

5. Being Mercy



GATHERING SPACE

In God's great plan, every detail is important, even yours ... even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationships, friendships. ... Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life. (Pope Francis)

Mercy is more than justice; it is a matter of attentiveness and sensitivity to the concrete needs we encounter. (Kasper)

- > When is mercy manifest in the ordinary events of our lives?
- > How does the image capture the heart of mercy?

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus' actions in washing the feet of his disciples are widely regarded as a template for Christian service to others. The objections raised by Peter however are interesting – he speaks from a cultural paradigm of class distinction. It is inconceivable from Peter's perspective that the Messiah would wash the feet of fishermen. This is the heart of Jesus' message, an overturning of human notions of superiority in favour of an approach which honours God in all people.

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. He

came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 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. 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". (John 13: 1-15)

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > Peter asks Jesus 'Are you going to wash my feet?' How willing are we to have Christ touch us through the actions of others?
- > The question of superiority raised in this scripture is an important one – how can charity reinforce social inequalities?
- > Pope Francis calls on all people not to do mercy but to be mercy – how can you live this call?

PRAYER

Living God

In this board meeting may we be inspired by Jesus' leadership example to look for ways to 'serve' those in our ministries, our society and our own circle of family and friends.

Give us hearts that respond generously to the needs of others

Living God, hear our prayer

Give us minds that are open to the demands of justice and fairness in our world

Living God, hear our prayer

Give us hands that are unafraid to reach out and touch with kindness those made poor

Living God, hear our prayer

Give us feet that are willing to go the extra mile

Living God, hear our prayer

Give us the courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to Jesus' call to radical social transformation

Living God, hear our prayer

(Pause for any special intentions)

FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

May we 'be Mercy', Living God
In our living, striving and responding
May your compassion and humility find such a
home in us,
that our every action reflects your love.
Help us to know you in our service to others.
Open us to the power of the washing of feet –
ours and others around us.
Amen

Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of
these least brothers and sisters of mine, you
did for me. (Jesus, adapted from Matthew 25)

Nothing is too little to be noticed. (Mary
MacKillop, 1873)

Illustration from Sieger Köder 'Art and Inspiration'. Pope Francis: *The Church of Mercy* (2014), p62. Luke 19: 1-10. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Simmonds, G: *The Closeness of God* (2013), p84. Kasper, W *Mercy* (2013) p143. Burke, A. *The Quality of Mercy* (2015), p17.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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