



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Maundy Thursday 2021**  
**Readings: St John 13: 1-17, 31b-35**  
**Written by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

'Then Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel.'

Potentially, one of the few times anyone, who is not a member of ones' own family, pours water on any part of our anatomy is at baptism. The priest scoops a small quantity of water and pours it over the head baptising in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. A cloth is then proffered to pat dry the drips. Then beaming smiles all round for another member has been received into the church through the symbolic death to sin, washed clean by the baptismal waters: the outward sign of an inner blessing.

In the gospel Jesus too is performing washing. This is not the gentle baptismal washing but rather that of hygiene and more also, of humility. At a hygienic level, the streets would have been filthy not merely with dust but doubtless also animal waste, were their even gutters let alone a sewage system? The foot-washing, therefore, was not a nicety but a necessity for healthy living. Such physical touch is an intimate gesture requiring acceptance by the one whose feet are to be washed. Then there's the posture of the one who washes. kneeling in humility to serve. Jesus knelt before his disciples to be their servant. Jesus the:

- Son of God;
- Good Shepherd;
- Way the Truth and the Life;
- Bread of life;
- True vine;
- Door to salvation;
- Resurrection and the life.

He knelt before Peter and still kneels before us in this Eucharist this evening and every day offering selfless service out of his boundless love. He offers this as a symbol of healthy, spiritual living. But this is back to front, for we are the:

- Selfish ones;
- Pompous;
- Arrogant;
- Wilful;
- Cowards;
- Sinners.

We ought to be kneeling before him and Peter feels the same, articulating for us "You will never wash my feet." However, Jesus says to him "Unless I wash you, you have no share

with me.” By so doing, Jesus shows us that to be disciples there is no place or situation that is too:

- Humble;
- Confidential;
- Intimate;
- Deplorable;

where we cannot be washed clean by his redeeming love. Sadly, Judas did not grasp this as did Peter. Judas went out into the night rejecting that love, a betrayal Jesus had already anticipated. Throughout his life Jesus had prepared for this moment of trial through prayer and reliance on his Father to enable him to complete the task. This is the generosity of God that he makes himself the victim of his own all outpouring love.

Peter, we know, will follow Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the High Priest’s Courtyard and then deny the Lord he loves. Yet, even then, God’s redeeming love held him until Peter confessed his abject failure to hold to Christ’s teaching and in that confession was redeemed serving faithfully as the Rock on which the church is founded.

None of us know the strength of our Christian discipline or the depth of our faithfulness until we are tested to our tipping point. Peter’s example gives our faltering faith such hope, despite our betrayals of faith through doubting, backsliding, and selfishness, God, through Christ extends his saving grace.

To the eleven disciples who remained with Jesus he gave a new commandment, which is also extended to us today: “You are my disciples if you love one another as I have loved you. People will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

How do we respond? We too can take the quick exit rejecting God’s love going out into spiritual darkness. Or, we can choose the longer passageway, approaching with humility seeking forgiveness and restoration. Tonight, and at every Eucharist, is our opportunity to receive the inner blessing of the Word made flesh living among us that we may go out, as the Body of Christ, saved to serve him in the world.

The questions for us to ponder today and every day, is how much do we love God and each other? Would people know that we are his disciples?

Amen.