

THE *MANDATUM* AND THE WASHING OF WOMEN'S FEET: BETWEEN PROGRESSIVISM IN THEOLOGY AND CONSERVATISM OF ORTHODOXY¹

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Now 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. 2. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then 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. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you". 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 After 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? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord- and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

John 13: 1-17 (RSV)

The focus of discourse is from the "*Mandatum*", the "optional" liturgical ritual during the liturgy on Maundy Thursday when the feet of twelve pre-chosen men are washed. The traditional take of the *Mandatum* over time according to the Roman Missal, has been the washing of twelve men, being prototypical of the twelve disciples that Jesus washed and these are taken from among the people. In fact, in keeping with this tradition, it has for the most being the selecting of twelve pre-chosen men who are in "communion" with the Church from among the people.

Nevertheless, Pope Francis issued a decree revising the rules for the traditional foot-washing ritual on Holy Thursday with a letter signed by Cardinal Sarah, the Prefect for the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacrament on January 21, 2016 via the Bollentino which was in response to Pope Francis letter to the Guinean Cardinal dated 20 December 2014, saying the rite should no longer be limited to men and boys but also include women and young girls. Thus, the rubric changes from "*virii selecti... chosen males*" to "*qui selecti sunt... those who were chosen*". Those participating in the ceremony, the decree says, should be representative of the entire community. This change is "an attempt to improve the method of implementation, to express the full meaning of the gesture performed by Jesus at the Last Supper, his gift of himself 'to the end' for the salvation of the world, his boundless charity." This is the beginning of a very heated debate.

The issues that oscillate here are not just about the revision made but the implication of the directive. Far from the indicated spirit of service highlighted, conservatives see this as festering the agitation of pro-feminist advocates and theologians who have pushed cases of women clergy for instance to no avail. It opens the debate if the revision is in tandem with the liturgical history of the *Mandatum*? Progressives on the other hand see this as 'the nudge of inclusiveness and belongingness' that is much needed in the church. Over time, the Church like most religions has been accused of the hypocrisy of chauvinism and patriarchy and so, the admittance of women into this ritual practice which essentially is a show of charity and service, should be as inclusive as possible. There is yet another contention, how much can the Pope bring his personal understanding on theological definitions and positions? It must be stated that prior to this modification, Pope Francis in each of the past three years since he became Pope had included at least one woman in his Holy Thursday foot-washing ritual, and sometimes even non-Catholics. On the first Holy Thursday after his election, Pope Francis washed the feet of 12 young people, two of them women, and two of them Muslim, while he celebrated Mass at Rome's juvenile detention centre, Casal del Marmo. In 2014, Francis visited Don Gnocchi, a centre for the elderly and disabled. On that occasion,

the participants in the foot-washing ritual ranged in age from 16 to 86, and several were in wheelchairs with their feet swollen or disfigured. Four of them were women. Thus, even before his official pronouncement, he had begun the change. The question is thus asked, how much can individual conscience play a role in interpreting and practicing theological rudiments? For some, it is the clarification of a liturgical question which has been taught with ambiguity over the years. Thus, the interrogatives raised only widen the scope of our discourse and makes the issue more polemic. However, we hope that we shall have some resolutions at the end of this. The starting point however, would be, looking at the liturgical history of the *Mandatum* in the bid of understanding the proper sense and spirit of this liturgical practice.

THE MANDATUM: A SUCCINCT LITURGICAL HISTORY

The Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper has two distinctive features: the foot washing ceremony known as the *Mandatum* and the Eucharistic procession to the Repository. The former which is our concern is a religious rite observed by various Christians. "The origin of the rite is found in the Gospel of John 13:1-17, immediately after the Last Supper. Jesus pours water over the disciples' feet and begins to wash them, saying that the act was an example that those called to fill the high places in the Church must be willing to serve (Jn 13:15)"² The root of this practice which was later well integrated into the early Christian life and became a characteristic act of Christian piety in the Apostolic Church as noted in 1 Timothy 5:10³, has its roots in an hospitality custom of ancient civilization, especially where sandals were the chief footwear. A host would provide water for guests to wash their feet, provide a servant to wash the feet of the guests or even serve the guests by washing their feet. This is mentioned in several places in the Old Testament of the Bible (eg Genesis 18:4, 19:2; 24:32; I Samuel 25:41; etc.). It is noted that a typical Eastern host might bow, greet, and kiss his guest, then offer water to allow the guest to wash his feet or have servants do it.⁴ This explains Jesus' reaction to the Pharisees complaint of a woman with a bad name who bathed the feet of Jesus with tears and costly ointment.⁵ Jesus replied: "Then turning towards the woman, he said Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair" (Luke 7:44).

Foot washing was such a thing of honour for guests as well as a mark of welcome just as it is a mark of service. 1 Samuel 25:41 is recorded as the first passage where an honoured person offers to wash feet as a sign of humility. In the New Testament, St. Paul mentions foot washing as a characteristic act of piety in the apostolic Church (cf. 1 Tim 5:10). The

gospel passage of John 13:1-17 is the New Testament classic edition of feet washing as a sign of not just humility as found in 1 Samuel 25:41 but combines the service of earlier tradition of foot washing, humility and piety. Hence, Jesus gave this as a commandment (a *mandatum*) to his disciples. Maundy Thursday, another popular title in English-Speaking countries comes from the solemn ritual washing of feet in imitation of Jesus at his Last Supper. The title is a corruption of *Mandatum* (Latin, "Commandment") from the words Jesus sung as the washing begins: "A new commandment I give you..." (John 13:34)⁶

The earliest records that is available of a special mass commemorating the Last Supper is in the diary of the pilgrim Egeria, who visited the Jerusalem for Easter sometime around 381-384 does not show that the *Mandatum* was part of the liturgy of Holy Thursday, it was not until the seventh century that the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and the *Gregorian Sacramentary* that there was the first positive attestation of the *Mandatum* ceremony.⁷ The first unambiguous reference to the foot washing ceremony is contained in the document called "*Roman Ordo in Coena Domini*" which mentions the pope washing the feet of his attendants on Holy Thursday.⁸ The Pope washed the feet of twelve sub-deacons after his Mass and of thirteen poor men after his dinner. In 694, the Visigothic King Egica summoned the seventeenth region Council of Toledo. The Council promulgated eight canons, among which we read the following: "The washing of feet at the feast of the *Coena Domini*, which has fallen into disuse in some places, must be observed everywhere".⁹ This was the first major revival of this practice which later took on secular imitation of Christ, and which was meant as a sign of humility and a reminder to the Christian that he is called to serve. In the middle ages, it was common for Christian kings to wash the feet of the poor once per year and then invite them to dine, sometime serving them at table. St. Elizabeth of Hungary regularly chose twelve lepers for this service. From 1570 to 1955, the Roman Missal printed, after the text of the Holy Thursday Mass, a rite of washing of feet unconnected with the Mass. The 1955 revision by Pope Pius XII inserted it into the Mass. Since then, the rite is celebrated after the homily that follows the gospel account of how Jesus washed the feet of his twelve disciples.¹⁰ The Roman Missal however does not specify the number of persons whose feet are to be washed.

WASHING OF FEET: THEOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION

The narrative of the washing of feet is uniquely and classically Johannine with no parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. This pericope which is contained in John 13:1-17 is commonly themed, "The Royalty of Service".¹¹ The narrative of the washing of feet is a clear breakaway

from the first twelve chapters of St. John's gospel where Jesus was making himself known to the world, but in chapter 13 with the foot-washing account, we move to a more intimate moment with the disciples. This would explain the deep-seated meaning in the action.

It is worthy of note that Jesus being aware of his divinity as recorded in vv 1-2 of John 13, decided to perform an act remarkable in its subversion of the prevalent cultural attitude which had seemed to infiltrate the very ranks of the disciples themselves.¹² Guthrie notes that "humility was despised in the ancient world and a sign of weakness".¹³ Pride and ego- the antithesis of humility- found a home in the disciples' strut for position and power in the supposed Kingdom of their Master. Luke's parallel narrative of the Last supper (Luke 22:24-30) captured this inordinate struggle for position. Lopinski notes, it was "within this ego-based climate of mutual distrust Jesus embarks upon his unexpected and subversive act of humility. Matthew Henry Commentary says, Christ's washing of his disciples' feet was an action of a singular nature, no miracle, unless, we call it a miracle of humility".¹⁴ What Jesus was demonstrating was that, the way to royalty is service, the way to greatness is ministry, the way to power is humility, the way to position is serving and the way to rule is giving.

The action of foot-washing for the disciples was not in a humour or a frolic that this was done; no, the transaction was very solemn. Matthew Henry enunciated four reasons for this solemn action:

1. That he might testify his love to his disciples, (vv 1-2)
2. That he might give an instance of his own voluntary humility and condescension (vv 3-5)
3. That he might signify to them spiritual washing which is referred to in his discourse with Peter, (vv 6-11)
4. That he might set then an example (vv. 12-17)

In a cultural sense, what Jesus was doing was truly radical. By dressing as a servant and undertaking the servile and humiliating task of washing feet, Jesus identifies the paradoxical manner in which God chooses to reveal himself.¹⁵ The foot-washing episode parallels the account in Luke 22:27, wherein Jesus states: "I am among you as one who serves"; it also echoes the confessional hymn of Philippians 2:6-11, in which the Christ is described as one who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..." The foot-washing is "a rare unfolding of the authority and glory of the incarnate Word, and a rare declaration of the character of the Father himself."¹⁶

The motive of Jesus was a demonstration of love. This love which would culminate on the cross was not selective but encompassing. It is true of all believers, for these twelve patriarchs were the representatives of all the tribes of tribes of God's spiritual Israel.¹⁷ Christ washed his

disciples feet that he might signify to them spiritual washing and the cleansing of the soul from the pollution of sin. This explains the reply to Peter's initial resistance and Jesus' eventual clarification that, "unless, I wash you, you cannot be a part of me". By this, Jesus seems to indicate that the action goes beyond the physical and that it *conditio-sine-qua-non*, for being part of Jesus. Here too, we see the salvific action of Jesus as symbolized by the foot-washing. This again has a very inclusive meaning. Matthew Henry aptly remarked: "Doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; it is an instructive sign, not sacramental, as the Eucharist. This was a parable to the eye and Jesus designed three things to teach us: (1) A humble condescension, (2) A condescension to be serviceable (3) A serviceableness to the sanctification one of another: *you ought to wash one another's feet*."¹⁸ The action of foot washing is more of an invitation to enter into God's salvific plan which would take place in the events after the Lord's Supper: the passion and death of Jesus. Thus, it is a way of making the disciples who are representative of God's Chosen Israel, to be partakers of God's salvation plan.

The polemic between Peter and Jesus is interpretatively contentious and key to understanding those who could be partakers of the *Mandatum* and can justify if women can partake of this encounter. When Jesus replied Peter, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean...(v. 10)". This verse is not easily understood by many commentators. For example, in what sense are the disciples already clean? What is the first bath that makes a second one unnecessary? What, then, does foot-washing represent? Lopinski notes that the difficulty in exegesis stems primarily from two concerns (1) the word "bathed" (perhaps introduced into the dialogue as a synonym for washing and (2) the phrase "except for the feet", which some ancient manuscripts exclude.¹⁹ Francis Moloney hints that "the one who has bathed" means total immersion which is to be contrasted with partial washing. He notes further, that "the total immersion involved in "the one who has bathed" is a further hint of both baptism and the association of the disciple with the death of Jesus."²⁰ Moloney admits too, later copyist added, "except for the feet".²¹

Some commentators favour a sacramental interpretation, whereby the term "bath" refers to Christian Baptism and subsequent "washings" refer to the sacrament of Penance or another sacrament. Others view it in a non-sacramental manner, but still distinguish between "bathing" and "washing" in that "the disciples, already cleansed by their fellowship with Christ, need only to have their slighter faults removed."²² Hence, foot-washing in this sense refers not to the initial bath but a second cleansing. Lopinski citing Michael Ramsey adds that along this line with his view that the second cleansing finds its "completion and full realization" through the "practice of love and forgiveness by the

community of faith"²³ thereby underscoring the communitarian significance of the foot-washing act.

VV 12-17 takes on a discourse of Jesus with his disciples and from where the commandment (*Mandatum*) to do same comes. Here, Jesus wanted to download the implication of his action. He had told Peter in v. 7, "you would not know what I am doing, but later you would understand". In v. 12 he asked: "Do you know what I have done?" In v. 14, Jesus gives them a command to do the same. Here, I would quote Lopinski extensively. He notes:

"Jesus' commandment in v. 14, together with his statement in v. 8, forms the heart of his teaching on the act of foot-washing. In declaring to his disciples that "I... have washed your feet" and that they therefore "ought to wash one another's feet," Jesus wraps together in a single sentence the theological interdependence of vertical and horizontal relationality. Those who have a "share" (v. 8) with Jesus are likewise called to "share" with others. Foot-washing therefore serves a dual purpose in symbolizing not only the self-giving love and cleansing provided by Jesus' death, but also the self-giving love we extend to others. "This is what Jesus means by describing the foot-washing as an example in v. 15. Not only is it essential to be washed by Jesus, it is also necessary to wash the feet of others." This calls to mind Jesus' exhortation in Matt 10:8: "You received without payment; give without payment." The concept of servanthood that Jesus was asking of his disciples was radical as radical as the act he himself performed before them. This notion of servanthood "was revolutionary in the sphere of human relationships."²⁴

From this understanding, foot washing points to a call to live a life of servanthood based upon Jesus' model- as well as the need to be washed oneself by the salvific work of Jesus upon the Cross. There is a moral dimension of this which is the dramatic and creative example of Jesus and which we are called to imitate.

THE WASHING OF FEET AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD: AN INTERTEXTUALITY OF JOHN 13:1-17

There is yet a reading of the foot washing text that seems to closely link it to the institution of the Priesthood. It is this understanding that makes the washing of women's feet a liturgical absurdity and

theologically confusing. Leroy Huizenga is one of the New Testament scholars who hold the interpretation that foot washing is closely tied to the institution of the Priesthood. In an article titled: "Holy Thursday, Foot washing and the institution of the Priesthood", Huizenga maintains that foot washing is not just a ritual of humble service but a basis for holy orders.²⁵ For Huizenga, something more than mere exemplarism is going on in John 13. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet has sacerdotal significance; Jesus institutes the priesthood.²⁶ In fact, Neyrey Jerome, professor of New Testament Theology in University of Notre Dame calls it "Status Transformation ritual" in which the disciples are made priests of the new covenant.²⁷ The argument of Neyrey is the use of the word "unless" which becomes a transformation elsewhere in the Gospel of John²⁸:

Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

(3:3)

Unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (3:5)

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (6:53)

Unless you believe that 'I AM,' you will die in your sins. (8:24)

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. (12:24)

Unless I wash you, you have no part in me. (13:8)

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (15:4)

This transformation Neyrey argues is real ontological transformation and it is into the priesthood of Christ. Huizenga draws an Old Testament parallelism. He points that "washing was part of priestly ordination elsewhere in the Old Testament. In the midst of the "consecration" of Aaron and his sons, Moses "washed them with water" (Lev 8:6-10). We also see Aaron and his sons being washed in Exodus 40. "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water. (v. 12) [...] And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet; when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed; as the LORD commanded Moses". (Ex. 40:30-32).²⁹ These Old Testament references of washing being linked with consecration and linking this background with the institution of the Holy Eucharist on the same pericope of the washing of the feet seems to make the passage of John 13: 1-17 more notoriously complex for interpretation. It is this understanding that conservatives

seems to hold and develop that makes washing of feet on Holy Thursday of people other than men, more difficult. The text of having only males, would have been a product of the 1955 revival of this ritual action which seem to keep it in tandem with the twelve apostles of Jesus who were males.

THE WASHING OF WOMEN'S FEET: FROM REVISION OF THEOLOGY TO THEOLOGY OF INCLUSION.

With the interpretation, theology and intertextuality on John 13: 1-17, we come to the notoriously polemic debate of washing of women's feet which the Holy Father, Pope Francis has asked to be revised to include women, keeping with the spirituality of charity that overtones the action of foot washing. Since then there have been a stream of reaction and reprise on the issue. Who is right after all? Are theologians like Huiguiza and Neyrey legalistic or is the Pope a dissenter? The debate from a pastoral perspective has no much tension. From a theological perspective of an ancient rite, the argument seems open-ended. The washing of women's feet seems caught between theology and spirituality. This takes us to the history and practice of the *Mandatum* as an ancient rite and the case for its eventual inclusion in the liturgy of Holy Thursday.

It seems to me, that the *Mandatum* is more tied to spirituality and a show of service both from historical antecedent and a direct interpretation of John 13: vv 12-16. More so, if it were so intrinsically tied to the institution of the Priesthood or the Eucharist, then, it would not have been an optional rite on Holy Thursday. By being optional, it means it can be done or not and in the present situation, if you find it irreconcilable to add women to the roll, then, you can as well omit it. Another supporting evidence that diffuses foot washing from being an intrinsic part of the institution of the Priesthood is attested by the non-appearance of this event in the synoptic accounts of the institution of the Priesthood.

Be that as it may, David Gibson, writing in the National Catholic Register Online notes: "there were generally two forms of the ancient practice: "Mandatum Pauperam" or washing of the feet of poor people, and the "Mandaum Fratrum", the washing of the feet of the brothers. Neither of these were part of the Holy Thursday liturgy and popes and clerics routinely washed the feet of poor people as a sign of service and humility. In convents, as well, "woman washed feet and had their feet washed and they washed the feet of guests and children".³⁰ Gibson adds, Foot washing does have a long tradition and it didn't exclude women up until 1955.³¹ Although women's feet could be washed but by other women and it was done outside the mass. It was the reform of Pope Pius XII which included foot-washing ritual into the Holy Thursday Mass.

Gibson defends Pope Francis review further and justifies why only male were introduced into the ritual. He argues, "The problem is that back then, Catholic women were not allowed into the restricted space near the altar and, unlike today, they could not have any part in the Mass. So the rule was 12 chosen men- "*virii selecti*" in Latin- would have their feet washed by the priest or bishop"³² It is noted that while the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s ushered in numerous reforms, including of the liturgy, the rule on only washing of men's feet was never addressed. It was in view of reflecting the openness and inclusiveness of the Church around 1970s that, bishops and priests in many dioceses began washing the feet of other people other than men, including women. The US conference of Catholic Bishops acknowledges stresses that the rite aims to signify both charity and humble service rather than a re-enactment of the foundation of the priesthood and notes that "It has become customary in many places to invite both men and women to be participants in this rite in recognition of the service that should be given by all the faithful to the Church and to the world"³³

Pope Francis explained in his decision that he had been reflecting on the foot-washing ritual for some time, and determined that it needed to better reflect "the significance of the gesture Jesus performed in the Upper Room, giving himself 'to the very end' for the salvation of the world, his boundless charity." To that end, he ordered that the rubrics be modified to permit participants for the rite to be chosen "from among all members of the People of God," and likewise insisted that those who are chosen receive an explanation of the meaning of the ceremony.

Further, in a commentary by Archbishop Arthur Roche, the Secretary for the Congregation of Divine worship and Discipline of sacraments, he notes:

"The current change foresees that individuals may be chosen from amongst all the members of the people of God. The significance does not now relate so much to the exterior imitation of what Jesus has done, rather as to the meaning of what he has accomplished which has a universal importance, namely the giving of himself «to the end» for the salvation of the human race, his charity which embraces all people and which makes all people brothers and sisters by following his example. In fact, the *exemplum* that he has given to us so that we might do as he has done goes beyond the physical washing of the feet of others to embrace everything that such a gesture expresses in service of the tangible love of our neighbour. All the antiphons proposed in the *Missale*

during the washing of feet recall and illustrate the meaning of this gesture both for those who carry it out and for those who receive it as well as for those who look on and interiorise it through the chant."³⁴

The Sacred Congregation explains further:

The washing of feet is not obligatory in the *Missa in cena Domini*. It is for pastors to evaluate its desirability, according to the pastoral considerations and circumstances which exist, in such a way that it does not become something automatic or artificial, deprived of meaning and reduced to a staged event.... It is for pastors to choose a small group of persons who are representative of the entire people of God lay, ordained ministers, married, single, religious, healthy, sick, children, young people and the elderly and not just one category or condition.³⁵

In a similar commentary by Joseph Fessio, Jesuit priest and founder of Ignatius Press, has weighed in the recent polemics: "Of course it should be made clear that this is permission, not a requirement."³⁶ Cardinal Sarah, the Prefect for the congregation of Divine worship and the discipline of the Sacraments, notes, too that priests don't have to wash the feet of women, if they feel so as a matter of conscience.

CONCLUSION

The debate on the washing of women's feet is exciting for various reasons. It has attracted so much of controversy not so much that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, at the request of the Holy Father adjusted the rubric of the *Missale Romanum* regarding the washing of feet (p. 300 n. 11) with the decree *In Missa in cena Domini*, but first that it has come from the Pope Francis, whom many a person think he is very liberal with thoughts and that he is taken his Gospel of Mercy beyond bounds. It is also interesting because of the exegetical misgivings accommodated on John 13: 1-17 that seems to strictly limit foot-washing as irrevocably tied to the institution of the priesthood in that text, thus, making it a transformation ritual. Even though, washing, was part of the Old Testament ritual of consecration, it was not an essential part of all consecrations. However, the Hebrew word for washing in Leviticus is more synonymous to baptism than consecration. In this sense, the use of 'wash' in a sacramental sense could be more closely aligned to baptism than identify consecration as used in the passage of foot washing in St. John's gospel. Further, we can only be susceptible to this heterodoxy of text, if we do not take the background of love, service and humility that Jesus attempts to domesticate and

exemplify by the washing of feet of his disciples. His command to wash others feet is not circumscribed to the male sex, but 'all' whom the Gospel message is preached to. Thus, if the Gospel message must be all-embracing and the teaching of service is well understood, those to be selected must be taken from the people of God entirely to reflect an inclusive character, lest, people see the Church as Chauvinistic and the message of service as selective.³⁷

The washing of feet is not a passage for liberalism or a reconstruction of theology neither does it signal the death of orthodoxy. In fact, orthodoxy cannot be viewed without historical lens. If the washing of women's feet is viewed with the lens of traditional history of the *Mandatum*, the new reform to include washing of women's feet would be a return to the basics and a revival of the orthodoxy of this liturgical rite. In my estimation, Pope Francis is making a case for a theology of inclusion. The Church is not immuned from excessive exclusivism, the washing of Women's feet is both making a clarification of an old ambiguous practice, while making a case for the theology of inclusion. With this, progress is made in theology, while orthodoxy is in fact strengthened. I will end with a caution of Pope Francis in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, "Since "time is greater than space", I would make it clear that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it."³⁸ In sum, for the overriding reason of service and humility and with this being a command to do same, the washing of women's feet is only a consummation of the teaching and practice of the *Mandatum*.

Endnotes

¹ Progressivism underscores two meanings in this work. First, it means the school of thought in Theology that advocates for the breaking of new frontiers and development why not being excessively tied to a tradition bereft of theological dynamism. The second sense in which progressivism is understood is an advancement in theology. Conservatism on the other hand first connotes the opposite school of thought that advocates a confinement to traditional teaching, while as a philosophy it also involves leaving things as they are.

² "Mandatum: Liturgical History": in <http://www.unamsanctamcatholicam.com/liturgy/78-liturgy/525-mandatum-liturgical-history.html>, retrieved May 2, 2015.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Foot washing" in Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot_washing, retrieved May 2, 2016.

⁵ Cf. Luke 7: 36-50

⁶ Greg Due, *Catholic Customs and Traditions, a popular guide*, Connecticut: Twenty Third Publications, 1990, p. 100

⁷ "Mandatum: Liturgical History", *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Seventeenth Council of Toledo, Canon III

¹⁰ "Foot washing" in Wikipedia, *ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John*, vol 2. Edinburg: St. Andrew Press, 2000. P. 136

¹² Peter Lopinski, "To wash and be washed: An Exegisis of John 13:3-17, in <http://www.mcmaster.ca/mjtm/4-3.htm>, retrieved, May 3, 2016

¹³ Guthrie, Donald. *John from the New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition)*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1994. p. 1054

¹⁴ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible, Massachusetts: Hendrickson publishers, 2008.. p. 1601

¹⁵ Peter Lopinski, "To wash and be washed: An Exegisis of John 13:3-17, *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible, *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Lopinski, *ibid.*

²⁰ Francis Moloney, *Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of John*, Minnesota: The Liturgical press, 1998, p.378

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Hunter, A.M. *The Gospel According to John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 135

²³ Lopinski, *ibid.*

²⁴ Lopinski, *Ibid.*

²⁵ Leroy, Huizenga, "Holy Thursday, Foot washing and the institution of the Priesthood", April 16, 2014 in http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/3074/holy_thursday_foot_washing_and_the_institution_of_the_priesthood.aspx, retrieved May 4, 2016

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jerome Neyrey, "The foot washing in John 13: 6-17: Transformation ritual or ceremony?" in <http://www3.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/footwash.htm>, retrieved May 5, 2016. Also published in L. Michael White and O Larry Yarbrough, eds., *The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*. Minneapolis: Fortress,. 1995, Pp. 198-213

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Huizenga, *ibid.*

³⁰ David Gibson, "When Pope Francis washes women's feet, arguments follow. Who's right?" in <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/when->

pope-francis-washes-womens-feet-arguments-follow-whos-right, retrieved May 5, 2016

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Holy Thursday Mandatum" in <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/triduum/holy-thursday-mandatum.cfm>, retrieved May 5, 2016

³⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, "*Commentary concerning the decree in Missa in Cena Domini*, I have given you an example.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Joseph Fessio in Diane Montagna, "Cardinal Sarah: Priests don't have to wash women's feet on Holy Thursday..." in <http://aleteia.org/2016/03/15/cardinal-sarah-catholic-priests-dont-have-to-wash-womens-feet-on-holy-thursday/> retrieved May 5, 2016

³⁷ I am aware that this point is susceptible to being hijacked by pro-feminist theologians for an advocacy for women priesthood. It is however important to clarify that the case of women in priesthood is far more reaching than service. Being a priest, is a composite representation of Jesus, *in persona Christi Capitis*, who enjoys the *munus triplex* of being priest, prophet and king. This discussion is more expansive than the case in point.

Amoris Laetitia, n. 3