

SERVING ONE ANOTHER

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2006

John 13:3 - 5: 12-15



And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "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 also should do as I have done to you.

As we gather to celebrate Maundy Thursday, we are celebrating a time-honored Christian tradition of two millennia. The word "Maundy" comes from the word for "commandment" (Latin, *mandatum*) and it refers to Jesus' commanding his disciples to "take and eat this bread and wine, and do it in remembrance of me."

For many, the most attractive images of Jesus Christ are derived from the Gospel accounts of that evening in the garden of Gethsemane when, late night after the last supper, Jesus was arrested after being betrayed by Judas.

It was just before the meal Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. By washing the feet of his followers Jesus set an example of caring and love that became the basis for Christians to follow through the ages.

Under protest from Peter ~ Jesus demonstrated what Christian leadership is all about. The tools of the trade were ~ a wash basin and a towel. To this day many ordained Ministers wear the stole (signifying a towel) around their shoulders ~ admitting that they are not greater than the Master and to be reminded of their high calling ~ not seeking to be rulers, but rather servants ~ serving one another. This is so different from what many are doing in our time. In the Kingdom of God -- the question is not "who is the greatest" but rather "who is willing to be the least" ~ after the example of Jesus. It is said that **a Church is only as large as the lives that are touched, through the Congregation, by the love of God.** Caring is the ultimate measure of a Congregation's size. I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other and that the taller we grew in Christian character the more easily we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other and that it is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower.

As we drink from a common cup - infant and elderly, rich and poor, black and white, family and stranger, East, West, North, and South-we sustain and strengthen our union

with Christ and with one another. We find new life, new hope, forgiveness – our lives are made whole again!

Won't you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.
I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh – I will laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow – until we've seen this journey through.

Break now the bread of life, Savior, to me, as you once broke the loaves beside the sea; Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord; my spirit yearns for you, O Living Word. Bless now the truth, dear Christ, to me, to me, as you once blessed the bread by Gal-i-lee; Then shall all bond-age cease, all shack-les fall, and I shall find my peace, my all in all. **AMEN**

