

● How do people know you are a follower of Jesus?

● What is a personal commandment you keep? How is it like Jesus' new commandment?

● Compare footwashing with breaking bread and sharing a cup of wine as the symbolic actions through which the community remembers Jesus.

● Who models footwashing in your neighborhood, job, or ministry?

Jesus models love and service.

Last Sunday's gospel from John 10 climaxes in Jesus' proclamation, "The Father and I are one." In John's gospel Jesus is not only the teacher from Galilee but also the pre-existent Word. This high Christology causes conflict between Jews of John's community and Jews who follow Moses.

John's gospel inseparably ties its exalted view of Jesus' identity to the humble reality of Jesus' crucifixion and death. In John 13, Jesus possesses the omniscience of the Word. He knows that his hour has come "to pass from this world to the Father."

The gospel writer observes, "He had loved his own in this world and would show his love for them to the end" (13.1). Jesus' passage to the Father lasts more than a literal hour. It includes the last supper, his passion, death, and resurrection—his glorification, God's glorification in him.

In John's gospel Jesus does not institute the eucharist at the last supper as he does in the synoptic gospels. Instead Jesus washes

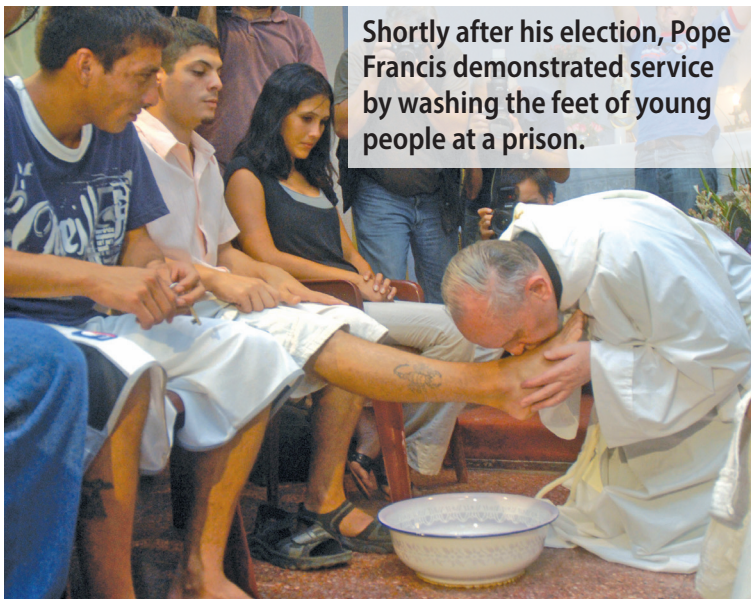
and dries his disciples' feet. In John, footwashing rather than blessing and sharing bread and wine becomes the symbolic action that anticipates and interprets the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross for his disciples. Jesus humbles himself and performs a simple and personal act of service for his friends.

In washing his friends' feet Jesus gives them a model. "As I have done," Jesus says, "so you must do." In the community that gives us John's gospel, the way to imitate Jesus' ultimate service and love—his humiliating death on the cross—is to serve one another. Perhaps Christians in this community need Jesus' example so they don't give some in the community more status than others.

Jesus' command to wash one another's feet parallels his command to love one another—the passage that forms Sunday's gospel. To love

After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus prepares them for his coming death in a farewell that lasts for four chapters. "I am with you only a little while longer," he says. He anticipates for his disciples and for us not only his absence but also life in the Spirit in our





Shortly after his election, Pope Francis demonstrated service by washing the feet of young people at a prison.

continuing relationship with him. The Church chooses passages from this farewell as its gospels for the Sundays after Easter each year.

This Sunday Jesus speaks knowing he comes from God and will return to God but also knowing one friend will betray him and one deny him. The gospel deliberately places Jesus' command to love one another as he has loved us between his prophecy that Judas will betray him (13.21-30) and his prophecy Peter will deny him (13.36-38).

Judas changes allegiance at the last supper. Officials' growing opposition to Jesus calls the question on this night. Jesus anticipates, "One of you will betray me." His words unsettle Peter, who nudges the beloved disciple to ask who. "The one to whom I hand a morsel," Jesus says. It is Judas, who then leaves this intimate meal of belonging among disciples.

At this point Jesus teaches his new commandment. It turns on the little word *as*, the likeness to his own love that Jesus expects of his disciples. "As I have

loved you, so you must love one another." Love for each other is how others will recognize us as Jesus' followers. Our love for each other will reveal the one we follow.

● **When have you experienced a parish community that makes clear they are Jesus' disciples?**

● **How does Judas's betrayal affect you?**

In the fourth gospel Jesus is the revealer. In his footwashing and in laying down his life for his friends, Jesus reveals his love for them and for us. Peter insists he is ready to reciprocate and give his life for his friend, but Jesus

knows better. Jesus' simple command to love one another takes a lifetime to transform us as we live it out.

A thousand years ago in feudal times St. Anselm understood Jesus' death as making satisfaction for our sins which offended God. Drawing on his own time, Anselm saw God as a feudal lord whose honor must be restored. Today this theology makes God an abusive father. The word *sacrifice* suggests unwilling victims. Self-sacrifice can stunt becoming a full self-giving person.

Love is a free act. Love grows through a succession of free responses that serve our marriages, friendships, and commitments. Understanding Jesus as wholeheartedly self-giving emphasizes his free gift of himself.

Love is a verb that can welcome immigrants, hold a benefit for a sick neighbor, serve meals at shelters and experience others' burdens. Love puts faith into action.

● **How do you see the Christian community—more like a flock that belongs to a shepherd who knows and cares for you or more like a company of Jesus' friends who love one another?**

CHARITY

JUSTICE

DO SOMETHING

● **On whose work are you depending in your daily life? How many are new immigrants? How do public policies in your area treat these workers? With what groups can you work to help insure fair wages and benefits for workers?**

God opens a door of faith to the nations.

In the first reading last Sunday Paul gets thrown out of the town of Antioch in Asia Minor, after preaching in the local synagogue. This Sunday's first reading recounts the end of Paul's first journey. In the parts of the journey between these two passages, Paul and Barnabas preach, make converts at the synagogue in Iconium, and anger others who try to stone them.

In Lystra, Paul heals a man who was crippled from birth, leading the people to think Paul is the Greek god Hermes and Barnabas is Zeus. They want to make sacrifices to them, but instead Paul preaches the good news until his enemies from earlier towns arrive, have him stoned, and leave him for dead. His disciples circle around him to save him; he and Barnabas move on to Derbe, the farthest point they reach on their first journey.

Like Jesus and Peter, Paul in his first missionary journey speaks and heals in the Spirit. He finds both new disciples and people who reject his message and seek to kill him. Sunday's reading begins as Paul and Barnabas turn toward home.

Paul and Barnabas head home.

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the gospel in Derbe and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and then to Antioch, strengthening their disciples and encouraging them to persevere in the faith, saying, "We must suffer many afflictions to enter into the reign of God." In each church they appointed elders and with prayers and fasting commended them to the Lord, in whom they had put their faith.

Then Paul and Barnabas passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. After preaching the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had first been commended to the grace of God for the work they had completed. After they arrived and the church gathered, they reported all that God had helped them do and that God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

Acts 14.21-27

- What keeps you in the Church today?
- Who sustains your community of faith as do the elders Paul appoints?

PRAY

Make a commitment to serve friends, family members, or co-workers in a needed way. Share it with the group if you feel comfortable doing so.

LEADER: We build the city of God as God's partners on earth.

ALL: Let us do our part to make all things well.

LEADER: Our community, ourselves, all people of Earth itself—we are God's dwelling place.

ALL: Let us do our part to make all things well.

LEADER: We pledge to sustain one another in our joys and sorrows.

ALL: To act as kin to the people and creatures who dwell in God with us.



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LUKE'S GOSPEL: WRITTEN FOR US

Beginning in June all our Sunday gospels will be from Luke. In Luke's gospel, Jesus seeks out the lost and forgotten, gives second chances, welcomes the sinner home. Sister Joan's book focuses on these themes in its nine short chapters. Ideal for bible study and faith-sharing groups and for homilists. Go to goodgroundpress.com to read sample chapters.

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