

## Maundy Thursday Sermon – Mel Caron

Officially the beginning of this service ended the season of Lent and we entered into the shortest liturgical season of the Triduum. While we celebrate the institution of the Lord's Supper at this service, we are unable to partake.

Due to our current circumstances from CoVid 19, we find ourselves still fasting from the meal we celebrate tonight – the Bread and the Wine are unavailable to us.

While this is a challenge for us, we can engage ourselves at the other focus of this night – Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

Feet are seldom pretty. They can be smelly, swollen, rough, deformed looking – even just plain ugly! We women attempt to pretty our feet by having our toenails painted and wearing cute, attractive sandals – otherwise we hide our feet inside of shoes.

What was Jesus thinking – focusing on our feet? Why not our hands?

Think about it. What position do you have to assume in order to wash someone's feet? Generally you have to get on your knees. Sometimes (if you have issues with your knees) you can get onto a stool and sit in front of the other person in order to wash their feet. Either way you have placed yourself in a position of servitude. A position of supplication. A position of humility. A position of love.

We are often in awe of the saints who have gone before us like Damien – who washed the feet and the bodies of the lepers in Hawaii, or Mother Theresa who washed the feet and bodies of the lepers in India.

Today we have the examples of our medical workers who are caring for those ill with CoVid 19. We think their actions are extraordinary and they are.

What we don't realize or admit to ourselves, is that we too are called to take care of others – meeting them in their needs. We've been asked to stay home – to protect others from getting the virus. We've been asked to provide food for the pantry so that they can meet the incredible demand of people who are in need.

We've been asked to reach out by phone, zoom or letters to let people know they matter. It doesn't have to be in a foreign country or to the ill.

This is one way we respect the dignity of every person.

If we aren't willing to get down on our knees and wash the feet of those we love, how can we expect to find the courage to step forward to do so to those we don't know?

I have shared with you that before coming into the Episcopal Church I was the Director for the Initiation process in a very large Roman church in Georgia. The practice in this parish for Holy Thursday was that the Monsignor would get his own disciples – twelve old men to sit in the chairs in front of the church and he would wash their feet. I convinced him to allow some of the people who would be baptized to get their feet washed by him. He agreed and so we had a mix of twelve people of various ages (including children) as well as women in those chairs.

I believed that it was vital for their formation that these people understood what they were about – just as Jesus told the Disciples: “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example- that you also should do as I have done to you.”

Ironically, when Don and I came to the Episcopal Church, the Rector had us participate in an initiation process much like the one in the Roman church. It was very humbling for us. Likewise on Maundy Thursday that year we were assigned to not have our feet washed, but to wash the feet of others.

I confess that I was very nervous and secretly hoped I would get someone who was quite lovely with dainty, pretty feet. That's not what happened. An elderly man was assigned to my station. As he removed his shoes and socks, I saw that his feet were very large, callused and almost deformed from bunions. I paused, prayed that I might see this man as Jesus before me and I began to wash his feet. At first I did it rather perfunctory, but it quickly moved into a loving action. I tenderly and slowly washed and toweled his feet. It was as powerful a sense of communion as I have when receiving the Eucharist. What better way to respect the dignity of another person than to wash their feet?