

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

John 13: 1-18

Douay Rheims Version

Christ washes his disciples' feet. The treason of Judas. The new commandment of love.

1. Before the festival day of the pasch, Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father: having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.
2. And when supper was done (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him),
3. Knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands and that he came from God and goeth to God,
4. He riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments and, having taken a towel, girded himself.

chosen. This, however, seems rather harsh, both because the whole blame must be laid upon Judas and not upon Christ, and His election from which He excluded Judas, and in the next verse Christ lays the blame on Judas; and then again because Christ, when He speaks of the eternal election and predestination of God, is not wont to attribute it to Himself but to the Father, for it is a primary function of Providence, which is the attribute of the Father. Christ therefore is here speaking of His *temporal* election, by which He, as man, chose twelve apostles (see Luke vi.), and Judas himself among the number. This is the view of Toletus and Maldonatus.

I know and have known whom and what manner of men I have elected to be apostles, who will be worthy, and who will not, who will persevere, and therefore be blessed, and who will not. I know those who will do these things which I have said, and who will not, as I know and have known, that Judas being chosen by Me, would not do these things, but would be My betrayer. Wherefore I did not choose him in ignorance, nay rather I foreknew and foresaw that he would betray Me, yet did I choose him to use his malice for the common good, that through him My Passion might be fulfilled, and through it the salvation and redemption of men. Wherefore He adds,—But that the Scripture may be fulfilled; He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against Me. I knew that Judas would be My betrayer, yet I elected him an Apostle, that through him the Scripture which foretold My Passion and its manner, might be fulfilled, for it foretold that it should be begun by the treachery of My familiar friend, of one of Mine own household, of Judas who has abused My friendship and familiarity in order to betray Me. And I have been willing to allow this, that from his wickedness I may elicit an infinite good—the salvation, namely, of the world—just as I permitted the fall of Lucifer and of Adam, to draw from thence the Incarnation of Christ.

Lift up his heel. He is quoting Ps. xl. 9, where the Septuagint translate “made great upon Me his tripping up,” and S. Jerome, “lifted up against me the sole of his foot,” that is, tried to deceive, trip up, betray, and bring Me to ruin; nay, he did indeed trip Me up by his deceit, caused Me to fall into the hands of the Jews, and brought Me to My Cross and death. David is speaking literally of Achitophel, who betrayed him to his son Absalom, but mystically of Judas, the betrayer of Christ, of whom Achitophel was a type as David was of Christ.

by Christ Himself or by others in His behalf. The expression appears to be rightly applicable to the washing which takes place in baptism.

And ye are clean, but not all. Christ secretly strives to provoke Judas to think better of his plot of wicked treason; still He would not mention him by name, lest He should bring him into bad odour, and the apostles should rise up against him as a traitor, and ill-use him.

Ver. 11.—*For He knew who it was that should betray Him; wherefore He said, Ye are not all clean.* From this S. Augustine gathers that Judas was then present, and had been washed by Christ, and that he received the Blessed Sacrament—(Bk ii. *contra Petil.* Ch. 22.). S. Cyprian, however, in his treatise on the Washing of Feet, says that Judas was not present at the washing, nor, consequently, at the Eucharist.

Ver. 13.—*Ye call me 'Master' and 'Lord,' and ye speak rightly, for so I am.* Christ was Master and Lord of all men and of the whole world, not only as God but as man, and not only taught externally by speaking, as masters commonly do, but illuminated minds interiorly, and impelled the will whithersoever He would. See Matt. xxii. 10.

Ver. 15.—*I have given you an example, that as I have done so ye may do also*—not unto Me, seeing that I am even now going to death, but to others, your neighbours, when necessity or kindness shall require. For, as St. Gregory says in his preface to his books of Dialogues, “Examples stir us up to the love of our heavenly country more than preaching.” It was thus that Jesus began first *to do* and then *to teach* (Acts i. 1), and taught more by deed than by word. Hence S. Basil teaches that he who bears rule must first do those things which he teaches his subjects to do, and that he ought to excel his subjects in humility as he does in dignity. Christ foresaw that the apostles would soon be wrangling in their pride as to who should be the greater, so He put before them this example of humility to break down and suppress their ambition; and in the event He did if not crush at least break it.

Ver. 16.—*Verily, verily I say to you, The slave is not greater than his Lord, nor the messenger than He that sent him.* Foreseeing the contention about the chief place which would soon follow, Christ insists on the humility which He is inculcating on His apostles.

Ver. 17.—*If Ye know these things, blessed shall ye be if ye do them.* If you know these things—and who is ignorant that a master is greater than his slave?—you shall be blessed if, as you know them, you also act up to your knowledge in practiced. *Blessed* in hope, though not yet in actuality;—blessed ye shall be after death if until then ye continue to do these things, and persevere in following Me, as I know that ye all will persevere excepting only Judas. And so, to indicate this exception, He adds,

Ver. 18.—*I speak not of you all, because I know that Judas will not do these things which I have said. I know whom I have chosen.* S. Augustine (Tract. 59) explains this with reference to the eternal predestination and election to glory by God:—I speak not of all, but of those only whom I have chosen to glory, and Judas I have not

5. After that, he putteth water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6. He cometh therefore to Simon Peter. And Peter saith to him: Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7. Jesus answered and said to him: What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8. Peter saith to him: Thou shalt never wash my feet, Jesus answered him: If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me.

9. Simon Peter saith to him: Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.

10. Jesus saith to him: He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all.

11. For he knew who he was that would betray him; therefore he said: You are not all clean.

12. Then after he had washed their feet and taken his garments, being set down again, he said to them: Know you what I have done to you?

13. You call me Master and Lord. And you say well: for so I am.

14. If then I being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.

16. Amen, amen, I say to you: The servant is not greater than his lord: neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him.

17. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them.

18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen. But that the scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me shall lift up his heel against me,

19. At present I tell you, before it come to pass: that when it shall come to pass, you may believe that I am he.

20. Amen, amen, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me: and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

21. When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit; and he testified, and said: Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray me.

22. The disciples therefore looked one upon another, doubting of whom he spoke.

23. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him and said to him: Who is it of whom he speaketh?

25. He therefore, leaning on the breast of Jesus, saith to him: Lord, who is it?

26. Jesus answered: He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped. And when he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

27. And after the morsel, Satan entered into him. And Jesus said to him: That which thou dost, do quickly.

28. Now no man at the table knew to what purpose he said this unto him.

29. For some thought, because Judas had the purse, that Jesus had said to him: Buy those things which we have need of for the festival day: or that he should give something to the poor.
30. He therefore, having received the morsel, went out immediately. And it was night.
31. When he therefore was gone out, Jesus said: Now is the Son of man glorified; and God is glorified in him.
32. If God be glorified in him, God also will glorify him in himself: and immediately will he glorify him.
33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me. And as I said to the Jews: Whither I go you cannot come; so I say to you now.
34. A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
35. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.
36. Simon Peter saith to him: Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered: Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow hereafter.
37. Peter saith to him: Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee.
38. Jesus answered him: Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Amen, amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou deny me thrice.

Ver. 1.—*Before the Feast of the Passover.* About the thirteenth day of the first month; the Passover, say the Greeks, having to be celebrated by the Law of the Jews on the fourteenth day. For they make out from these very words of John that Christ, on account of the approach of His Passion, anticipated the Pasch, celebrating it on the thirteenth day, and therefore ate the lamb with *leavened* and not with *unleavened* bread. For the use of unleavened bread began with the Passover on the fourteenth day. For this reason they say that Christ consecrated the Eucharist with leavened bread, and they therefore consecrate and celebrate in leavened and not unleavened bread. But this is opposed to the other Evangelists, who assert that Christ celebrated the Pasch and instituted the Eucharist on the first day of unleavened bread—on which day the Jews used to sacrifice the Paschal Lamb—the fourteenth day of the month, for thus the Law prescribes in Exodus xii. As for what John says, that Christ did it on the day before the feast of the Passover, this must be understood to mean His having done it on the fourteenth day, in the evening preceding the feast,—preceding the first day of unleavened bread, which was the fifteenth day, the morning of the Friday on which Christ was crucified. And in favour of this view, it is to be observed that, though the sacrifice of the lamb took place on the fourteenth day, in the evening, still the feast of the first day of unleavened bread properly began on the morning of the fifteenth. It is in this sense that John says Christ celebrated the Pasch on the day before the Feast of the Pasch, because He celebrated it in the evening of the fourteenth day. But the other three Evangelists, because they couple the evening of the fourteenth day with the morning of the fifteenth, as being one and the same feast (for feasts were begun by the Hebrews on the evening of the day before, and lasted until the evening of the succeeding day, as is still the practice in the Vespers of the Ecclesiastical Office), for this reason say that Christ celebrated the Passover and

Christ had asked. Hence S. Basil in his Shorter Rules, 60th Answer, gives a useful rule:—“Whatever we have before resolved upon beside that which is commanded by the Lord must be rescinded. This is plainly shown in the case of the Apostle Peter, who had first resolved ‘Thou shalt never wash my feet,’ but when he heard the Lord say positively, ‘Unless I wash thee, thou shalt have no part with Me,’ straightway changed his mind and said, ‘Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands.’”

Again, in the 233rd Answer, St. Basil teaches us from this text that obedience is to be preferred to all the other virtues. “Peter,” he says, “although the Lord had borne him witness of such and so great meritorious acts, and had called him and pronounced him blessed in so singular a manner, yet, having in one point only seemed to turn aside from obedience, and that too not from negligence or pride, but from reverence and respect to his Lord,—for this and this only is it said to him, ‘Unless I wash thy feet, thou shalt have no part with Me.’”

Ver. 10.—*Jesus says to him, He that has been washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean throughout.* Observe that Christ here alludes to those who wash themselves in the baths and go out washed all over, but, walking barefoot on the ground soil their feet and therefore afterwards wash them only. Again, observe that Christ, as His wont is, here rises from the corporal to the spiritual washing thus—He that has been spiritually washed by baptism, as I, O apostles, have washed you, or he who has been washed by Contrition and penance, such an one is washed all over in soul, but needs only to wash his feet, that is, purge frequently by contrition, bodily austerities, and the like virtues, the inclinations of the soul which is stained by contact with the things of earth, and contact from their slight impurities, and this is especially needful before receiving the Holy Eucharist.

SS. Augustine, Bede, Rupert, and S. Bernard in his Sermon on the Lord’s Supper, interpret more or less to this effect.

So Christ by this washing of feet purged away the sins of Peter and the apostles, especially their venial sins; for by means of this act of self-abasement He pricked their consciences and reminded them of that inward purification that must be made in the soul by contrition by means of which venial sins are expiated.

Lastly, S. Augustine in his 108th Letter to Seleucianus, gathers with some probability from the words “he that has been washed,” that Peter and the apostles had been baptized before the Eucharist; both because no one is qualified to receive the Eucharist without having been baptized, and also because Christ baptized them before His death, for after His death He baptized no one, and it is clear that they must all have been baptized either

Ver. 8.—“*Peter says to Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.*” Origin accuses Peter of headstrong audacity and disobedience, but S. Augustine (Tract. 56) rightly excuses him, inasmuch as this speech of his showed profound faith, reverence, fear, humility, and love. “I,” (the words are St. Cyprian’s in his treatise on the washing of the feet), “I am ready to die with Thee, if needs be, for this I ought to do, this fate I embrace. For Thee I will gladly present my neck to the executioner; but my God and my Lord prostrate at my feet, this I suffer not, this I dare not endure.”

Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. First, S. Augustine takes this mystically. Unless I wash away thy venial sins by penance I will not give thee the Eucharist, which I am about to institute, neither shalt thou enter heaven, for nothing that is defiled can enter there. So, too, St. Cyprian in his treatise on the washing of feet. *Secondly*, according to SS. Chrysostom and Cyril: Unless thou receive the lesson of humility which I give thee in this washing of feet, thou shalt have no part with Me, for only the humble attain to the grace and glory of God.

Thirdly, according to the letter: If thou, O Peter, persistest in thy disobedience, thou shalt not communicate with Me in the Eucharistic table,—I will give thee no part of the bread that is about to be consecrated into My body,—I will not have thee for My familiar friend and the companion of My sacred table. Christ threatens Peter with the loss of His intimate friendship and of the Eucharist, not the loss of His grace and glory; for though Peter was loth to obey, yet this arose from his profound humility and reverence, and was, therefore, worthy of pardon. Toletus says: He threatened not to give Peter the Eucharist by which Christ was to abide in him and he in Christ; for it was chiefly for this that He washed their feet, so that they might be clean and fitly prepared to receive Him when He should give Himself to them and be really united to them. Peter did not distinctly understand what Christ said at the time, but only understood that he was to be cut off from Christ and have nothing in common with Him unless he underwent this washing; afterwards, however, he comprehended the mystery. There is a similar expression in 3 Kings xii. 16, where the people, exasperated by the cruelty of Roboam, say, “What part have we in David? or what inheritance in the son of Jesse?”

S. Basil, in his “Discourse on Sin,” says, “For this reason threats of this kind were held out by Christ against Peter, that unless he had rectified his will by promptitude and quickening of obedience, not those wonderful blessings which had come to him from God, not his gifts, not the promises made to him, not even that declaration of such and so great a yearning towards the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father, would have served him to expiate his actual disobedience.” Hence S. Basil draws from this two remarkable rules of conduct:—“He that opposes himself to the commands of God, even though he do so with a pious and friendly intention, such an one is nevertheless for this cause estranged from the Lord.” And the second is:—“Whatever is said by the Lord, that ought we to receive with all the fulness of our heart.” (Reg. xii. ch. 2.)

Simon Peter says to Him, Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. Struck by the threat of Christ as by a thunderbolt, Peter obeys, and offers more than

the Eucharist on the first day of unleavened bread, the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, this being the beginning of the festival, and belonging to both the fourteenth and fifteenth days. So that if we take it as being the end of the fourteenth day, it must be considered as being before the first day of unleavened bread. But if we take it in the beginning of the feast to be held on the next day, then in this sense it belonged to, and was called, the fifteenth day or the first day of unleavened bread, as the other three Evangelists call it.

Jesus, knowing that the hour was come for Him (by His Cross and death) to pass from this world to the Father. This is an allusion to the name Passover,—a *passing*, or rather a *leaping over*. Jesus, knowing that it was now the Feast of the Passover, when the Hebrews of old, led by Moses, went out of Egypt and passed into the promised land by the immolation of the lamb (for it was by the blood of this lamb that they were delivered from the angel when he smote the Egyptians), the type of His Immolation, which was about to be accomplished on the Cross, and by which He was about to pass from this world into heaven and return to His Father on the day of His Ascension, that so He might cause us also to pass thither, and leap after death from the world into heaven,—knowing this, He prepared Himself for this day by heroic acts of the supremest humility—inasmuch as He washed the feet of His disciples—and of the sublimest love—inasmuch as He instituted the Eucharist. By these acts He prepared for death and martyrdom that He might teach us to do likewise, to multiply and intensify towards the end of our lives our virtuous actions, especially our acts of humility and charity. And this, first, because it becomes us to grow and advance in virtue daily, with the advance of our lives, to pass the latest day and hour of life in the holiest manner, and to be already beginning the heavenly life, thought, and habits to which we aspire. *Secondly*, because it is right that when we go out of this world we should leave our brethren, our associates, our friends, and all men a great example of virtue, for the things which we do when going away from them, or dying, make a more lasting impression on the minds of our friends. *Thirdly*, because it is fitting that we should be prepared in this manner for a generous death, in some cases for martyrdom, and, as it were, earn it from God. Thus S. Laurence, two days before his martyrdom, prepared himself for it by washing the feet of the poor and distributing to them the treasures of the Church, and this was for him the occasion—even the meritorious cause—of so glorious a martyrdom. So too SS. Cyriacus, Largus, Smaragdus, and Sisinnius the Deacons, ministering to the ten thousand Christian soldiers condemned by Diocletian to labour in the construction of his baths, carrying on their shoulders the burdens of old men, and distributing the alms supplied to them by S. Marcellus the Pope and Thraso, obtained as their reward the glorious laurels of martyrdom, as appears from the record of their acts in Surius.

Moreover, faithful and pious souls pass from this world in one way—those

without faith in another. For, as S. Augustine says (*Tract* 55), “It is one thing to pass from the world, another to pass with it; one thing to pass to a Father, another thing to a foe. For the Egyptians too passed over . . . yet did they not pass *through* the sea to the kingdom, but to destruction in the sea.”

Having loved His own (the faithful ones of His household, the Apostles whose feet He soon after washed) *who were in the world*. Cyril thinks that this is added for the sake of distinguishing them from the angels who are in heaven; but S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius consider it as marking the distinction of the patriarchs and prophets who were not now in the world but in Limbo, as having passed away from this life. The connection is more appropriate with the preceding “*for Him to pass from this world.*” Being about to leave the Apostles, His most dear children, in the world, and in its troubles, perils, and persecutions, so numerous and so great, Jesus, taking pity on them, gave them, before He went, the highest token of His love towards them, and furnished them, in the Eucharist, with the supreme remedy for all the tribulations of the world, that in it He might always be present to them to fortify and strengthen them against all that might be opposed to their salvation.

He loved them to the end. To the end of life, unto death, say S. Cyril, S. Augustine, and Rupert; or, as S. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 69) explains it, *always*. Whence Nonnus says, “Having loved His own from the beginning, so also He loved them to the end.”

Secondly, *to the end* of His love—He loved them with a supreme love, the Greek *τέλος*, *end*, being put for *τελείωσις*, *perfection*, as S. Chrysostom, Leontius, and Theophylact explain. Euthymius too interprets “to the end” *as vehemently*, for *τέλος*; is *the end, the last, the sum of a thing*, its highest perfection, its issue, completion, and crowning point. Christ had hitherto loved His disciples exceedingly, but now, being about to pass away to the Father, He manifested to them His most perfect love by washing their feet, by instituting the Eucharist, by exhorting them with the most ardent charity, and by rousing them to the love of God, to constancy, and to all virtue. Of these two meanings the former is the plainer and simpler, and, therefore, that which Christ first intended; the latter, however, is, the more full of meaning, and therefore Christ had it in view at the same time. So says Toletus. For He (Christ) gives it to be understood that His love to His disciples was so great that, though He knew a fearful and instant death to be awaiting Him, yet, as though forgetful of this, He poured forth His whole being in the love and service of His disciples. Wherefore S. Thomas (*Opusc.* 57) says, “Wherefore, that the vastness of this charity might be the more deeply impressed upon the hearts of the faithful in the Last Supper, when, after celebrating the Pasch with His disciples, He was about to pass from this world to the Father, He instituted this sacrament as an everlasting memorial of His Passion, the fulfilment of ancient types, the greatest of the miracles wrought by Him, and the peculiar solace for their grief at His absence.”

S. Augustine and Bede understand Christ by the *end*, symbolically. For Christ is “the end of the Law” (Rom. x. 4); He loved His own, therefore, *to the end*, that is, on account of Himself, or by communicating to them His own glory. The Interlinear says that He loved His own unto the end, that is, by dying for them, that they by His love

sacrament, and implies that it has power for the remission of venial sins; “for,” he says, “that we may not be in doubt about the remission of our daily sins, we have the sacrament of it—the washing of feet.” By “*sacrament*,” however, S. Bernard here understands *symbol* or *figure*, as he himself explains a little farther on.

Symbolically, Origen and S. Jerome (in his epistle to Damasus on the first vision of Isaiah) think that Christ washed His apostles’ feet to prepare them for the preaching of the gospel, according to the words, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring good tidings¹” (Isa. 1ii. 7.) Secondly, S. Ambrose thinks that Christ in baptism washes away actual sin by washing the head, but that here, in washing their feet, He washed away the remains of original sin, the movements of concupiscence, for that by this washing He strengthened their feet—that is, their affections—to make generous resistance to their lower appetites. Thirdly, S. Augustine and S. Bernard (*l.c.*) say that by the feet with which we tread the earth are signified the loves, the stains, and the defects which, while we are amid the things of earth, adhere to our affections, as dust or mud to our feet.

S. Ambrose (*De Initiandis*, ch. 6) gives the mystical reason for the washing of feet as follows:—“Peter was clean, but He must wash his foot, for he had by inheritance the sin of the first man when the serpent tripped him up and led him astray; and therefore is his foot washed, that these hereditary sins may he taken away.” He alludes here to the word spoken by God to the serpent, “Thou shalt ensnare his heel” (Gen. iii. 15). The same Saint says again (*De Sacram.* book iii. ch. 1), “Because Adam was tripped up by the devil and the venom was poured out over thy feet, therefore dost thou wash thy feet that in that part where the serpent ensnared thee there may be added the more abundant aid of sanctification, so that he be not able to trip thee up hereafter,” κ.τ.λ.

Another more literal reason was that those who were to be baptized used to go barefooted as a sign of humility. This going barefooted is called by S. Augustine (“On the Creed,” bk. ii ch. 1) “the humility of the feet.” And so they used to wash off the stains contracted by their bare feet. This custom spread from the Church of Milan to other churches (see S. Augustine, *Epp.* 118, 119). Palladius, too, in his *Lauriaca*, ch. 73, tells how Serapion the Sindonite converted two comic actors, washed their feet and then baptized them; but afterwards, as a great many persons came to think that this washing of feet was sufficient without baptism, it was forbidden by the Council of Eliberis, ch. 48. The Church of Milan, however, continued the usage. Guiseppe Visconti treats at length of this subject in his *De Ritibus Baptism* (bk. iii. ch. 17, *et seq.*).

washed by Him. So S. Augustine, Bede, Rupert, Maldonatus, and others.

Christ here indicates figuratively that visitation and reformation must be begun with the head and those who bear rule, for that so it will be easy to reform the faithful who are subject to them. However, Origen and Leontius think that Peter was the last in this washing of feet, and with Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius, hold that Christ first of all washed the feet of Judas that He might soften his heart and recall him from his wicked treason, and might give us an example of the love of our enemies, that we may repay their injuries with kindness, and do them the more good the more spiteful we feel them to be towards us.

And Peter says to Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? That is, dost Thou *prepare* to do so? The action is represented as just beginning, or rather intended, for Christ had not yet begun to wash his feet. Peter said this in stupefied amazement at the humility of Christ, and out of the depth of his reverence for Him, says Cyril; and hence every one of the words is emphatic. *Thou* who art the King of kings and Lord of lords, *my* feet, who am a low fisherman, and but a worm of this earth, *feet* that are muddy and filthy, dost Thou *wash* them with Thine own blessed hands? “These things,” says S. Augustine, “must be thought upon rather than spoken of, lest the tongue fail to express what the mind has more or less worthily comprehended by these words.”

Ver. 7.—*Jesus answered and said to him, What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know.* Christ means that in this washing of feet, mysteries are hidden which as yet Peter knew not. “Peter,” says S. Ambrose (in his work, *De iis qui initiantur*, ch. 6), “saw not the hidden meaning, and therefore rejected the service, thinking that the humility of the servant would be compromised should he suffer his Lord to do him this office.” “*Hereafter* thou shalt know,” that is, first, “when I shall tell you (ver. 14) that I do this to give to thee, to the apostles, and to the rest of the faithful an example of the greatest humility and most sublime charity;” so S. Cyril interprets. Secondly, because by this ablution penance is signified, and this sacrament must precede that of the Eucharist, as thou, O Peter, shalt understand after the Holy Spirit has been sent, for “He shall teach you all things.” So S. Cyprian, (*Tract. de Cœnâ Dom.*), S. Pacianus (Ep. 1, *contra Novat.*), S. Gregory (bk. ix. Ep. 39), and SS. Augustine and Bernard imply the same. It was as a type of this that the Jewish priests used, when entering the temple to sacrifice, to wash their hands and feet in the brazen laver that was set for this purpose in front of the Holy of Holies; and this they did for the sake of bodily cleanliness, that by it they might be admonished of spiritual purity.

On this point S. Ambrose is singular in his view; for in his work “On the Sacraments” (bk. iii. ch. 1, and in *De iis qui initiantur*, ch. 6) he holds that this bodily washing of feet is necessary for all the faithful before baptism, that by it they may be prepared for the Holy Eucharist just as Christ prepared the apostles. Hence he maintains that the washing of feet is a kind of *sacrament* or sacred rite here sanctioned by Christ, by which we are to be strengthened against the devil’s endeavours to trip us up. And for this reason he reckons the washing of feet amongst the rites or ceremonies of baptism, so that it came into use as such at Milan. S. Bernard, too, in his sermon “On the Lord’s Supper,” calls the washing of feet a

might pass from the world.

And supper being over, when Satan had put it into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon the Iscariot, to betray Him. After the legal supper and the common supper too, before the Sacred Supper—the institution of the Eucharist—Christ washed the feet of His disciples; for by this washing He wished to show with how great purity and humility we ought to approach the Eucharist. Observe that Christ partook of a triple supper with His disciples, the ceremonial, the ordinary supper, and the Supper of the Eucharist. In families of ample means, the lamb being insufficient to satisfy the hunger of so many persons, there usually followed the ordinary supper, at which they ate other kinds of meat. And so Christ washed the feet of the Apostles after the two former suppers and *before* the third. And hence it is clear this washing of feet was not merely the ordinary usage of the Jews according to which they were accustomed to wash the feet of their guests, but a sacramental ablution, by which Christ was preparing His disciples for the reception of the Eucharist, converting the ordinary usage into a sacred ceremony. So that they are in error who gather from this passage that Christ washed the feet of His disciples after the Eucharistic Supper and before the lengthy discourse which He then made them, and which is subjoined by John. Of this number is S. Cyprian, or whoever is the author of the “Treatise on the Washing of Feet.” “The Lord,” he says, “had now distributed to the Apostles the Sacrament of His Body; Judas had now gone out; when, rising from the table, He girt Himself with a towel, and at the knees of Peter the Lord Himself, on bended knee, about to wash the feet of His servant, discharged towards him an office of consummate humility.”

When the devil. The betrayal of Christ by Judas being now at hand—the result of a diabolical prompting—and His murder by the Jews, He wished first to leave us in the Eucharist a perpetual memorial of Himself, by means of which He would also recall to our minds His Passion and Death endured for us, and so incite us to a reciprocal love of Him. Again, John mentions the treachery of Judas in order to increase our appreciation of Christ’s humility, patience, and loving-kindness. For, knowing that He had been sold for money, and was soon to be betrayed by Judas, He nevertheless was so persistent in the love of His Disciples that He wished to wash their feet, even the feet of Judas. So say S. Cyril, S. Chrysostom, S. Augustine, Theophylact, Euthymius, and Rupert. The Evangelist tells us that the devil put this treachery into the heart of Judas; by which he wishes to imply that its atrocity was such that it could only have been the work of the devil.

Ver. 3.—*Knowing that the Father gave all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and went to God.* That is, first, though Christ knew Himself to be such, and so great as to have all things in His power, and indeed to be Very God of Very God, and that, as He had come forth from, so he was about to return to, and sit down at the right hand of God, yet He humbled Himself so far as to kneel down and wash the feet of His disciples

and of Judas His betrayer. So Cyril, Augustine, Bede, and S. Gregory (*Morals*, Book iii., chap. 12). Maldonatus adds that Christ *knew that all things were given Him by the Father*, that is, that it was now permitted Him by the Father's ordinance to complete all the things that were given Him to do;—that hitherto He had not been permitted to die, because the time appointed by the Father had not yet come, but that now that time had come when it was permitted Him to do all that belonged to the redemption of man.

Again, John here assigns three very fitting and efficacious motives which impelled Christ to wash the feet of His disciples. The first is, that "*the Father gave all things into His hands;*" that is, *because* the Father entrusted to Him the salvation of mankind, and committed their whole care to Him; for this trust incited Him to leave to mankind before His departure these stupendous examples of humility and charity. As for what is meant by the Father's making over all things to Christ, see the remarks on Matt. xi. 27.

The second motive was that "*He came forth from God.*" It was fitting that Christ the Son should by this washing of feet manifest His supreme love and reverence towards God the Father. For by nothing is God more honoured and gratified than by our humility; so that humility is the highest praise of God.

And the third was that "*He went to God.*" Knowing that His death was near at hand, and wishing the last act of His life to be one of the most sublime virtue, He would now do an act of the greatest charity and humility, and leave it as a legacy to posterity. Such is the view of Toletus.

He rises from supper and lays aside His garments, and taking a towel girded Himself. John enumerates all the actions, conditions, and circumstances of the washing of feet to show us how attentive, exact, and observant of decorum Christ was in this, as in all else that He did, that we may learn to do likewise even in the smallest matters, according to the words of Eccus. xxxiii. 23, "In all thy works [be thou careful to] excel."

Lays aside His garments—the outer tunic, keeping on the inner lest His body should be exposed; or rather the robe which those about to partake of supper usually put on over their ordinary dress. The Greek has *ἑνὸν*, the *outermost garments* or *garment*, such as the toga or pallium. By the figure of enallage the plural number is here put for the singular.

Girt Himself—that He might not soil His garments, that He might be the more unimpeded in the work of washing, that He might wipe their feet when He had washed them, and also that He might assume for this servile office the servile garb which befitted it, and in this way abase Himself completely. "What wonder," says S. Augustine, "if He who, when He was in the form of God, did make Himself void, arose from supper and laid aside His garments?" For humility is the distinctive virtue of Christ and Christians. S. Basil (*Constit.*, chap. xvi.) says that humility guards the treasure-house of the virtues. Humility, says S. Macarius (*Homil.* xv.), is the badge of

Christianity, which he who lacks is a vessel of the Evil One; humility is the ballast of the virtues. This is what S. Augustine says in his first Discourse on Psalm xxiii. "As David laid Goliath low, it is Christ who hath slain the devil. And what is the Christ who hath slain the devil? Humility hath slain pride. When therefore, my brethren, I mention Christ, humility is chiefly commanded to us. For by humility He hath made a way for us, inasmuch as by pride we had receded from God. Except by humility we could not have returned to Him, and we had none to set before us as an example to imitate, for all mortals had become puffed up with human pride. And if there existed any man humble in spirit, as were the prophets and patriarchs, the human race disdained to imitate humble persons. Then let not man disdain to imitate a humble man; God hath become humble that so the pride of the human race might at least not disdain to follow the footsteps of God."

Ver. 5.—*Then He puts water into a bason and begins to wash the feet of his disciples, and wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.* S. Cyprian, Theophylact, and Euthymius note that Christ did all these things by Himself, without the aid or help of any one, to teach us how attentively and carefully we ought to serve others. Euthymius adds that Christ Himself asked the master of the house for the basin, and drew and brought the water. "What wonder," says S. Augustine (*Tract* 55), "if He who poured forth His blood on the earth to wash away the uncleanness of sin poured water into a bason to wash the feet of His disciples? What wonder if He who made firm with the flesh He had taken upon Him the footsteps of His Evangelists, wiped with the towel He was girded with the feet that He had washed?"

Symbolically, S. Ambrose (Book i., "On the Holy Spirit") says, "This water was the heavenly dew. This it was that was prophesied, that with that heavenly dew the Lord Jesus should wash the feet of His disciples." And later on, "Come, therefore, O Lord Jesus! put off the garments that Thou hast for my sake put upon Thee; be Thou naked, that Thou mayest clothe us with Thy mercy. Gird Thyself for our sakes with linen, that Thou mayest gird us with the immortality of Thy (*muneris immortalitate*) free gift. Pour water in the bason, and wash not our feet only but our head also; and not only those of the body, but I would also put off from the footsoles of the mind all the uncleanness of my frailty, that I too may say, 'I have put off my garment in the night, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I soil them?'" (*Cant.* v.)

Ver. 6.—*He comes therefore to Simon Peter:* so as to begin here as elsewhere with Peter, the Head and Primate of the Apostles. For if He had gone first to the other Apostles, they would assuredly have protested as much as Peter against so great and unusual an act of condescension on the part of their Lord; but when they saw Peter acquiesce after having been rebuked by Christ, they too acquiesced, and allowed their feet to be