

WALKING with JESUS through the LONG NIGHT

Reflections & Prayers for Maundy Thursday

Today the Presentations, Video and Bible Readings have deliberately had a different feel, designed to help us on a more reflective and prayerful journey, following in the steps of Jesus through the first part of what for him would indeed be a long, long night.

GROUP OPENING PRAYER:

“Lord Jesus Christ, our true and humble king, who was hailed by the crowd as Messiah but then betrayed on this night by your disciple, grant us the faith and obedience to know you and to love you, that we may be found always following beside you on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory.”

LOOKING INTO THE STORY

READ TOGETHER: John 13:12-17 & 34-35:

“After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. “Do you understand what I have just done to you?” he asked. “You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. I am telling you the truth: no slaves are greater than their master, and no messengers are greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know this truth, how happy you will be if you put it into practice! ...

And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

A TIME OF REFLECTION TOGETHER

The first four questions, each based on the words of Jesus in this passage, have been designed to allow space for personal reflection as much as for group discussion. They can be read aloud—whether one by one or in a continuous sequence—by the leader or by different people in the group. A group can choose to share their answers together or simply to give space for personal private reflection.

1. Jesus says: “Do you understand what I have just done to you?”

- Think about how much the disciples were able to understand about Jesus before the crucifixion and the resurrection.
- Now that we live on the other side of Easter, does it help us understand more or less?
- Where do you think your understanding has grown during this Lent and where do you feel you might have ‘some way to go’?

2. Jesus says: “You, then, should wash one another's feet.”

L’Arche is a community of those with and without learning difficulties who take this literally every Maundy Thursday, as do many congregations today throughout the world.

- How would you feel about having your feet washed?
- Imagine Jesus is washing your feet: how does it make you feel?
- Jesus' command is not merely literal, of course: how else can his followers 'wash' each-others' feet in the course of daily life?

3. Jesus says: **"How happy you will be if you put it into practice."**

Jesus offers the blessing of happiness to those who follow his example. We are living in a world going through a time of great mental anguish.

- How can 'washing' other people's feet possibly help with our current problems?
- Is Jesus being too simplistic?
- What can we do to ease the poor mental health of each other and of those who live in our communities?

4. Jesus says: **"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."**

- As we follow Jesus' 'new commandment', in what ways can our love for others reflect his love for us?
- When Jesus uses these words again in John 15:12-13, he goes on to speak of his dying for us his 'friends'. Are we really meant to be ready to die for those with whom we worship or who are friends?
- What form might that love take from day to day?

Further Resources

- Walking through the Passion Narrative: see Peter Walker's, *In the Steps of Jesus*, chapter 10-13; *Immersed in the Passion* (Walkway Books 2020) available from walkwaybooks.com
- Also his *The Weekend that Changed the World* (1999), chs. 1-3 available from Amazon
- Also his Audio-guide to Holy Week: *The Week that Changed the World*: go to walkwaybooks.com/the-week
- And for an opportunity to travel to Jerusalem in August 2021, please email info@walkwaybooks.com

PRAYER ACTIVITIES TO CONTINUE YOUR PERSONAL JOURNEY

Given the Covid restrictions and the nature of Zoom seminars, we envisage that the next two options are activities that may best be done by individuals when on their own and in a quiet place.

A. TRAVELLING BACK TO THE UPPER ROOM

We are asking you to go on a journey of discovery and prayer within your own imagination—often described as an 'Ignatian' meditation, named after the Spanish monk, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). Perhaps after reading some more words from John 13-14, please spend some time imagining that you yourself have been invited by the apostle John to join him and the other disciples in that Jerusalem 'upper room' with Jesus

Are there questions you would like to ask him?

- Have you found any answers during this year's Lent course?
- Where might you continue to look in order to find answers?

Or would you rather simply enjoy his company?

If so, remember it is possible to do that now, precisely because the Risen Jesus has promised to be 'with us always' (Matt. 28:20) and because he promised that his Holy Spirit would 'lead us into this truth' (John 16:13).

- Think what it means to rest quietly in the presence of Jesus.
- Give thanks for all he has done, pray and offer yourself to him again.

B. EXPERIENCING A FOOT-WASHING

Materials: *For this prayer activity you will need a bowl of water, a towel and a pebbles for each participant in your home. You might like to use small heart-shaped stones for this activity if you have them.*



Read out loud, ensuring you really hear the words of God spoken through the prophet Isaiah (43:1-3):

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you [add your name here];

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."

Take time to rest in God's presence. He has called you, and he will never forsake you.

Read out loud, ensuring you really hear the words of God spoken through the prophet Ezekiel (36:24-28):

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”

Focus on your pebble. Remember the promises you or your parents made at your baptism—promises to reject evil and to repent of sin. That was a day that spoke of the need for us as followers of Jesus to rise out of the water and start walking in newness of life with Christ.

- *Are there times when your heart has become hard?*
- *Or times when you have not followed Christ’s example?*

On Maundy Thursday, in the last supper that he shared with his disciples, Jesus said: “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.” He calls us to a life of service—a life where we should love one another.

Place your pebble into the bowl of water. Let Jesus wash your heart clean again. Recommit your life to him.

As you dry your hands on the towel, imagine Jesus drying your feet.

- *Whose feet should you wash?*
- *Who should you let wash your feet?*

Final Prayers

“Heavenly Father, we recommit our lives to you, a life where we love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Sometimes it can be easier to commit to acts of service than it can be to receive them. Help us to know when to serve, but also to know when to be served. In serving one another may the strength of bonds in our church community be strengthened, drawing us closer to you in the centre, so that your glory might shine out into the world and we would be ready to serve you there too. Amen.”

“Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring your love,
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord, and where there is doubt, true faith in You.

Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light; and where there's sadness, ever joy.

*Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
in giving to all men that we receive; and in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”