

Sermon

◆ **First Reading:** *Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14*

◆ **Second Reading:** *1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

◆ **Gospel:** *John 13: 1-15*

1. One of our older missionaries who worked in India many years ago told us a story of what happened in the Divine Word Seminary in Poona, province of Mumbai, India. ... India has a caste system, the high caste and the low caste; this system has caused and continues to cause friction in the daily running of this vast country; the high caste citizens, as the saying goes, “stick to their own clan”; at the start of a particular year in the seminary, referred to as the Novitiate year, the new seminarians arrived, eager to serve the Lord and do good; Seminary life is made up of priestly formation, prayer, study and work, as in, chores to be done in and around the premises of the seminary; twice a week a list of chores was put on the notice board corresponding to the name of the seminarian assigned to do a certain chore, such as for example, to keep the lecture halls clean and dusted for the coming week. or distribute incoming mail to the recipients or to accompany 1 of the seminary workers in collecting food supplies from local stores

2. etc ... But there was a certain task on the list that caused trouble!!!

Some of the seminarians were assigned to clean the seminary showers and toilets; the seminarians of the low caste background went to do what was expected of them, but the few seminarians of high caste background, who were assigned the same task went to the rector to complain “ Reverend Father, how could our names be on the the work list, assigning us to clean the showers and toilets???, there must be some mistake, we thought you knew what caste we belong to!!!” ;

The rector asked to see the list of chores and names, to which he replied “No!” He said to them “There’s no mistake, your task as indicated on this list is to do the same with the others (... of the low caste!..)”; But there was still grumbling going on, and tensions were increasing. So the rector called all the novices together, gave them a gospel reading to meditate on in the hope they would put it into practice; the gospel reading was about the washing of the feet.

3. That wonderful reading assigned to Holy Thursday. After washing the feet of his apostles, He said to them: **“IF I THEN, THE LORD AND MASTER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YOU SHOULD WASH EACH OTHER’S FEET. I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE SO THAT YOU MAY COPY WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU..”** “SO” says you “what happened with those seminarians??”; Yes, All the seminarians grasped the meaning of what Jesus had done; a few, from both castes, decided to leave, they realized the seminary wasn’t for them, they left for different reasons and went their separate ways

How well have you and I grasped what our Lord did by washing the feet of his apostles??

if it only “sounds nice” what he did, then we have missed the point; whereas if we grasp the real meaning of what Jesus did, and put into practice what we have grasped, then we become his disciples. By that very act of washing the feet of his apostles, Jesus did away with all forms of snobbery, class distinction, favouritisms etc.,

4. If that be the case, then God has no favourites, you’ll read those exact same words in chapter 2:11 in St Paul’s letter to the Romans;

Now that the Corona virus is approaching it's peak here in the U.K. we need to be servants of each other, many people of all faiths and none are doing just that; they are reaching out, without distinction, to the more vulnerable in society, this is very encouraging, we see how much we need and depend on each other at a time like this; we recognize what we can do for others in a very uncertain situation; isn't it great to see all the good that people are doing at this time, all those simple acts of kindness too many to mention?? ; whatever you are doing, however great or humble (... or indeed not doing..) for the benefit of a society weighed down by this contagious virus, keep doing it; and pray for all N.H.S. workers, cleaners, farmers, rubbish collectors, food-chain-workers supermarket employees etc., and for those who have died of the virus;

5. Let us not forget, the power of prayer is the greatest power on earth and one last point of reference, during the time of Jesus, the task of washing feet was done by "Bond Servants" (... bondage, as in, having no freedom..); these unfortunates were the "property" of their masters, and had no rights; Jesus took on the role of a bond servant to illustrate for all time the kind of love and service he was calling those who follow Him to emulate, that is, love and service that is SELF-SACRIFICING, HUMBLE AND LOWLY, AND DOES NOT COUNT THE COST.

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