



Maundy Thursday

We are called to be servants of each other.

On this night, perhaps the most Holy of Holiest nights, we both remember and celebrate the final supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, which we continue to celebrate, as Jesus instructed us, in memory of His saving Grace and as a sign of our unity with our Lord.

On this night, we begin the most solemn and joyful celebration of the entire Christian year, as Augustine, the great theologian and philosopher, referred to as the triduum during which the Lord dies, was buried, and rose again.

On this night, we gather together as faithful Saints to give thanks to God for his amazing gift in Jesus. To remember these last instructions given by Jesus to his disciples and to us, and to be with Jesus; to sit with him; to reflect with him and to love him as he faces his final hours.

*Though Jesus was in the form of God,
He did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited, but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave. (Philippians 2:6-7)*

Silence

When Jesus approaches Peter to wash his feet, Peter reacts with astonishment and resistance. He cannot understand that Jesus was willing to wash his feet. And Peter doesn't understand until much later, and the full meaning of what Jesus is doing will only become apparent in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jewish slaves could not be required to wash their master's feet so this really highlights the significance of Jesus actions. For Peter to accept this foot-washing would show his readiness to accept the disintegration of all the standards which the world uses to judge what is great and divine, and he wasn't quite ready.

We all need to undergo the "cleansing" from sin achieved through "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".

*Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am,
there will my servant be also.
Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. (John 12:26)*

Silence

This lesson continues for us today, the example of Jesus foot washing teaches us much about Jesus and the way he wants us to continue his mission in the world.

Jesus didn't actually write down any of his teachings personally, one theologian thought that Jesus may have written the book of John, history tells us this Gospel was written much later by ... would you believe ... the Apostle John!

However, the lessons we find in Jesus example of foot washing mean so much more to us than words.

When Peter says "no" to Jesus, "you shall never wash my feet", Jesus answers "unless I wash you, you have no part with me". Meaning of course that we need to acknowledge our misdoings, we need to be cleansed, and our sins forgiven in order to be followers of Christ.

We need to recognise our humanity and strive to live our lives as Christ did, we can't do this by ourselves, but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We are taught through this foot washing example to be humble and gracious toward all people, no discrimination, we are all equal in God's sight.

Through this foot washing we show love, kindness and consideration.

We learn to have compassion for one another and understanding, everyone has a story to tell, we need to be attentive to other's needs.

So this relatively simple act of foot washing highlights Jesus teachings, almost like a summary, for His followers to emulate.

On this Holy night I would like us to focus on Jesus. Can we imagine how He might be feeling?

When we reflect on His life we see so many struggles, he is met with so much opposition as He begins His ministry, the authorities, the Scribes and Pharisees don't acknowledge him as the Messiah. He is accused of blasphemy, and they try to catch him out at every opportunity.

Jesus was seen by many as an earthly King, someone who would overthrow the Roman authorities and bring a reign of justice to the common people, Jesus was to do this but in a very different way. He was to transform the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles and not from an ornate throne in a lavish castle with beautiful robes. Jesus came as a servant King.

This was a role that most people could not understand. I guess it was difficult to grasp many of Jesus' teachings, as these people had little education and many of Jesus concepts were not of the secular world, for example: love your enemies, many of Jesus and his disciples miracles, His death and resurrection. Jesus taught us to live in Him by faith, trust and obedience, to die to self and commit ourselves to Him.

We are fortunate to have the New Testament to guide us and the Old Testament as well of course; one supports the other. We also have theologians and leaders that have studied God's word in great detail and provide us with valuable insights.

But, best of all we can share God's word together and learn from each other.

Most of Jesus' followers were illiterate so they didn't have access to the Old Testament, the Torah etc. so I can understand why they struggled with many of Jesus teachings, especially the crucifixion. Jesus was meant to stay with them and reign as a worldly king. The crowds followed Jesus relentlessly, he often needed to escape and spend time alone and in prayer with the Father.

Through all of this there were many exhilarating moments for Jesus, many of his follows did actually see the light and understand his mission, bringing hope and encouragement and here we are today, still worshiping and glorifying our Lord with millions of others around the world.

So let us now spend a few minutes with Jesus, he must have felt so alone, the disciples that were with him all fell asleep, he was deeply troubled by the task before him but was prepared to die for us, to obey the Father to the end, let us sit with Him in silence, hold his hand and wait with him.

Silence

Jesus said,

"I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father". (John 16:28).