

## **No Shoes, No Shirt, No Service**

**Intro.** In my grandmother's backyard there was a huge fig tree of which she was very proud. She had taken a small cutting from a neighbor's tree and nurtured it into a large tree full of figs in season. My brothers and I used to go barefoot a lot. Walking or running in her yard, we often stepped on over-ripe figs which oozed up between our toes. Our feet got pretty dirty; we had to wash them off outside before even thinking of coming in grandma's house.

**I.** In an economy that used work animals like donkeys, camels and horses, the dirt streets were a mess. Most people couldn't afford shoes, some were lucky to have a simple piece of leather strapped to their feet. People who could afford shoes could also afford a slave or a servant. At the end of the day, a

slave would wash the dirt from their feet with her or his hands. It was probably the lowest job in the house. I'm sure the disciples' feet were fairly clean, but the sight of their teacher down on his hands and knees doing a servant's work must have been eye-popping. Despite squirming one way or another to avoid it, the Lord washed their feet. Peter had a few minutes to formulate his response which was, "No way!" He soon realized unless he gave in, he would have no inheritance with the Lord. As he thought about it, he *badly* wanted to be part of the Lord, "Then not only my feet but my hands and head as well." Fr. Donal mentioned how important blood is for life. That without transfusions, many life-saving operations would not be possible. How blood tests reveal so much about health, monitoring cholesterol, diabetes and more. At this supper, the Lord changed

the traditional Passover meal to the life-giving Eucharist we have now and he sent the disciples to make sure to, “Do this in memory of me.” Holy Thursday is a special day for priests. We remember the commission we have received to continue this ministry.

**Concl.** The point the Lord was making was not about cleanliness of feet. *It was the requirement that his disciples be servants.* It was one of the last models of discipleship the Lord gave. During these days we have the opportunity to re-discover how to wash feet, to be servants to one another. Even though we cannot wash feet as we usually do on this holy night, I believe a *whole lot of feet* are being “washed” these days in our hospitals, homes, grocery stores and among public safety departments.

Washing feet is an *image*. We can wash feet by

continuing to acknowledge the “essential” people with notes on the garbage can and mailbox; in food delivered to police and fire stations; in prayers for each other. Serving others **is** washing feet. Tonight or tomorrow, families and friends *could* wash each other’s feet as a sign of our inheritance of eternal life and salvation in Christ. We have seen the sign on restaurants which reads, “No Shoes, No Shirt, No Service.” For the Last Supper, “No shoes, No problem” works. But these days, please add a mask.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

Holy Thursday, 2020