

FLOWING WATER, LIVING WORD:

A BAPTISMAL JOURNEY OF DISCERNING GOD'S MISSION
FOR THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

HOLY WEEK:
WASHED BY JESUS,
COMMANDED TO LOVE

BISHOP CANDEA

FRIENDS IN CHRIST, IN THIS LENTEN SEASON WE HAVE HEARD OUR LORD'S CALL TO STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL—ALL THAT KEEPS US FROM LOVING GOD AND EACH OTHER. THIS IS THE STRUGGLE TO WHICH WE WERE CALLED AT BAPTISM. WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH, GOD NEVER WEARIES OF FORGIVING SIN AND GIVING THE PEACE OF RECONCILIATION

MAUNDY THURSDAY, ELW PAGE 259

We began this Lenten season by inviting all of you into a baptismal journey so that together we could discern God's mission for us as a synod. How can we as the congregations, ministries, and leaders of the Central States Synod participate more intentionally and purposefully in God's mission and activity in our world? The intention was to develop a new mission and vision statement, to get greater clarity in our purpose and priorities not simply through a strategic planning process (not that strategic planning is not important) but by discerning, by listening to God and to one another. And then the pandemic hit! Plans and lives have changed.

And the need for discernment is even greater! The need to enter our baptismal waters to be refreshed and forgiven, to be nourished and enriched, to be held and revived is even more important. The need to listen to God and one another, to focus on what God is calling us to be as the church in the midst of these times is essential. So what do you see and hear Jesus doing in the familiar passage from the gospel of John read on Maundy Thursday?

John 13 (selected verses):

¹Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" . . .

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¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. . . . ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Questions for Reflection

& Special Invitation

- How do you believe this pandemic has changed the church? What has been “washed” away? What has been revealed?
- What commandment is Christ giving the church? How can we live out that commandment?
- How can we as a church participate in God’s mission so that by “this” (what we articulate as our mission) everyone will know that we are disciples of Christ?

If you are willing, I would like to invite you to actually write out your reflections to any or all of the questions above and send them to my by e-mail (scandea@css-elca.org). Sharing your reflections with me will help me guide the synod through this discernment process. Thank you.

Blessing

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

AMEN.