

## **Maundy Thursday Homily**

I am sure you will remember our recent Gospel on Passion Sunday when Lazarus was treated to a dinner after being raised from the dead. Dramatic and extraordinary as that must have been, not least his silence in John's text, the drama is centred instead on Mary: anointing our Lord's feet and wiping them with her hair. Judas was there too and he does speak and remonstrate about the cost and waste of such a gesture - in the same way that you hear of people today saying it is a waste of money giving to overseas aid or the latest disaster appeal. I believe our offertory collection tonight is hugely symbolic of taking a different view, and a compassionate one which says 'we must keep on giving to the poor' and 'we must keep on serving our neighbours in need, or distress'.

Tonight's remembrance is of another Supper, the Last one in Jesus' presence and fellowship...Judas is just mentioned in passing as the one about to betray Jesus. The drama is undoubtedly centred on the Foot washing and the jarring play on words about cleanliness, about servanthood, about sacrificial love. And you will not be surprised to hear me say this reminds me of a magnificent painting in tones of Mediterranean blue and turquoise, by Ghislaine Howard. It now belongs to the wonderful Methodist Art Collection which is always touring the country and I am going to see it again next week in Kirkby Stephen.

Like any Gospel writer, the artist has the privilege of studying this moment of encounter when Jesus is on his knees (and not Mary this time), and by chance I came across a short film with an accompanying reflection, in the form of a sonnet, so that's what I want to share with you tonight on our big screen...

Food for thought indeed because Judas was indeed a friend, something that was never lost on Jesus. So I could make a good case, couldn't you, that this painted figure with arm outstretched looking

down on Jesus, was indeed Judas? This divine encounter was meant to be embarrassing and is embarrassing in the same way as when I ask for volunteer feet every year, and I see all the heads go down! 'You're not doing that to me', I hear you say silently!

Jesus is never frightened to enter our private spaces or even our hidden ones. He has heard all our excuses before. But he never reprimands Judas at the Last Supper, he just keeps on loving him to the end. We should take more than a glimmer of hope from that and rejoice in Christ's undying love for us all, even when we fail him or try to hurt him.

Even at our lowest ebb, Christ picks us up and washes our feet. There are no limits to his love and compassion finding us. And when that news finally breaks through all our stubbornness, we feel just like a child jumping into water for the first time, and jumping for joy!

That's why everything we remember and do tonight is an inviting picture of the Servant Church we want to keep and cherish all our days.

Amen.