

Note that the proper (that is, intended for this day) gospel acclamation text is pointed for simple use with a psalm tone. Other choir or assembly settings may be sung. Some options are included in *Music Sourcebook* (S438–441).

Because John's gospel usually heightens and deepens the meaning of the narratives about Jesus, the gospel readings throughout the Three Days come from John. On the last Thursday of his life, Jesus connected a meal shared with his disciples with his coming death, and he demonstrated the meaning of his death by washing their feet. The meal, the footwashing, and the death of Christ—all convey God's love.

At its best, this hymn pulls together the themes in the reading: both eucharistic in nature, but also taking up the theme of love as exemplified in the commandment to wash each others' feet. Hymns such as "Where charity and love prevail" (ELW 359) and "Great God, your love has called us" (ELW 358) are especially appropriate, whether actual footwashing takes place or not.

Rituals are ways to express symbolically our complex ideas, attitudes, and desires. In rituals, we perform an action that works better than words to affirm many layers of meaning. For example, think of a handshake. In medieval times it signified that I was approaching you without a sword in my right hand; now it is the cultural sign that I am extending myself to you. Indeed, even if I don't feel 100 percent positive toward you, I offer to you this symbol of myself. So, in first-century Palestine, the household servant washed the feet of the hosts and guests; in the fourth century, catechumens had their feet ritually washed; and since at least the seventh century, Christians have performed the footwashing to signify their willingness to serve one another in love.

The Three Days service invites our churches to join many others in this ritual where we are invited to do what Christ did: to demonstrate the reality of the body of Christ, first by being served by another, and then by serving the next person. And this service is not only an attitude in one's head: it is an action that extends all the way to our hands and our feet. Our entire body is pulled into and expresses our covenant within the body of Christ. Both food and the touch of the neighbor enliven our bodies, and the flowing water reminds us of our baptism.

In Sunday school, teach the children how to do the ritual so that it is easy for especially young Christians to express Christian love in this traditional way each year.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands. The following or another appropriate acclamation may be sung.

I give you a ^I new commandment,
that you love one another
just as I ^I have loved you.

GOSPEL John 13:1-17, 31b-35

The gospel is announced.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The gospel is proclaimed, concluding:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

Silence for reflection follows.

HYMN OF THE DAY

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

FOOTWASHING

When footwashing is included in the service, the assembly is seated. The presiding minister may introduce the footwashing with these or similar words.

On this night we have heard our Lord's commandment to love one another as he has loved us. We who receive God's love in Jesus Christ are called to love one another, to be servants to each other as Jesus became our servant. Our commitment to this loving service is signified in the washing of feet, following the example our Lord gave us on the night before his death.

The ministers and people may wash each other's feet. Assembly song and other music may accompany the footwashing. If it has not been sung as the hymn of the day, "Where charity and love" is especially appropriate.



*Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbors we have from you.*

—Tom Colvin, Protestant missionary, ELW 708

*Even though we are baptized, what we constantly
lose and betray is precisely that which we received
at Baptism . . . Each year Lent and Easter are, once
again, the rediscovery and the recovery by us of what
we were made through our own baptismal death and
resurrection.*

—Alexander Schmemmann,
twentieth-century Russian Orthodox priest¹³

During the footwashing, a variety of music may occur. Choral and assembly song, especially that which uses a repeating ostinato or simple refrain, allows worshipers to participate in footwashing without having a book or folder in their hands. The traditional Latin hymn "Ubi caritas et amor" is available in three forms: ELW #359 is a twentieth-century versified version; #642 is a meditative song from the Taizé community that can be in either Latin or English; and #653 utilizes the medieval chant of the Western church. *Music Sourcebook* contains an additional version translated from the Spanish of Joaquín Madurga (S442) and other options for singing during this time (S443–444).

*Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right, or claim,
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.*

—Brian Wren, hymnwriter,
"Great God, your love has called us," ELW 358

*Our competitive, ladder-climbing, be-No.1 society does
not highly prize the servant role: our God does.*

—Joan Delaplane, Dominican sister¹⁴