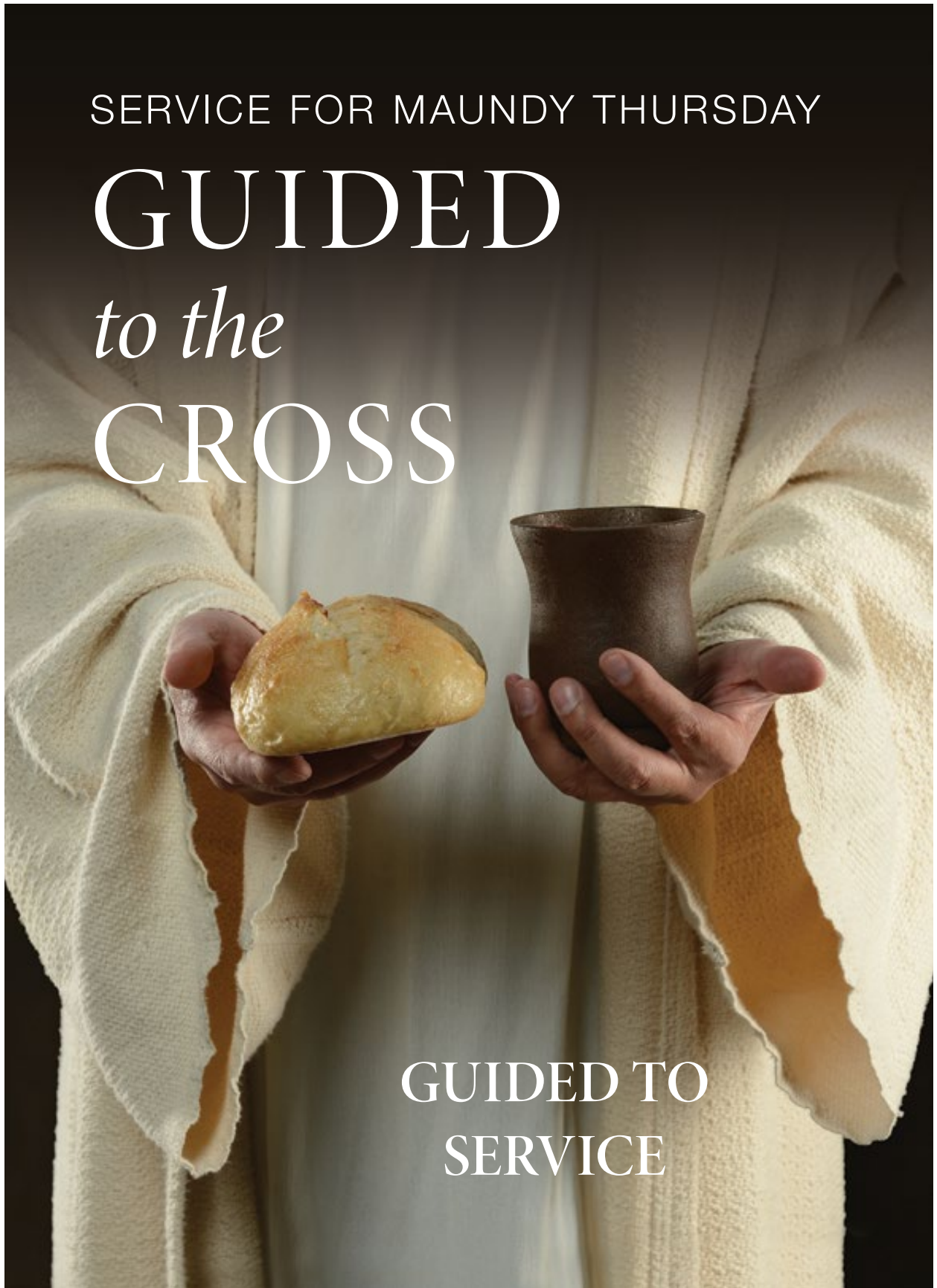


SERVICE FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

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SERMONS FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

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SERMONS FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

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SERMON

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

P Grace, mercy and peace to you, my dear Christian friends. Welcome to Maundy Thursday. Welcome to the night before we are guided to the cross of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Water and a basin, bread and wine—these are the primary elements of this evening. What do they have in common? They are used by our Lord in acts of service toward his disciples in special and unique ways.

Think of the scene in the Upper Room with Jesus and his disciples gathered together to celebrate the Passover in what they assume will be the traditional manner. But right from the start, the disciples see that this will be no ordinary night. Jesus bends down and takes a basin of water and a towel and asks the disciples to sit down so that he can wash their feet. This is not something ordinarily done by the host of a meal. It is a task reserved for the lowliest of servants. The disciples are taken aback. It is Peter, of course, who speaks up in disbelief, Listen to this exchange, recorded in John 13:6-10: Peter asks, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.”

The washing of feet has many aspects to uncover. First, it is something that Jesus indicates as necessary at this moment. It is something that has a greater meaning to our lives and something that ties us more directly to Jesus. When Peter boldly declares that Jesus wash his head and hands, too, we sort of scoff, but Jesus points to the fact that it is the feet that need the most cleaning, because feet are prone to getting more dusty on the road as the people of that day walked everywhere. The disciples' feet are made clean of dirt so that they can walk the road before them, and the implication here is that their hearts are clean of the filth of sin as they walk ahead—except for Judas, who is internally unclean because of his impending act of betrayal already determined in his heart.

After he has completed the washing of his disciples' feet, Jesus opens up a little more about what he is doing here. Listen now to John 13:12-16: “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.” The washing of feet is a lesson in service. And no one is above serving another. Jesus does not want us to just leave the serving up to him. He wants us to serve one another just like he did. And how does he serve? He serves humbly and quietly, with assurance and without complaint, not halfheartedly or flippantly. He makes sure the job is done right. Jesus does what he teaches, and so should we.

Jesus' act of service on this holy night guides us in the service we perform for others in Jesus name throughout our lives. No job should be too demeaning for us to accept. No dirty or disgusting part of our service should prevent us from following through with helping another. No distraction should keep us from putting our whole heart, soul, mind and strength into a task meant to benefit the needs of others. We can come up with a number of reasons to say no to a request or opportunity to serve, but Jesus helps us in this action to see that we should always be ready to say yes to others who truly need our assistance. No disciple was turned away by Jesus that night, even, presumably, Judas. Jesus washed Judas' feet just like he did the others. Jesus' servant heart still reached out to this one whom he knew would turn against him. That's how deep his service goes.

So how deep does our service go? How many feet have we washed lately, so to speak? What roles have we accepted, if any, to serve in our churches, our hospitals, our care centers, our neighborhoods. Holy Week is a perfect time to look around and say to ourselves, “Where is Christ guiding me to serve?” We can't do everything, of course, but there may be specific things that are tailor-made for you to do right now in which you can use the skills and abilities that God has gifted you with. Serving may not come easy, but there is great reward in the serving. We receive more from others than we give at times, and there is a great sense of unity with Christ in the actions that we perform that reflect on the actions he performed for us.