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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

Holy Mass “in Coena Domini” in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, 02.04.2026

At 17.30 this afternoon, Holy Thursday, the Holy Father Leo XIV presided over the Vespertine Mass *in Coena Domini*, the beginning of the Easter Triduum.

During the liturgy, the Pope performed the ritual of the washing of the feet of twelve priests of the diocese of Rome.

At the end of the celebration, the Blessed Sacrament was taken to the Chapel of Repose.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope, after the proclamation of the Holy Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

This evening’s solemn liturgy marks our entry into the Holy Triduum of the Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection. We cross this threshold not as mere spectators, nor out of habit, but as those personally invited by Jesus himself as guests at the Supper in which bread and wine become for us the sacrament of salvation. Indeed, we take part in a banquet at which Christ “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end” (*Jn* 13:1). His love becomes both gesture and nourishment for all, revealing the justice of God. In this world, and particularly in those places where evil abounds, Jesus loves definitively — forever, and with his whole being.

During this Last Supper, he washes the feet of his apostles, saying: “I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (*Jn* 13:15). The Lord’s gesture is inseparable from the table to which he has invited us. This gesture is a concrete *example* that flows from the *sacrament*: while revealing the meaning of the Eucharistic mystery, it also entrusts to us a task — a mission that we are called to take up as nourishment for our lives. John the Evangelist chooses the Greek word *upódeigma* to describe the event he witnessed: it means “that which is shown before your eyes.” What the Lord shows us — taking the water, the basin and the towel — is far more than a moral example. He entrusts to us his very way of life. The washing of the feet is a gesture that encapsulates the revelation of God: an exemplary sign of the Word made flesh, his unmistakable memorial. By taking on the condition of a servant, the Son reveals the Father’s glory, overturning the worldly standards that so often distort our conscience.

Along with the silent astonishment of his disciples, even human pride cannot remain blind to what is

taking place. Like Peter, who at first resisted Jesus’ initiative, we too must “learn repeatedly that God’s greatness is different from our idea of greatness... because we systematically desire a God of success and not of the Passion” (*Homily at Mass of the Lord’s Supper*, 20 March 2008). These words of [Pope Benedict XVI](#) candidly acknowledge that we are always tempted to seek a God who “serves” us, who grants us victory, who proves useful like wealth or power. Yet we fail to perceive that God does indeed *serve* us through the gratuitous and humble gesture of washing feet. This is the true omnipotence of God. In this way, his desire to devote himself to those whose very existence depends upon his gift is fulfilled. Out of love, the Lord kneels to wash each one of us, and his divine gift transforms us.

Indeed, through this act, Jesus purifies not only our image of God — from the idolatry and blasphemy that have distorted it — but also our image of humanity. For we tend to consider ourselves powerful when we dominate, victorious when we destroy our equals, great when we are feared. In contrast, as true God and true man, Christ offers us the example of self-giving, service and love. We need his example to learn how to love, not because we are incapable of it, but precisely to teach ourselves and one another what true love is. Learning to act like Jesus — the living sign that God has placed within the history of the world — is the work of a lifetime.

He is the true measure, the “Teacher and Lord” (*Jn* 13:13) who removes every divine and human mask. He offers his example not when all are content and devoted to him, but on the night he was betrayed, in the darkness of incomprehension and violence. In this way, it becomes clear that the Lord’s love precedes our own goodness or purity; he loves us first, and in that love, he forgives and restores us. His love is not a reward for our acceptance of his mercy; instead, he loves us, and therefore cleanses us, thereby enabling us to respond to his love.

Let us, then, learn from Jesus this reciprocal service. He does not ask us to repay him, but to share his gift among ourselves: “You also ought to wash one another’s feet” (*Jn* 13:14). As Pope Francis once remarked: this “is a duty which comes from my heart: I love it. I love this and I love to do it because that is what the Lord has taught me to do” (*Homily at Mass of the Lord’s Supper*, 28 March 2013). He was not speaking of an abstract imperative, nor of a formal and empty command, but expressing his heartfelt obedience to the charity of Christ, which is both the source and the model of our own charity. Indeed, the example given by Jesus cannot be imitated out of convenience, reluctance or hypocrisy, but only out of love.

Allowing ourselves to be served by the Lord is therefore the necessary condition for serving as he did. “Unless I wash you”, Jesus said to Peter, “you have no share in me” (*Jn* 13:8): unless you accept me as your servant, you cannot truly believe in me or follow me as Lord. By washing our bodies, Jesus purifies our souls. In him, God has given us an example — not of how to dominate, but of how to liberate; not of how to destroy life, but of how to give it.

As humanity is brought to its knees by so many acts of brutality, let us too kneel down as brothers and sisters alongside the oppressed. In this way, we seek to follow the Lord’s example, fulfilling what we have heard from the book of Exodus: “This day shall be a day of remembrance for you” (12:14). Indeed, the whole of biblical history converges in Jesus, the true Passover lamb. In him, the ancient figures find their fulfilment, for Christ the Savior accomplishes the Passover of humanity, opening for all the passage from sin to forgiveness, from death to eternal life: “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (*1 Cor* 11:24).

By renewing the Lord’s gestures and words this very evening, we commemorate the institution of the Eucharist and of Holy Orders. The intrinsic bond between these two sacraments reveals the perfect self-gift of Jesus, the High Priest and living, eternal Eucharist. For in the consecrated bread and wine lies “a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (Dogmatic Constitution *Sacrosantum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, 47). Through bishops and priests, constituted as “priests of the New Covenant” according to the Lord’s command (Council of Trent; *De Missae Sacrificio*, 1), there is made present the sign of his charity towards the whole People of God. Beloved brothers in the priesthood, we are called to serve the People of God with

our whole lives.

Holy Thursday is therefore a day of fervent gratitude and authentic fraternity. May this evening’s Eucharistic adoration, in every parish and community, be a time to contemplate Jesus’ gesture, kneeling as he did, and to ask for the strength to imitate his service with the same love.

[Holy Chrism Mass in the Vatican Basilica](#)