

Getting Personal!

Exodus 2^{1-4,11-14}; Psalm 116^{10-end}; 1 Corinthians 11²³⁻²⁶; John 13^{1-17,31b-35}

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another:
just as I have loved you, you should love one another[John 13³⁴]*

One of the tasks that no-one ever prepares you for as Rector of a Parish like this is that you often get called onto interview panels. The perception that you are free apart from Sundays does mean that people are not shy about asking you!

As you prepare for the interview days you get to know a lot about a person from their CV and the other things they write - but you only know about them!

At the interview itself you want to get to know the person, from their body language as they walk into the room; whether or not they have polished their shoes; what their handshake is like; whether or not they look you in the eye; you might even listen to the answers they give!

It is so important that our faith grows out of knowing Jesus - not knowing about Jesus - because only then can we love as he has loved us.

For instance, would the Jesus you know wash your feet?

- ✦ Of course we know that Jesus did it, but remotely, 2000 years ago - and it didn't involve touching us!
- ✦ Did you know that in Jewish culture even a slave was not required to wash the feet of guests - guests were expected to wash their feet when they arrived, but the host was only ever expected to provide water and a towel.
- ✦ When Jesus washes the disciples feet they are rightly shocked - this was beneath the dignity of anyone and everyone in that time!

As a Parish Priest it is such an important thing to wash the feet of those who will let it happen at this Eucharist. It is to do what Jesus did and is such a privilege.

Some places replace the washing of feet with the washing hands - but that is to miss the point completely. Only one person ever washed their hands in the passion story was Pontius Pilate, and that wasn't positive!

This evening we haven't lined up 12 people who have had notice and so have cleaned their feet in preparation! I am asking for volunteers to gather after this sermon at the Baptistry.

Your embarrassment is probably the right response. My discomfort is precisely appropriate!

Maundy Thursday gets its name from the Latin text of our Gospel reading - the New Commandment is the *Mandatum Novum*, from which Maundy is derived.

The commandment is not just 'to love' but it is to **love one another; just as I have loved you, you should love one another.**

- ✦ Knowing about Jesus will never teach us the extend of his love.
- ✦ Knowing Jesus will teach us about his love - the Son of God who, as man, was prepared to do more for those around him (even someone who was to betray him) than a slave could be compelled to do.
- ✦ As we move towards the cross we discover even more about how Jesus loves - and that gets very personal!

Our faith isn't theoretical - it is always practical! It isn't remote but personal!

How would the Jesus of the Gospels want you to love as he has loved?