**Holy Thursday**

* In his first celebration of Holy Thursday, Pope Francis astounded the world by going to a prison in Rome and washing the feet of twelve inmates, two of whom were women and one of whom was Muslim.
* For many, this was scandalous – the pope always washes the feet of 12 priests – all males, of course.
* In very brief remarks, Pope Francis said he was simply serving them, as Jesus did on the night of the Last Supper.
* So, what is it that Jesus did on this night?
* Jesus chose to wash his followers’ feet, the bruised and battered feet which had got dirty through following him on ‘The Way’ to the end of his earthly ministry.
* Why? What was the meaning of this action?
* He was doing what servants did.
* He stripped off his tunic with a towel girding his waist, filled a basin and washed their feet; he was their master, but this was the task of a slave.
* Jesus is the body-language of God.
* This is what, or rather, **Who** God looks like in human history.
* Peter was so overwhelmed by what Jesus was doing that he protested, full of his usual bluster. But who can blame him?
* For us also, this whole incident is a challenge.
* If I were to ask twelve adults at random to come up and get their feet washed, I bet there would be some embarrassment, perhaps protest.
* In normal circumstances it is difficult for the liturgy group to find 12 people in our parish open to having their feet washed at this ceremony, & this year we cannot even do that because of the restrictions, but at least over 120 of us can gather here tonight – last year we couldn’t even do that.
* We don’t like to reveal our feet, vulnerable, hidden and very personal.
* But Jesus wants to wash them as symbols of those things of which we are most embarrassed, those shameful things we fear to have exposed.
* That is one meaning of this ceremony: Jesus wants to, & can, wash you clean.
* More simply, Jesus knows who we are, not our imaginary self-portrait, but who we really are at ground level, and he wants to soothe and refresh us, our feet, for the further journey through life.
* Another challenge for us has to do with our claim that we are the Body of Christ.
* Jesus got down & got dirty washing the feet of his disciples & he tells us by this action that if we want to follow him, then this is how we should spend our lives.
* We are to become His feet, His way of getting around the world and doing what is necessary in order to spread his friendship and mercy and justice.
* He depends on our feet.
* When we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, when we *are* the footsteps of Jesus, really following in His Way, then we will get our feet dirty and bruised. But so what?
* Those whose lives we touch can experience the presence of the soothing refreshing God in their lives when you and I reach out to them, setting their feet on the path to a fuller life.
* On Tuesday evening, at the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral, the Archbishop preached on the Gospel that told of Jesus reading from the scroll from the prophet Isaiah & Jesus concluded it by saying that he is the one anointed to bring Good News to the poor & to set people free from all that oppress them, & the Gospel concludes by saying that all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him.
* Archbishop Comensoli then said that Jesus’ eyes would have been fixed on those in the synagogue – all of them men – the Pharisees, writers, & interpreters of the law, the wealthy men of the village, BUT his eyes were also fixed on those outside the walls; those who were excluded – the prisoners, outcasts, the poor, children & women – because his words & ministry were meant for them - & so are ours meant to be.
* In his last 'parable' to his friends, Jesus calls all who would be his disciples to embrace the humble dignity of "footwashers" to one another.
* To bend down to wash the foot of another person as Jesus does requires a spirit of humility and selflessness, of respect and love for the other person.
* To allow another to wash our feet requires us to trust, to let go of our need to be in control, to acknowledge our vulnerability and our need to be healed, to face the reality that we need care - our feet need to be washed.
* To be footwashers in the spirit of Jesus is to see one another as valuable individual human beings with whom we share the dignity of being made in the image of God.
* The other ritual of the Last Supper which we especially commemorate tonight is Jesus giving himself to you and to me, totally and utterly, under the appearance of bread and wine.
* These elements do not remain on the altar for our adoration.
* We eat them. We drink them. And in doing so, Our Risen Lord in his glorified Body enters into the most intimate union with our bodies that we might become his Body in the world.
* It is only when we embrace the spirit of Jesus the footwasher that we will become the Church of the Eucharist and the witnesses of the resurrection that Jesus calls us to become.