

Address: Thursday of Holy Week 2012

You have come to share a meal with friends and your feet are dusty from travelling. The host approaches with a bowl of water. A bit late you think, the meal is already over. Now come to think of it, what were those words he said, about broken bread and spilt wine? What was that all about? Better late than never I suppose, for this moment of hospitality but, wait a moment, he is now removing part of his clothing and tying a towel round his waist. This man is my Rabbi. I am one who should be doing this for him! And In your mind things seem a bit confused. What is he up to? “Are you going to wash my feet, master”, you ask?

He senses our confusion. “Later on you will understand my actions, don’t worry”, he says. And as if to prove the point that we don’t know what is going on, we hear ourselves saying to him, “no way, this is never going to happen”. We have failed to understand his servant role. If only we had remembered and understood the words of the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord says,

My servant will succeed in his task;

he will be highly honored.^[a]

¹⁴ *Many people were shocked when they saw him;*

he was so disfigured that he hardly looked human.

¹⁵ *But now many nations will marvel at him,*

and kings will be speechless with amazement.

*They will see and understand
something they had never known*

*He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;
he never said a word.*

*Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,
like a sheep about to be sheared,
he never said a word. [52: 13-15, 53: 7]*

“Fair enough”, he says, “but if I do not do this for you, you will never be my disciple”. Still grasping at that which we do not understand, we then ask for a bath! Have we forgotten the cleaning act of baptism in Christ? Have we already forgotten that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and used her hair as a towel?

“Just the feet”, says Jesus, just the feet. “The rest of you is already clean”. So we allow Jesus to carry on and the work is done.

He says to us, “do you understand what I have just done for you?”

In bread and wine, Jesus asks not for our understanding, but our humble and trusting faith.

Here is bread, given by God that we might live our daily lives as a pilgrim people. Remember he said, ‘do not worry about tomorrow, it has enough problems of its own’.

This is wine, to celebrate that Jesus washes feet, our feet, and that Christ finds his home in hearts, our hearts. Remember he said, *“I am the vine and you are the branches... live in me as I live in you”*

This is his body; we are that body. So as we eat, let our feet be washed. As we drink, let Christ take his towel and dry our feet.

As we share in the fellowship of Jesus, may we understand why he has done this for us, the ‘suffering servant’ who has submitted himself, even unto death.

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”. Hallelujah.
Amen.