

Holy Thursday: Spending Time at Jesus' Table



*“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”
(1 Corinthians 11:23-24)*

PREPARE:

We invite you to find a comfortable position as you read this reflection. Light a candle if you wish and become aware of your breathing. When you are ready, slowly read the reflection, pause when you are drawn to stop and reflection on what you have read. Write down your thought and feeling to ponder on these later.

REFLECTION:

In their last hours as enslaved persons in Egypt, God invited Israel to the table, planting the seeds of an annual commemoration which would draw Jesus and his disciples together in the Passover season. As the disciples gathered around the table, Jesus inaugurated a new feast in which we are offered the bread of life and the cup of salvation. *“Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24).*

Scripture offers us insight into the parameters of this feast, through which God invites us anew to the table. In the symbols of human nourishment—bread and wine — God reveals the deepest identity of Jesus.

Through the fruit of the vine and the work of human hands, we encounter and grow in understanding of the Son of God incarnate. God chooses to be with us and for us, to share in our joys and our sufferings, our everyday journeys through life.

And what do we learn from Jesus? He is not a facile role model, the answer to *“what would Jesus do?”* Rather, Jesus challenged us to a life of sacrificial service. Revealingly, Jesus rose from the table.

As on Easter morning, everything was about to change. Jesus humbled himself, replaced his cloak with a towel, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet—in a stark role reversal, the master served his disciples.

In God's Kingdom, we are not called to seek power and glory. The first among us are those who choose a life of humble service.

Jesus demonstrated moreover that this *service is due to all people*. The religious authorities grumbled about Jesus' propensity for dining with outcasts and sinners. He conversed with a Samaritan — a woman, no less — in public. He healed the servant of a Roman centurion, invited a tax collector into his inner circle, and promised paradise to a condemned criminal. He even forgave his executioners.

Jesus walked the talk: *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).*

In a culture increasingly hamstrung by fear of the other and politics of distrust and exclusion, we would do well to spend time at Jesus' table.

Despite medieval paintings with haloed disciples, on the night of the Last Supper the gathered community was not a picture of purity. Think about who was present:

- Peter, who would commit an act of violence in the garden and deny knowing Jesus;
- the majority of the disciples, who would abandon Jesus in their fear; and yes,
- Judas, who had already entered into a pact to betray the Son of God.

On that Holy Thursday, Jesus did not deem his very human and fallible followers unworthy to sit at his table.

He talked with them, shared a meal with them, washed their feet, and offered them his body and blood. Jesus did not exclude them—he gave them communion, as he does for each one of us today.

And then, Jesus called us to do likewise: *"Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).*

How will we respond?

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Gaze – gently on the image as you ponder these questions.

How will I respond?

Am I one of the disciples?

Am I called to action?

