

## Maundy Thursday

He poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples feet and to wipe them with a towel. (John 13)

1 In those days people walked great distances and had to take great care of their feet. It was therefore customary that on arriving for dinner at the home of a friend a servant would wash the feet of a guest. It was a task normally undertaken by the lowest slave. For some reason, on this night - the night on which Jesus was betrayed - the customary washing of the feet had been omitted. So the situation arose where everyone was saying to himself, "Who is going to do it? Should I offer? Perhaps our host isn't wealthy enough to have servants." Not one of them had the courage to offer himself as a servant to the others. Then, John tells us, 'Jesus took a basin, and poured water into it and began to wash the disciples feet'. How embarrassing!

2 The action of Jesus brought forth an immediate protest from Peter: "Lord, you will never wash my feet". We know that feeling well don't we? We often recognise that something needs doing, but we don't step forward. We hold back and create numerous reasons why it would be better if someone else did the job. "Here am I send him." Sometimes its sheer laziness; sometimes a lack of confidence; sometimes a false sense of humility.

3 Some years ago - a long time before I was ordained - the Vicar asked me if I would read a lesson in church. Hay fever made it quite impossible.

4 But there is a deeper reason behind Peter's protest. Something made Peter resent the fact that Jesus - his Lord and master - was proposing to wash his feet. It went against the grain. Something to do with status. But Jesus said, "You call me Master and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Then, if I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you an example: you are to do as I have done for you". Jesus had turned Peter's idea of Lordship upside down. But Peter should have known what to expect. Jesus had demonstrated the principle often enough. In Mark 10 we have that famous dispute with James and John, the sons of Zebedee. <explain>

4 This principle was fundamental to the teaching of St. Paul who wrote in Galatians ch. 2, "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross".

AMEN