
Maundy Thursday Reflection

Lord Jesus, give us joy that we might serve others, for in tending wounds of those who suffer, we sense your healing grace at work in us.

The liturgies of the Triduum are a beautiful invitation for us to enter more fully into the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, taking us out of the regular form of Sunday Mass and experiencing something different. Today we celebrate Maundy Thursday, the first part of the Triduum, in very unusual circumstances. Unable to celebrate this Triduum together, many of us will be watching the ceremonies from home, rather than in the pews which will remain empty. The measures brought in to fight the Coronavirus outbreak will change how we mark the next few days.

One of the most powerful actions of the Triduum will sadly be one of the things that will be lost this year; the moment where the priest reenacts Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. In the readings we hear Jesus' explanation of his actions before he sat down to share his Last Supper with His disciples: *'If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'*

This message is one that has become deeply ingrained in the Christian way of life, with acts of loving service being the way of giving witness to the faith we hold; a natural expression of our love for God and neighbour. It is natural that service is one of the three prongs of the mission of JRS. This service is expressed in many practical ways in the highly varied projects JRS operates around the world. Here in the UK our weekly day centre is a place where some of these acts of service are obvious, whether it be our volunteers cooking a hot lunch for our friends or staff giving advice and support to those who need it.

There is always a danger in any kind of charitable work that a sense of helper and helped can become a barrier to relationship, but the service aspect of the mission of JRS is rooted in the model Jesus offers in today's Gospel. The JRS charter highlights that we are to serve as companions and this too is clear to see in our day centre each week. Not only do our volunteers spend plenty of time getting to know our refugee friends by name and building close bonds with them, a large part of the team who serve are themselves refugees who give their skills, time and care to serve one another. It is they who are the greatest living witnesses of Jesus's example at work at JRS UK.

In this time of uncertainty, where acts of physical service and compassion are becoming more difficult to carry out, the call to serve one other does not go away. We are presented with new, if somewhat challenging, situations in which we can continue to be loving servants at a time of great need.

As you stay awake with the Lord in the garden, we invite you to reflect on what ways might you be able to offer service to your Lord and to your neighbor in this hour of need?