



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Maundy Thursday – March 29, 2018:

A couple of years ago on Maundy Thursday, I had to do a funeral here in Honolulu. It was one of those really intense days where I had to get up early, get dressed, hop on the plane, drive to Diamondhead Memorial, do the funeral of a parishioner's mother, conduct the burial, get in the car, go back to the airport, fly home, and then go to church in Hilo to do the Maundy Thursday foot-washing service back at Holy Apostles.

There was no time to go home and change before the 5:30 service that Thursday and I'd been out and about in the hot sun on two different islands and my socks were soaked with sweat. And I knew that my feet would really stink and that I had terrible foot odor.

So when it came time to do the foot-washing, I decided there was no way I was going to take my shoes off and subject my parishioners to washing my horrible awful smelly feet. And so I served as water boy, carrying buckets full of water back-and-forth for everybody. And that day, I lacked the humility that was called for in the Gospel.

I'm sure you see the parallel.

When Jesus goes to Peter to wash his feet, Peter says, "You will never wash my feet."

He's too ashamed to have someone of Jesus' stature kneel before him and wash his feet. That's a slave's work. And although Peter's balking presents itself as modesty and unworthiness, some people think it's actually pride. The ego prevents us from becoming vulnerable. Instead we want to remain in control and decide what gifts and what services we will and won't receive. Sometimes it's really hard to say thank you, become vulnerable and open, and take the gift.

But face it, we're all dependent. We were dependent as babies as others wiped us clean and I know more than one adult who's had to face the same thing in convalescence and old age.

And if we can't receive a physical cleansing, something as simple as the washing of our feet, how on God's green earth are we going to receive the spiritual cleansing of our sins when Jesus dies on the cross?

And it's worth thinking about the other gifts we're too proud to let ourselves be given; not only material gifts, but spiritual gifts—forgiveness from one we've wronged or forgiveness to one who admits he or she has wronged us, words of praise and affirmation, or even just the basic gift of love—from God and from our fellow human beings, as well as from the Christ within ourselves.

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Jesus' donning a towel around his waist and washing the feet of the disciples gives us a mandate, and Maundy in Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin *mandatum*. What is that mandate? It's to love, and to love like Christ loves us, letting down our guard, becoming vulnerable, being humble, letting another in, accepting the gift and allowing another to wash our feet.

Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

And tonight it starts with vulnerability, vulnerability made manifest in the washing of the feet.

Amen.