

Broken Open: A Holy Week Retreat Experience

Today is Holy Thursday. My name is Karissa Lopez; I am a senior majoring in Journalism and Theology. Our theme today is Service.

When looking to Holy Thursday for reflection, the moment that resonates most with me is when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples.

However, growing up the washing of the feet during Holy Thursday mass was something that I often overlooked. I didn't understand the meaning behind it, and it seemed to be just another ceremonial aspect of the Holy Week masses. This thought process continued until high school, when I was asked to participate in this aspect of the mass by allowing the priest to wash my feet. I agreed, but thought it would be weird or uncomfortable. I didn't want the whole congregation seeing my feet and the idea of having to have damp feet for the rest of the mass didn't seem ideal.

Reflecting back on that moment, I think that it's one of the most important in my faith journey. In the moment of my childhood priest bending to wash my feet the titles of priest and lay person, church leader and church congregant, disappeared. There was a humility in this act that allowed me to understand the solidarity and oneness that occurs in the community of Christ.

Jesus bending to wash the feet of his disciples had a similar meaning to what I was able to experience back in high school. Peter's response to this is begging Jesus to wash him completely, not just his feet, but we're told that the true meaning isn't about the washing, it's about Jesus in the place of the servant, who was often referred to as the Other—overlooked and uncared for by society.

I'm really drawn to this message, as it correlates with theology of the option for the poor. Jesus action on Holy Thursday was one of humanity and humility; it diminished any sort of hierarchy that was present between him and his disciples, but it was also an act of solidarity. He not only drew the community of him and his disciples closer, he called

attention to the position of the Other and called upon his disciples to do this as well. To serve others, to wash their feet as Jesus had washed theirs.

The option for the poor, in many ways, calls for society to be rebuilt with the Other, those who are often overlooked and uncared for by society, at the center. Saying that all in one breath, in one sentence—it seems like quite a large feat, but it can begin by us, as a community of Christians living the practice of Holy Thursday. We are called to mimic Christ's love and care for those who are the most vulnerable in our communities, and reflecting on Holy week in light of current events, there seems to be a lot of spaces and communities that can use Christ's love and care. Jesus invites us, encourages us to put aside our comfort to serve and care for others.

In moments of true service and unity, the hierarchy of societal titles disappear. Love acts as the only correspondent. In this way, siding with the poor, caring for them, and serving them, the infrastructures of power and authority that created and named these communities as "Other" are challenged. In this way, God is present and can be found in the ways that we rethink power and authority as it's currently in society. God stands with the marginalized and vulnerable and we are called to do the same.

The call of Holy Thursday, that is the call to wash each other's feet, means more than washing the feet of your immediate neighbors. It's a call for us, as a community, to go out into the world and serve the marginalized and vulnerable in a way that is rooted in love and care, challenges the authority that continues to name Others within our society, and in a way that mimics Christ.

Today let us reflect on the option for the poor, and the ways that we can serve others, placing them at the center, allowing God to be present in every moment of service and solidarity.