



On your marks

In John's account of the events of the last supper, he doesn't focus on the bread and wine but rather on the moment when Jesus chooses to become the household slave and washes the disciples' feet. Jesus is showing them what true leadership means. He is also giving them an example of how they should love and care for others. It is something they would never forget - and it is Peter in particular who perhaps learns the most. The following outline offers a simple way to tell the story of this incident and could be used in an all-age service or for celebration time in Messy Church at this time of year.

Get set

You will need:

- twelve pairs of socks (used and in need of a wash!)
- a large towel
- lots of pairs of clean socks (enough for one sock each)
- a laundry bag or basket

You can find the story in John 13:1-17.

Go!

- Introduce the laundry bag or basket. Explain (with despair in your voice) that you have been lumbered with doing all the dirty washing again. What a chore, even with modern machines, and it can be such a dirty, smelly job!
- Take out the dirty socks, pair after pair, and make a big show of how disgusting and smelly they are. End up with a pile of twelve dirty and smelly socks in front of you.
- Suggest that this is really no job for the likes of yourself - perhaps you could pay someone to do it - or, better still, maybe you could have a servant to do your dirty work!
- Arrange the socks in pairs around an imaginary rectangular table space on the floor - or on a real table - angled so that the socks are visible to everybody.
- It was like that on the evening Jesus had his last meal with his friends. There were 24 dirty, smelly feet around the meal table - and because they didn't wear socks in those days, it was just bare feet in sandals. Yuck! It was enough to put you off your meal.
- So, just as we wash our hands before eating, the friends of Jesus were waiting for the house servant to come and wash their feet - that was what usually happened. But what did happen came as a total shock!
- Take a large towel from the laundry bag or basket and explain how Jesus wrapped a towel around himself (*do this as you tell everyone*), poured some water into a bowl (*mime this*) and then began to do the foot washing himself. *Move towards those nearest you, bend down and pretend to wash feet.*



(Alternatively, you could arrange beforehand literally to wash the feet of a couple of people who you have warned in advance.)

- This was the servant's job. This was something done by the lowest of the low; by the least important person; the one at the bottom of the pile. And Jesus, their leader and teacher, the one they thought would be their new king, was doing the dirty job!
- Peter couldn't stand seeing Jesus behaving like a common slave and he objected loudly.

But Jesus explained that this was the only way they could be really clean - not just their feet but the inside too. They all needed to let Jesus wash away all that is dirty and bad.

- Rearrange the pairs of dirty socks into a cross shape: eight pairs forming the down post and two pairs either side making the cross piece.
- Jesus was showing them what sort of king he was: a king who would die to wash away all that was bad on the inside and to bring people clean to God, forever.
- He was also showing them the way they ought to behave towards others, always choosing to serve those who are in need, just as he had done

And they never forgot it.

Prayer idea

Give everyone a brand-new clean sock - if possible, fresh from the packet it was sold in - and use it as a focus for some short prayers:

- *Turn the sock inside out and then back out again:* Thank God for what happened at Easter - because of that, God can clean us up on the inside from all that spoils and dirties our lives.
- *Hold the outside sole of the sock:* Ask God for help to follow Jesus' example and walk the way he did, always ready to do good and help others in need.
- *Link up with the person who has the matching sock of your pair:* Ask God to help you work together so you can make a difference in your homes, schools, community and workplaces.
- *Put the sock on over your own foot:* Make a special prayer, asking God to surround you, keep you safe and walk with you everywhere you go in the days and weeks ahead.
- *Throw your socks in the air:* End with a loud

Song suggestions

- 'I'm special'
- 'Oh happy day'