



Love one another...

Moments of Grace
April 3, 2015

I washed feet yesterday. They were the feet of some clergy at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in the morning and the feet of some laypersons at the Church of St. Michael and All Angels in the evening. It was Maundy Thursday when our church remembers the actions of Jesus on that first Maundy Thursday when he washed the feet of his disciples and showed them what discipleship meant in the world.

John describes it in his Gospel (John 13:1-17, 34-35) as happening on the night Jesus gathered with his disciples for their final meal together before the dread events that were to follow later that evening and throughout the next day. John tells us that during supper Jesus got up from the table and removed his outer robe before tying a towel around himself. And then he began to wash the feet of his disciples, one by one, before drying them with the towel around his waist. After Jesus finished he returned to the table and offered this explanation of what he had just done:

“Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them ... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

In the simple and yet poignant action of washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus was giving them a lesson in what it meant to be a true disciple of his in the world. And to be one of his true disciples, Jesus made clear, they must also become servants -- servants of one another, servants of others. "For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you ... Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another."

The Maundy Thursday liturgy is perhaps the most meaningful of all for me every year. In that liturgy I am reminded of who I am before God and how it is that I am to follow him. Jesus tells us on Maundy Thursday that his church is to be a community of servants, faithfully and humbly caring for each other

and those who come our way. He also tells me that Christian service is to be given without counting the cost and without any expectation of reward or recognition.

I get my share of hate mail these days. I expected it when I became bishop. Almost all of it comes from other Christians who don't like what I teach and write and preach. This Holy Week there has been extra scorn sent my way, ironically because I did not participate in the raising of the "Christian Flag" in St. John's and Mount Pearl in solidarity with persecuted Christians. First of all, I didn't know there was a "Christian Flag" and thought the symbol of the cross would suffice to identify us. But beyond that, there is something about flag-raising that just makes me uncomfortable. Oh, I am not ashamed of my faith; it's the very center of who I am. It's just that I believe there are better ways to show it. And I believe there are better ways to support persecuted Christians around the world than raising a flag in Newfoundland.

As a Christian I serve a God who loves this world and who came in Jesus so that the world might be redeemed from all that mars it and diminishes human life. I serve a God who tells me that if I want to be close to him I must let some things within me die so that I can live more fully for him. My God says that I must be a servant in the way that Jesus was a servant.

That's a whole lot to put on a flag.

I believe the most important message Christians can send to the world around us is one of faithful, humble, loving discipleship and service. Jesus' example on Maundy Thursday reminds us of that every year.

Who knows, maybe next year I will change my mind about flying a Christian Flag in Holy Week but I have a whole year to ponder that. Right now I would prefer that the Anglicans of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador are known by the abundance of their faithful and humble service and not their flag-raising.

I think that's what Jesus would have us do.

I really do.

This song by Graham Kendrick called [Love Each Other](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MblrWZDpPQ) always takes me to Maundy Thursday:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MblrWZDpPQ>

With my every blessing,
+Geoff