

## *Holy Thursday Gospel reflection: Unite yourself with Christ*



By Bernadette Gasslein (article found at catholicdigest.com)

“Master, are you going to wash my feet?” The shock in Peter’s question is clear. How could his Lord and master stoop so low? Paul answered clearly in last Sunday’s liturgy: “He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.”

“Father, are you going to wash my feet?” “Sister, brother, friend, are you going to wash my feet?” The question is still pertinent today, and sometimes there is as much resistance now as Peter manifested centuries ago.

Self-emptying isn’t relevant; it’s prophetic. Try it. Get down on your knees in front of someone you love. Or better still, in front of a complete stranger. Gently remove their shoes and socks. See the calluses, the manicured feet, the twisted joints of the one who suffers from arthritis. Take that foot into your hands. Splash warm water on it; feel the tension, the relaxation; and then look up into their eyes. Recognize the new intimacy. A bond has been forged between servant and served. Ritual breaks barriers that we struggle to maintain. Don’t expect it to be comfortable: challenging, perhaps; consoling, hopefully.

Foot washing unites us with the self-emptying Christ. It opens a door to the mystery of God’s self-giving that we celebrate during these three days. Whether foot washing, eucharistic self-giving, or self-surrender on the cross, each opens the door to the same mystery. God gives the divine self, in Jesus, for the life of the world.

# Never Forget: A Reflection on Holy Thursday and the Eucharist

By Mark Hart (article found at [biblestudyforcatholics.com](http://biblestudyforcatholics.com))

I don't have the greatest memory. I'm constantly setting reminders on my phone and sending emails *to myself* so that I remember to do certain tasks, whether it's a grocery list or a child's pickup time. It's possible I'm just getting old, or perhaps the stresses of the day take my attention. Maybe I just have too much on my plate and in my schedule. Regardless of the reason, I am a man in need of reminders if I'm going to get done what needs to get done.



I used to wonder if the Israelites had short-term memory. I mean every time I read the Old Testament it seemed as though God the Father had to say to them, “Remember *this* and remember *that*.” They were told to remember the Sabbath (Ex 20:8), to remember the Exodus (Dt 5:15), to remember God’s fidelity at Jericho (Jos 4:7), to remember what Amalek did (Dt 25:17), and so forth.

Long before Siri, God’s children relied on his divinely inspired “to-do” lists. The proverbial string was constantly being tied around the Jews’ fingers to help them to *remember*. So why did God so constantly warn them not to forget (Dt 4:9)? Why did the Father have to keep telling us to *remember*, anyway?

Put simply, God warns us to remember *because he knows we will forget*. We will forget his faithfulness in times of suffering, his love in times of desolation and his promise in times of drought. We will forget he is always with us, that he fights the battle for us and that he has given us everything we need to emerge victorious. When we “remember” God and his promise, his fidelity is no longer a distant memory but a present reality.

## One Last Supper

Taken, blessed, broken, and shared. It was a formula the disciples had seen before, when Jesus fed the multitudes. It was the formula again during the Passover meal that Thursday night, but its effects would prove eternal.

As the sun set that fateful night, the Sanhedrin no doubt thought they had hatched the perfect plan. Securing Jesus' arrest through the paid betrayal of one of the Lord's closest followers, the Jewish leaders must have thought they'd be rid of this trouble-making Rabbi once and for all. Little did they know that while they plotted Jesus' demise that just hundreds of yards away in an upper room, God was hatching his own plan to ensure Christ's presence among us eternally.

This was no ordinary Passover meal. The ritual may have looked similar but Christ's words would breathe new meaning and usher in the New Covenant. As Christ washed the feet of the Apostles, we were given a new vision of what servant leadership necessitates. As the Lord instituted the Eucharist, we were given an invitation to intimacy the likes of which the world had never known and could never top. In that Eucharistic institution, too, we were given a new sacramental priesthood through which God's children could regularly receive his divine mercy and taste salvation.

The elements are the same. The actions and words are the same. Not just in the Gospel episodes, but also in every single Mass—every liturgy from then until now, and from now until the end of time. They signify more than we comprehend, because it's not only the bread and wine upon the altar that are being taken and blessed, broken and shared, but we ourselves, the mystical body of Christ, that are being changed, as well.

Simple elements: bread and wine—completely humble in form. Wheat ground down into flour. Crushed grapes left to sit in a barrel until they change their composition. It's these humble things that the God of the universe uses to speak the language of his covenant, to bring his presence in a uniquely profound way into the world. It's in this action of God's Spirit, active in the priesthood, that we as Catholics are given our greatest gift—the gift of Holy Eucharist. It takes the Pascal Mystery of Jesus' Passion, death and resurrection, and makes it continually present to us.

## More Than Words

God knows that in the midst of our weeks and years—whether they be joyful or sorrowful—we will need to be reminded of his fidelity, mercy, and great love. Consider our Savior's words from the upper room, now.

Jesus' command was “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). The word “remembrance” means more than to “recollect.” Jesus wasn't saying, “Hey, guys, after I'm gone, why don't you all get together and reminisce. Tell some funny stories, sing some songs, check in with one another because accountability is important, and then, you know, ‘remember’ me. Just think about all the good times we had.”

No, this new covenant would fulfill what the prophet Jeremiah had foretold hundreds of years prior (Jer 31:31-34). In this new and everlasting covenant, we would **“re-member”** Christ—become one (member) with him, again—through the living bread of his living body (Jn 6:35, 48, 51, 53-56). This was no misunderstanding, for even St. Paul, not present in the upper room that night, confessed over twenty years later that the tradition was handed on to him orally (1 Cor 11:23-26).

Through the Eucharist, Christ **remembers** us as he promised (Mt 28:20), and in doing so renews our relationship with the Father, again and again. It's in this moment after receiving the God of the universe in his most Blessed Sacrament, more than at any other time in the course of our week, that things are finally *on earth as they are in heaven*. It's for this reason, as well, that St. Paul warns us against receiving Christ's body and blood if we are not in a state of grace (1 Cor 11:27-29); our souls ought to be properly disposed and prepared to become walking tabernacles if we walk forward to receive him. Christ sacrificed for us. It is the understatement of a lifetime to say that the least we can do is reconcile any serious sin before he humbles himself to **remember** us and consume us with his love, as we **remember** and consume him.

When we receive Christ's flesh in the Eucharist, we are finally fulfilling his directive to "do this in **remembrance**" (Lk 22:19). We are no longer members of the body of Christ, figuratively or symbolically, but physically and ethereally. *This* is how "heaven and earth are filled with his glory," as we proclaim with joy at every liturgy. *This* is how we worship God *on earth as it is in heaven*, by being in communion with him.

This is why the Father invites us to his table weekly if not daily—that we would never forget—that we might remember. Christ knows your suffering. The Cross is the eternal reminder that God understands your pain but with that recollection the one who is timeless also offers us a timely solution in his Eucharist.

Even if you forget everything else in your calendar and on your grocery list. Even if age or stress or busyness leave you wandering about aimlessly like me, remember this: the God of the universe invites you to consume his flesh and blood that you might be consumed by his love. He has invited you to become a walking tabernacle. There is no higher affirmation in creation that the Creator could offer you.

The only question you have to answer is, "Will you accept this invitation to love and to serve?"

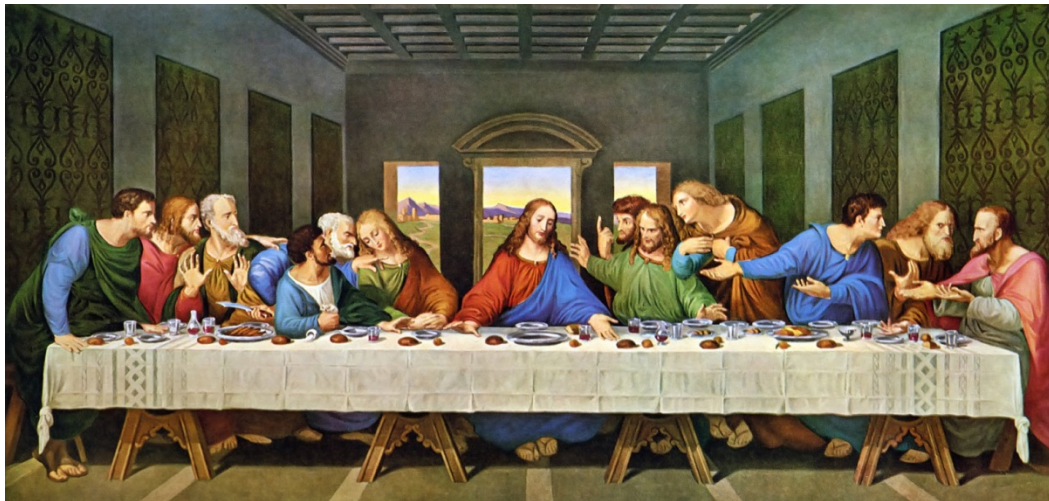
God would rather die than risk spending eternity without you. Never forget that fact. "Do this in remembrance of me" is not just a command...it's an invitation. Choose wisely and you will be reminded what made this particular Thursday so very holy.





# Holy Thursday

(article found at [mycatholiclife.com](http://mycatholiclife.com))



## ***No last will and testament has been as heeded as Christ's***

From the moment Christ first uttered the words at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening, the Church has never ceased to be faithful to them: “Do this in memory of me.” These words of a man about to die, if not a dying man, were a commandment more than a request, marching orders more than a mission statement. And everyone in that upper room understood exactly what He meant. No last will and testament of any man has ever been as faithfully fulfilled as these last words of Christ. What Christ asked to be done has been done, and continues to be done, every day, in every country, throughout the world, by every single priest who stands at an altar and recites the words of consecration *in persona Christi*.

The world has never moved on from Christ and never will. He is not in the world's rear view mirror. He is here, He is present, He is alive. And in every tight corner of the globe, from a tidy Polish village to a rambling Filipino city, from a Palestinian monastery hugging a sun-baked cliff to an Argentinian parish in a sprawling suburb, the Mass makes Him real because it is done in memory of Him. Literally every minute of every day, Mass is celebrated across the globe in a ceaseless offering to God the Father. “From the rising of the sun to its setting,” in a thousand tongues, priests bend slightly over their chalices and the white linens covering their altars and carefully repeat a chain of words in a cadence known to all the faithful: “Take this, all of you, and eat of it... Take this all of

you, and drink from it...This is my Body... This is my Blood.” No words are more familiar. None! Not Shakespeare’s, not Caesar’s, not Lincoln’s. The everlasting words of the cross-cultural and cross-generational Christ simply have no equal.

If we expect from the Church the sacraments, we will never be disappointed. If we receive from the Church more than the sacraments, we should rejoice. The Last Supper fulfills and completes the Jewish Passover sacrifice ordered by God of Moses and the Jews in Egypt. The Last Supper, at the same time, prefigures in an unbloody way the physical sacrifice Christ would make on the morrow on the hill of Calvary. In the Last Supper, Christ also gives priests the perennial form for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Last Supper, then, is a composite act of Jewish and Christian ritual, of Old and New Testament theology, of historical and spiritual realities all packed into one dense liturgical act which the Church presents anew at every Mass. The Mass is the Christian work of art *par excellence*. It is the public act which never stops showing. It is the magnet which pulls mankind into thousands of churches every morning, noon, and night.

We do this in memory of Him because God deserves worship as a matter of justice, not charity. We do this in memory of Him because He ordered us to do so. We do this in memory of Him because it prefigures what we will hopefully do in heaven for eternity. And we do this in memory of Him for a thousand million reasons locked in the quiet places of a thousand million hearts: For Jill to come back home. So that Robert survives the war. In thanksgiving for a good husband. So that a pain in the gut not be what it might be. In gratitude for the rain that saved the crops. At a king’s crowning, a convict’s death, or the bond of marriage. For the shocked just after the martyrs’ mangled bodies were dragged over the red sand out of the arena. In thanksgiving because my father did not die of cancer, and in remembrance of my cousin who did. For the fireman who couldn’t find his way out of the building, for the barren woman, for the anniversary of an aged couple, or for the nation on its birthday. There is no end of reasons. Month after month, year after year, century after century, until the sands of time run out, the Lord’s Holy Thursday command echoes over the waters and down the millenia: “Do this in memory of me.”

*Lord Jesus Christ, Your total physical gift of self on Good Friday began internally at the Last Supper. May the faithful often profit from Your priestly ministry by receiving Your body and blood consecrated on Your sacred altars by those who share in Your one priesthood today.*

# Prayer Meditation for Holy Thursday

(Prayer found at [mycatholiclife.com](http://mycatholiclife.com))



My Most Precious Lord Jesus, this night You gathered with Your Apostles to share with them Your last meal. But this was no ordinary meal. This was the gift of Your most Sacred Body and Blood, soon to be broken and poured out on the Cross for the salvation of the world.

Allow me, dear Lord, to spend this night in prayer and meditation with You. After the meal, You invited Your Apostles to join You for one hour, to stay awake and keep vigil as You prepared for Your arrest. The Apostles fell asleep, leaving You in Your bitter agony alone.

I accept Your gentle invitation of love, dear Lord, to spend this night in vigil with You. May I enter Your Heart as it faced the coming persecution You were to endure for my sins. May I console Your Sacred Heart and know the love and Mercy that flowed forth.

Lord, when I face the crosses of my own life, give me Your divine courage and strength to say “Yes” to the Will of the Father. Your love for me is abundant and is perfect in every way. Help me to know that love, to embrace it and to allow it into my life.

I make my vigil with You this night, dear Lord. I love You; help me to love You with all my heart. Jesus, I trust in You.