

# The Washing of the Feet

They arose from table, and whilst they were arranging their clothes, as they usually did before making their solemn prayer, the major-domo came in with two servants to take away the table. Jesus, standing in the midst of his Apostles, spoke to them long, in a most solemn

manner. I could not repeat exactly his whole discourse, but I remember he spoke of his kingdom, of his going to his Father, of what he would leave them now that he was about to be taken away, etc. He also gave them some instructions concerning penance, the confession of sin, repentance, and justification.

I felt that these instructions referred to the washing of the feet, and I saw that all the Apostles acknowledged their sins and repented of them, with the exception of Judas. This discourse was long and solemn. When it was concluded, Jesus sent John and James the

Less to fetch water from the vestibule, and he told the Apostles to arrange the seats in a half circle. He went himself into the vestibule, where he girded himself with a towel. During this

time, the Apostles spoke among themselves, and began speculating as to which of them would be the greatest, for our Lord having expressly announced that he was about to leave

them and that his kingdom was near at hand, they felt strengthened anew in their idea that he had secret plans, and that he was referring to some earthly triumph which would be theirs at the last moment.

Meanwhile Jesus, in the vestibule, told John to take a basin, and James a pitcher filled with water, with which they followed him into the room, where the major-domo had placed another empty basin.

Jesus, on returning to his disciples in so humble a manner, addressed them a few words of reproach on the subject of the dispute which had arisen between them, and said among other things, that he himself was their servant, and that they were to sit down, for him to

wash their feet. They sat down, therefore, in the same order as they had sat at table. Jesus went from one to the other, poured water from the basin which John carried on the feet of each, and then, taking the end of the towel



wherewith he was girded, wiped them. Most loving and tender was the manner of our Lord while thus humbling himself at the feet of his Apostles.

Peter, when his turn came, endeavoured through humility to prevent Jesus from washing his feet: 'Lord,' he exclaimed, 'dost thou wash my feet?' Jesus answered: 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' It appeared to me that he said to him privately:

'Simon, thou hast merited for my Father to reveal to thee who I am, whence I come, and whither I am going, thou alone hast expressly confessed it, therefore upon thee will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. My power will remain with thy successors to the end of the world.' Jesus showed him to the other Apostles, and said, that when he should be no more present among them, Peter was to fill his place in their regard. Peter said: 'Thou shalt never wash my feet!' Our Lord replied: 'If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me.' Then Peter exclaimed: 'Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus replied: 'He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all.' By these last words he referred to Judas. He had spoken of the washing of the feet as signifying purification from daily faults, because the feet, which are continually in contact with the earth, are also continually liable to be soiled, unless great care is taken.

This washing of the feet was spiritual, and served as a species of absolution. Peter, in his zeal, saw nothing in it but too great an act of abasement on the part of his Master; he knew not that to save him Jesus would the very next day humble himself even to the ignominious death of the cross. When Jesus washed the feet of Judas, it was in the most loving and affecting manner; he bent his sacred face even on to the feet of the traitor; and in a low voice bade him now at least enter into himself, for that he had been a faithless traitor for the last year. Judas appeared to be anxious to pay no heed whatever to his words, and spoke to John, upon which Peter became angry, and exclaimed: 'Judas, the Master speaks to thee!' Then Judas made our Lord some vague, evasive reply, such as, 'Heaven forbid, Lord!' The others had not remarked that Jesus was speaking to Judas, for this words were uttered in a low voice, in order not to be heard by them, and besides, they were engaged in putting on their shoes.

Nothing in the whole course of the Passion grieved Jesus so deeply as the treason of Judas. Jesus finally washed the feet of John and James.

He then spoke again on the subject of humility, telling them that he that was

**the greatest**

**among them was to be as their servant, and that henceforth they were to wash one another's feet. Then he put on his garments, and the Apostles let down their clothes, which they had girded up before eating the Paschal Lamb.**