

His last night. And he knows it. He looks around at each of his most beloved, most faithful companions. Jesus —with his towel & basin— works his way all around the table. Kneeling, he reaches finally toward his most ardent disciple, but Peter pulls away: "Lord,...You will *never* wash my feet."

I think some us know that feeling.

and it's not *just* a question of Jesus being too good for that.
It's a question of the state of my feet!

The Mayo Clinic Website, lists these conditions —among others— that *might* give anyone contemplating foot-washing pause :

- Athlete's foot
- Blisters
- Bunions
- Corns and calluses
- Fungus
- Gangrene
- Hammertoe
- Ingrown toenails
- Plantar warts
- Ringworm
- Sweating & body odor

Feet can be icky.

Foot-washing is not for the proud, nor for the squeamish!

And yet Jesus teaches:

"If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another's feet." ONE ANOTHER'S FEET!

In washing **one another's** feet, everyone gets a turn,
an opportunity to be challenged.

- challenged to have perhaps an unpleasant truth laid bare...
- challenged to trust the Christ in our Christian brother or sister.

For in ministering to each other in truth and vulnerability and trust, we do uncover the Christ in each other.

This foot-baring is a symbol of baring our souls and inviting Christ to know us *really* — and challenging Christ to love us — as icky as we get. This kind of truth-telling about ourselves is some of the holiest stuff that happens in churches.

Often it happens when we serve side by side with others over a length of time, say on the Altar Guild or in the Men's Group or the choir or as acolytes together. Over time we come to have faith in each other and be able to tell let our secrets out and test each other's reactions.

Like a member seeing the parking lot full of cars for an AA meeting and saying:

"I'm so glad they're here. AA saved my life when it got so bad my kids were begging me not to drink...."

Wow. That's powerful! Truths like that only emerge in a place of trust and faith, but once they emerge, they spark more truth and more healing.

Figuratively, the person saying a truth that self-revealing just took off their socks and invited their neighbor into a holy trust.

This night in which Jesus establishes the ritual of foot-washing is a dark night all about the truth catching up with people.

This night Jesus faces his betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

In the Gospel of John, he even tells Judas:

"Do what you have to do."

This night Jesus tells the devoted disciple Peter that —in spite of his best intentions— Peter will 3 times deny even knowing him.

But Jesus invites Peter to recover as soon as possible, saying:

"Simon, I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail.

And you —when once you have turned back — strengthen your brothers."

This night Jesus repeatedly asks his very closest friends to stay awake and pray with him, even as he knows they can't do it.

This night is the moment when our failures, our disloyalties, become so obvious, so blatant, we can no longer pretend everything is just fine.

It's the night when you knew you shouldn't have another cocktail on the way home, and then you feel and hear a sickening thud as you're driving home. What –or *whom*- did you hit?

Tonight you will face the truth about yourself.

This night is like the moment in childbirth when labor pushes the baby's head into the mother's bones, and she suddenly understands the pain that is yet to come.

There comes a time when the things we fear
and regret most about ourselves catch up with us.

And we pray and we sweat and we *writhe*,
and God seems so far away.

And we know ourselves in our fear, in our weakness,
in our cowardice, in our greed, in our brokenness. In our sin.

Tonight, whether you bare your foot or not,
let that moment of truth break over you.

Tonight is the night when our Christ teaches us the courage that faith gives us
to face the truth and push right on through.

Tonight is about bondage to truth
—regardless of the suffering it may bring with it.

Only through truth
can we pass into life and freedom and power and joy.

Do you remember what God told Moses
when He caught up with him at the burning bush?

...Moses who had run away from Egypt after noting the plight of his fellow Hebrews enslaved in brutality...

...Moses whose time had come to stop running for his own life
and to face God's call to confront the Egyptians and obtain freedom and justice for his whole people...

God caught up with Moses at the burning bush and said:

"Take off your shoes. ... You are standing on holy ground."