

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish
Newark, DE
The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday – March 20, 2016/Year C
Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:14-23:56
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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May my words reveal the greater glory of God. AMEN

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“So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”

My journey of Lent this year, seeking to “lengthen” my faith by cleaning yet again this littered soul home, I have walked our stations in The Way of the Cross many times. Following the process and progression, fourteen places taking me deeper and deeper into the agony of Christ, yet higher into the redeeming love that loves us even to death. When finished, I always was drawn to return to the First Station. In that ritual movement, that still holds part in our life to this day, Pontius Pilate ritually washes away responsibility for this whole sordid, unjust moment of time. Today, we still **wash our hands of the whole mess** when we feel we can no longer deal with a situation, and perhaps simply do not want to any longer.

The more I returned to this place, I came to regard Pilate in a different light. With each washing, I imagined his haunted soul, washing his hands again and again, harder and harder, trying to strip away the constant night hauntings of what he had done, and what he did not do, when faced with Love. My meditation then lengthens the view to my soul’s condition, and how often I **wash my hands of Jesus** in my days ...

- When I look the other way from the person on the street and their needs, denying them the simple dignity of a look of love at their very humanity.
- When I do not walk away from conversations laden with disparaging ethnic jokes, slurs, and demeaning of “the other”.
- When I do not take the stand of faith in the face of the many “isms” and ongoing injustice that makes up our post-modern and post-Christian culture.
- When I am frustrated and ignore **those** hopeless and hapless people who struggle with depression, addiction, anxiety, uncertainty, and simply are fear filled, seeking only to be held in Love.
- When my need to be liked or loved dictates how I live my faith in the world or not, for better or for worse.
- When I am afraid that claiming **whose I am is who I am** is so counter to our seismic cultural shifts, and what difference would it make anyhow, so I just keep my faith all to myself.

When we gather at this table each week, we are gathering with the disciples on this first **Eucharistic** feast ... **including Judas**. We are with Peter “the Rock”, whose true strength as Jesus’ own is revealed when this rock is shattered by his denial of Jesus.

Jesus gives his all to us always, even when we wash our hands of him. Jesus spreads his arms on the wood of the cross for us always, receiving the pounding nails we heard in Marc’s Cantata last Sunday. Jesus prays, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,*” looking at our washed outside, but seeing with healing love our broken insides. Jesus loves us to death, so that we may have life, life eternal.

This Holy Week, I invite you to take a bowl in your home, fill it with water, and place it in a spot you pass by every day. Each day of Holy Week, make a sacred moment to be with Jesus by washing your hands with him in you. Wash your hands knowing the sacred love of Jesus for you, in you, and through you. Wash your hands not in dismissal or guilt, but in the **cleansing power of repentance** in all that this most sacred week of our life of faith is meant to be.

Walk with Jesus on the Way of the Cross.

Walk with Jesus who loves you to death into new life beyond.

Walk with Jesus ...

AMEN