



HOLY THURSDAY

COVID-19 messed up our whole liturgical life during the celebration of the Paschal Triduum in 2020. I chose to connect with the livestreaming of the Holy Thursday Mass from Brisbane, Queensland. I was a little overwhelmed by the choice of venue that Archbishop Mark Coleridge chose for the Mass of the Lord's supper. He went to St Vincent's Hospital at Kangaroo Point. By doing so he highlighted the work of service that healthcare workers were doing for the community.

John's gospel account of the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples depicts Jesus providing us with a parable of service in action. There are seven actions that he took.

Jesus rose from the table;

He *took* off his garments;

He *took* a towel;

He *tied* it around his waist;

He *poured* water;

He *washed* the feet of his disciples;

He *dried* their feet.

John tells us that Jesus did this to show how much he loved his own. So many images come to my mind as I read those actions of Jesus. He purposely got up from the table. He took off his garments, which would be torn from him on the morrow. I imagine the puzzlement of the disciples as they watched Jesus tie a towel around his waist to perform the work of a servant. Jesus poured water into a dish. The next day he would

pour out his life for his loved ones. The cleaning of feet is no easy task. Washing is one thing. Drying off, especially between the toes takes time and gentleness. I imagine the tenderness of Jesus' touch. In that spirit Father Julian E. Tenison Woods' words to the sisters make their home in me.

'Be kind to all, be gentle to all, be very, very gentle.' (JTW Letter to early Sisters)

Jesus on his knees washing the dusty feet of his disciples calls to mind two stories of Saint Mary MacKillop. She washed the feet of barefoot children the day before they made their first Communion. She wanted them to look their best on that special day in their lives. On another occasion she put her arms around a little barefoot boy and announced that these were the children she loved. I ask myself who I love in a way that I would go on my knees for them? Whose feet would I find it hard to wash? How do I as a 'vulnerable' adult reach out to others in these days of COVID-19?

Basins and towels are instruments of service. In these days and in these times, they symbolise for us loving, humble service of others done with great tenderness, in whatever ways are at our disposal.

We might pray that we be who Mary MacKillop hoped we would be. She wrote:

'I want my darling Sisters to be what they are intended to be - God's ministering visible angels on earth.' (Mary MacKillop 1890)

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