[Washing of feet: changing from “being served” to “being a servant"](https://centroloyola.org.br/revista/outras-palavras/espiritualidade/739-lava-pes-passagem-de-ser-servido-para-ser-servidor%22%20%5Co%20%22Lava-p%C3%A9s%3A%20passagem%20de%20%5C%22ser%20servido%5C%22%20para%20%5C%22ser%20servidor%5C%22)

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“I, your Lord and teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet”

 (John 13:14)

Jesus feels that his "hour" is approaching, gathers his disciples and expresses his last wish with a gesture that will forever mark the history of mankind: the "washing of feet".

The text from John tells us that Jesus performed the "washing of feet" during supper. All meals had the “washing of hands.” Some special suppers had the “washing of feet” at the beginning as a sign of welcome and hospitality.

Jesus performs his gesture while the meal is taking place. Perhaps He is demonstrating a very close relationship between “eating” and serving, i.e., between the Eucharist and caring service.

Until Jesus, the guests to a meal were served and left satisfied. After Jesus, the guests to a meal serve each other and leave the meal to serve others. The gift received is shared among their own, but that is not enough; it needs to be made available to all, starting with the most needy. The gift is both grace and mission. The strength it brings is to lead life in abundance.

Jesus “rose up from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist.”

**“Arose from the table”:** This gesture by Jesus has a special meaning. It reveals that we cannot serve by remaining in our comfort zones. The gesture of rising denotes that there is something to be done.

**“Standing up”**  it is a posture that expresses readiness to serve; to do so, it is necessary to move from one's own “place” and down to another’s “place.” It is leaving one's own comfort, it is dynamism. Jesus does not make a theatrical gesture; He reveals to the apostles a "new angle" or a new way of looking at things: not from the diners' place, but from the perspective of those who are not seated at the table.

Jesus’ gesture invites us to move, that is, to take the place of the person who is not at the table. What do we notice as new at this point?

**“Being at the table” is always a sign of fraternitas**, of communion, but it is necessary to know when to get up at the appropriate time in order to serve with love.

**“Took off his outer garment”:** He disrobes himself. Removing the outer garment is a free and sovereign initiative that comes from within. The outer garment prevents freedom of movement, does not allow for doing the job easily. There are "outer garments" which are signs of power

In everything the Lord assumes the position of servant, to serve. He changes his outer garment for an apron: this seems to be the distinct fundamental watershed between religion before and after Jesus Christ.

The religious authorities wore distinct badges of authority-and power to serve the people. Jesus undresses himself in order to serve. He truly serves as a servant. The others served as masters.

It is necessary to rip off "all the garments of power" in order to rediscover the true human dignity removed and stripped of all appearances. There is no service without undressing all appearances of power, strength, prestige. It is not possible to love by placing yourself apart from each other.

"Put water in a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel with which he was girded." Usually preparations are left up to others; it is the servant who prepares the basin with water for the master to wash another's feet. Here Jesus takes over the preparations, he doesn’t leave it to another**. The water used is not used violently nor forcefully, but with extreme delicacy, with attention and love**. To love is to touch closely, to help, to walk together ...; in this gesture of elevation Jesus reveals a “physical” love, of body contact and service, of human help and dignity. He not only wanted to teach, to feed, but to approach, to kneel, to wash.

Jesus’ gesture expresses who He is. He is totally a servant. All of His being is to serve. He is present in that which He does, and He does all that He proposes to His disciples.

Washing the feet of the disciples: Leaning over their feet, all the way to the floor. With reverence, the master washes the disciples' feet: this is the dynamic that reveals the newness of the Kingdom of God. **“Washing” the disciples' feet is taking care of those who serve the servants.**

Jesus knew that his disciples had fragile feet, feet of clay. And if the feet are, in the Jewish tradition, a symbol of childhood and pleasure, their feet would undoubtedly need to be washed of all their negative memories. Each disciple was a sick child, and the child must first be healed before he sets out to proclaim the Gospel, the Good News.

“After he had washed their feet, he took up his garment, returned to the table, and said to them," Do you understand what I have done for you?" He replaces the outer garment, but does not remove the apron. He assumes and visualizes a new reality that characterizes the new way of being, which is right for Christians. Love-service has as its first symbol the apron. The apron is the seal of authenticity that guides, gives credibility to, and dignifies the authority that is service. Christian authority is born of service, sustained in it, perseveres only by serving.

Jesus asks that the dynamics initiated by Him be continuous, progressive and circular, starting from the middle to the periphery, in the shape of a circle, in order to reach everyone. The new way of exercising authority is practiced first among all who attend the supper, but it must be exercised without limit of time or space, i.e., it must reach every creature at all times to the maximum.

All foot washing gestures have their own sacredness, reverence, peace and special calm. There is no hurry, there is no aggression, there is nothing that can give the slightest appearance of something that is being required. In the rush of life it is urgent to resume the language of gestures that are lost in the hurry, in the habit of doing many things because others run us over and distract us from the essentials.

**Biblical Text:  John 13:1-15**

**Prayer:** May you be someone who, in an admiration of gratitude, approaches this bold gesture of Jesus (taking off his outer garment and putting on an apron), in order to purify feelings, straighten paths and deepen the journey with the brothers.

Your identification with Jesus gives you a new way of seeing, evaluating, choosing and positioning yourself. It is contemplation, the most engaging posture, that can make you see the miracle; and, sensitized, will open you to the dimension of greater service, out of sheer gratitude.

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