

## MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023

There is a TV show called Undercover Boss that some of you might have seen. The premise of the show is that the CEO's of very large companies go undercover and take low level jobs to get a better understanding of the jobs their employees are doing. One of the episodes featured the CEO of Waste Management and he took several different jobs within his company incognito. He worked on the garbage truck collecting garbage; he even cleaned Port a potties; he sorted garbage at a recycling plant and picked up loose flying paper at a land fill. That's the job he got fired from. The executive certainly got a different perspective of his company and his employees by working side by side with them. What he learned from doing this was the realization of how some of their corporate policies adversely affected the employees. He had some of those changed but what was most important to him was putting a face to all these employees. He went back to his management team and told them that to be a better company they had to not just look at productivity or the bottom line but to remember the faces of their employees. It took him taking on menial jobs to have his eyes opened to the plight of many of his employees. He was deeply humbled by the work he did and the dedication he saw. What that executive experienced is something Jesus taught us in tonight's gospel.

Tonight we read the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. John uses the washing of the feet on two levels, the first as normal hospitality. It was customary to wash a person's feet upon arrival for a meal and this was a task that was designated to the servant. John, however, tell us that Jesus washes the disciples' feet "during supper." Here he is alerting us to a second level of meaning. In the first-century Mediterranean world, different parts of the body were associated with various aspects of the person. The eyes and the heart represented the intellect and judgment; the mouth and ears, communication; and feet, external action, doing. To wash another's feet, then, carries the symbolic meaning of forgiveness, of washing away the effect of one's actions.

It is the actions of Jesus that night that we are called as Christians to remember and emulate in our own lives. It is his actions that form a framework for our faith. It is his actions that we commemorate in word and action week by week in our liturgies for the Church as a community of believers. These actions speak to us of the servant ministry to which we are called. It speaks to us of our need to gather as community, to be in relationship one with another. It speaks to us of our need to forgive and to be forgiven. It speaks to us of the Christian call to be willing to give sacrificially for others.

Jesus took a bowl, a jug full of water and a towel. He washed the disciples' feet. Lovingly and thoroughly he washed each one of them. In that gesture he washed the feet of all of us, believers and unbelievers, old and young, saints and sinners, bishops

and lay people, rich and poor, filled and hungry, dressed and naked. He gave us a model of what we should do for each other.

What kind of a world would we live in if the powerful washed each other's feet; if the wealthy washed the feet of the homeless, orphans and widows; if the young washed the feet of the elderly; if we were servants as Christ served us and gave himself for our sakes; if we forgave as God forgives?

Today Jesus' loving gestures are extended to each of us. During this liturgy I invite you to come forward and have your feet washed. I invite you to break bread and share the cup of wine. I invite you to forgive and be forgiven. So come and experience Christ's love anew. Come be washed and refreshed from whatever road has led you to this place, short or long, easy or rough. Come join the throng at Christ's table and be fed with the richness of Christ's banquet. Amen